

Wicked Cool Places wanted: New Bedford Creative announces next round of grant program

Harnessing the power of creativity and culture, Wicked Cool Places grant awards have helped redefine New Bedford since 2018 – and hastened its recovery from the pandemic since 2020. Now, in the autumn 2021, residents, artists, businesses and organizations can apply for the next round of grants and make their own unique contribution to the city.

Wicked Cool Places grant applications are available today at NewBedfordCreative.org. The deadline to apply for one is before midnight on November 30, 2021. The criteria is simple – yet expansive: projects should directly involve and have an impact on city residents, visitors or businesses in New Bedford's neighborhoods by mobilizing the arts and amplifying its culture.

There is a total of \$50,000 to invest in imaginative projects. Awards will range between \$1,000 and \$5,000. Individuals, non-profits, community groups, and for-profits are all eligible to apply.

This grant's cash award encourages recipients to be entrepreneurial. Grants can be used for material and direct project costs, as well operational expenses, including labor or staff time, capital improvements, sub-contractors, vendors or third party assistance.

"The timing of this grant program allows artists in New Bedford to sustain their efforts to help the community recover from the Covid-19 crisis," New Bedford Creative Strategist Margo Saulnier explains. "In addition, the emphasis on

placekeeping in this diverse city ensures that the important work of embracing every neighborhood continues to aid in that recovery and build a solid foundation for the future.”

Wicked Cool Places (WCP) is the City of New Bedford’s grant program for making or keeping a place where things are happening and people want to be. This year, guidelines include arts and culture-based solutions to expedite the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, support the everyday spaces to see anew the potential of parks, waterfronts, plazas, neighborhoods, streets, markets, campuses and public buildings.

Facilitated by New Bedford Creative and the NBEDC, and funded by the city of New Bedford’s Arts, Culture, and Tourism Fund, this grant is one component of implementing the city’s first-ever strategic arts and culture plan called New Bedford Creative: Our Art, Our Culture, Our Future. Applications for Wicked Cool Places grants will be evaluated by community volunteers to the New Bedford Creative Consortium. Preference will be given to projects in public spaces that demonstrate the role of creative individuals and groups in a community to envision solutions to common challenges with a creative arts and culture approach.

In past years, Wicked Cool Places grants have been awarded to a wide variety of projects, all over the city. The Community Economic Development Center in the north end received an award to launch “Festival Tipico de Guatemala,” a day-long celebration of Maya-K’iche Guatemalan arts and culture, for example. At West Beach in the south end, the popular Reggae on West Beach received funding from WCP and made a triumphant full summer schedule return this past year. Downtown, two projects launched with a WCP grant – AHA! New Bedford’s first-ever LGBTQ+ Pride month, and BuyBlackNB’s first-ever “Black in Business: Outdoor Pop-Up Market.”

“The use of a Wicked Cool Places grant award to brighten or enlighten our city is only limited by the imagination of

creative people in New Bedford,” says Saulnier. “So far, they have proven that they possess an unlimited amount of creativity despite any challenge we collectively may be facing as a city and society.”

“We all look forward to seeing what they come up with next when applications roll in by November 30, 2021!”

Again, applications for a Wicked Cool Places grant from the City of New Bedford are available at newbedfordcreative.org and the deadline is before midnight on November 30, 2021. If you have any questions, please contact Margo Saulnier at margo@newbedfordcreative.org.