

ART-TRAIN

MEMO: Using American Rescue Plan Funds for Creative Response and Recovery

Art-Train is a virtual technical assistance program for artists, municipal agencies, community non-profits, and arts councils across that nation that will launch in April 2021.

Local community collaborations for relief and recovery should start developing a plan to approach local officials for funding NOW.

- The American Rescue Plan funding will be allocated largely by local officials through Block Grants. The process for deciding how to spend the funding will vary by place.
- Now is the time to start talking to anyone and everyone you know who is in or connected to your local government about your program ideas.
- The block grant funding is extremely flexible. Almost any idea you have for addressing relief and recovery could be funded with these dollars, such as [Combating Social Isolation](#), [Downtown Businesses](#), [The Art of Recovery](#), [Creative Corps](#), [Irrigate](#), [Learning Lab](#), and [Timeslips/Telehealth](#),
- The keys to accessing this funding is 1) a good idea and 2) identifying and connecting with the decision-makers in your municipality.
- This is all about relationships. Gather with your partners and start listing everyone you know who can make connections to local officials involved.
- Every place will get some block grant funding. Look up your county and municipality estimated allocations on this [spreadsheet](#).

Now is the time to start the conversation about your program idea. Here are some steps you can take immediately.

If you are:

A MUNICIPAL or COUNTY AGENCY: Invite artists, culture leaders, and organizations to collaborate, propose ideas and provide input on issues you need to address.

A BUSINESS OR SERVICE ORGANIZATION, WHETHER NON-PROFIT OR FOR-PROFIT: connect to your municipal or county agency (that controls the funds), other potential partners including artists and topical experts, and propose ideas that address your overlapping interests.

AN ARTIST: make connections with a local business (or association) or non-profits aligned with your vision and values, and together approach your municipal or county agency with your ideas.

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In your coalition, answer these questions:

1. What is the plan or discussion about allocating ARP funds in my city/county? Check [media outlets](#) for news articles and social media—Is there a local discussion about the process for allocating funding and/or priorities?
2. Do we know who to talk to in local government? If not, who do we know who can help us figure that out? The local leaders are likely to include Mayors, County elected leaders, city/county managers, city council or county commission members, municipality or county planning departments. Often, a staff person who works for an elected leader or city/county agency will know who you should talk with.
3. Once you determine who the primary local decision-makers will be, can anyone in your coalition reach out to them? Getting a meeting is usually easier than you think! Remember, meeting with staff is great—they are the knowledge keepers for the elected officials who employ them.
4. Also, consider who can be your CHAMPION. Does anyone in your coalition have a CLOSE relationship with a local leader who is aligned with a vision of arts-based community programming? Does anyone in your coalition know a local influencer who can make important connections with local decision-makers? Consider your patrons, board members, donors, customers, clients, etc.

ALL PLACES GET AN AUTOMATIC/FORMULA GRANT

ALL counties get an allocation directly from the federal government. All cities of 50,000 or more will get an allocation directly from the federal government, and smaller municipalities will get an allocation directly from their state. To see how much funding is expected in any particular place, review [this list](#) of estimated allocations.

FUNDING COMES IN TWO ALLOCATIONS

The money will be allocated by the federal government in two passes, one within 2 months of bill signing (May 11) and one (at least) a year later. That creates a lot of opportunity to experiment, learn, and plan!

BLOCK GRANT FOCUS

The block grant funding is the big deal — and should be the target for all local orgs. \$130+ billion to local governments! Congress also included additional block grant funding for schools, housing, health, childcare, small businesses, and transit that you can target if your ideas are specific to these sectors.

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THE FUNDING IS FLEXIBLE!

It's extremely flexible money -- by design. It can be used to “respond to the public health emergency with respect to COVID-19 or its negative economic impacts, including assistance to households, small businesses and nonprofits, or aid to impacted industries such as tourism, travel and hospitality.” Almost anything we can think of is likely to fit into this category.

There are many other possible uses, and to the extent that a municipality needs even more options, there is the likely possibility of a waiver from the federal government.

FEDERAL AGENCY FUNDS

Finally, there are a number of smaller, more specific allocations to federal agencies. These will be mostly harder to access, but may be worth consideration by some groups. Access to these funds will depend on how the federal agencies decide to distribute the grants, and on getting letters of support from local and national officials, like members of Congress and Mayors.

NOW IS THE TIME TO START TALKING TO LOCAL OFFICIALS

Local officials are **making plans** for this money already. Make sure you are in communication with them.

** Memo prepared by Margy Waller for Art-Train, 3/31/21**

Art-Train is a virtual technical assistance program for artists, municipal agencies, community non-profits, and arts councils in communities of all sizes across the nation.

Art-Train equips practitioners with tools to design and support cross-sector, equity-centered, locally-rooted and culture-based collaborations that address critical recovery and rebuilding needs including workforce development, economic growth, public health, housing, infrastructure and civic engagement. Initial virtual training sessions include: information on accessing resources, including American Recovery Plan funds; customizable models to create cohesive programming; and best practices in equitable collaboration. Following this, participants have access to ongoing technical assistance through bi-weekly drop-in coaching and networking sessions with Art-Train staff, experts and an expanding network of peers. Art-Train is a resource for you, as an artist, agency, organization or arts council.

Watch [Art-Train.org](https://www.art-train.org) for training details and to register!