

Empowering the Creative Sector

Eligible Ways to Use ARPA Funds

VERMONT LEAGUE OF CITIES AND TOWNS

The American Rescue Plan Act is implemented by the Interim Final Rule, which outlines eligible uses of funds. Among them is assistance to small businesses, nonprofits, and hard-hit industries like tourism, travel, and hospitality – this includes arts, culture, and creative industries.

Why Use ARPA Funds to Empower the Creative Sector?

The creative sector is key to local economic recovery and renewal.

Arts, culture, and creativity are as foundational to strong, vibrant communities as are roads, bridges, and broadband. Creative enterprises and cultural experiences improve people's health and well-being, enhance quality of life, and revitalize villages and downtowns. They also help to honor and develop Vermont's culture and identity, drive equity and sustainability, fuel entrepreneurship, attract new visitors, and retain young residents.



Vermont's creative sector was hard hit by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Our cultural organizations were among the first to close to protect public health – and the last to fully re-open. **Vermont's creative sector lost 8,090 jobs and \$216 million in sales just from April to July 2020.**¹



The creative sector makes your town a place that people want to visit and live.

Communities thrive when they are full of creative people & businesses and host cultural activities & events. Vermonters are eager participants in cultural activities: a 2017 survey found that 68.3% of Vermont adults attended visual or performing arts events in the previous year, putting us in the top 10 in the country.



Creative industries kickstart local economies.

Vermont's creative sector contributes billions of dollars annually to our GDP. In 2019, arts and cultural industries generated \$1.1 billion in output, representing 3.3% of the state's gross domestic product.² The creative economy is a catalyst for growth and change, particularly in rural places and in times of crisis and recovery.



Footnotes

1 Lost Art: Measuring COVID-19's devastating impact on America's creative economy. The Metropolitan Policy Program at Brookings Institution. August 2020.

<https://tinyurl.com/4a2n4w4t>

2 Trends in Arts and Cultural Production: 2018-2019 (Vermont). Bureau of Economic Analysis. US Dept of Commerce.

<https://tinyurl.com/8eey96sx>

Mural from Montpelier City

Six Ideas for Using ARPA Funds to Empower the Creative Sector in Your Community

1 Improvements for disaster recovery and resilience. Upgrading cultural and community facilities for health, accessibility, and resilience – and making these investments now – will have long-term benefits to your town for when a disaster strikes again.

2 Improve and/or increase digital capacity. Digital skills and the ability to connect will be essential for creative enterprises in a post-pandemic world. Upgrading computer hardware and software can help cultural organizations and others connect with and build audiences and increase opportunities for civic engagement.

3 Investments in community-driven creative projects. Supporting or collaborating with cultural nonprofits, libraries, and other community groups can foster creative placemaking, public art, oral history projects, community conversations, performances, and festivals – all of which are powerful ways to mitigate the negative effects of the pandemic on your town's economy and bring residents back together – especially those who were disproportionately impacted by COVID-19.

4 Infrastructure. Ensure that the cultural organizations and facilities (libraries, theaters, studios, galleries, and performance spaces) can access and benefit from ARPA infrastructure projects in your town (e.g., water system upgrades and broadband expansion)

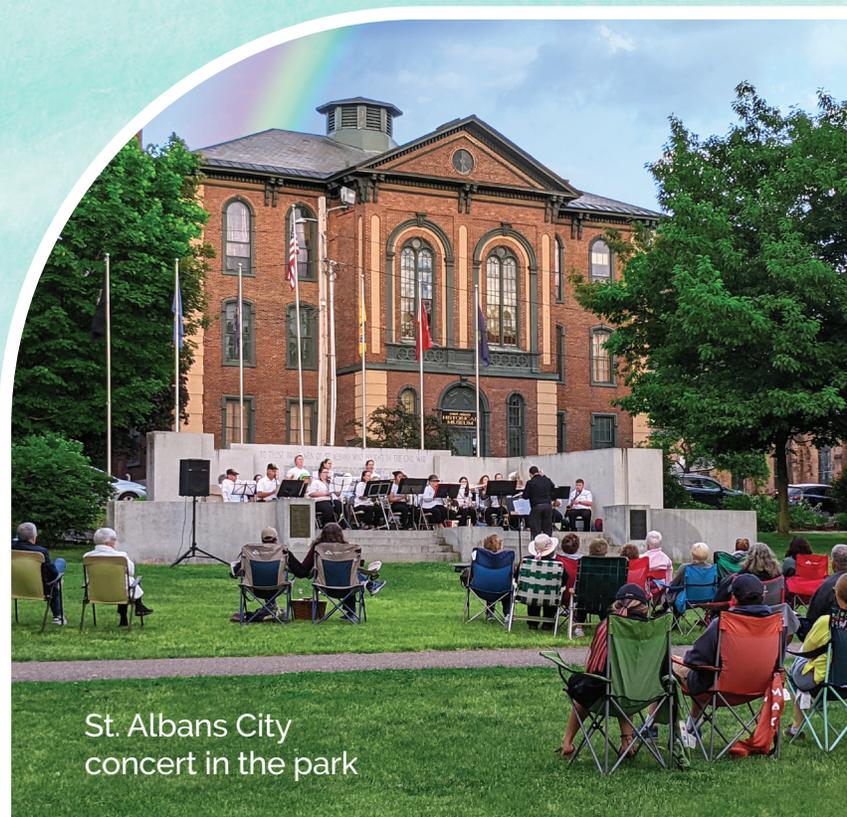
5 Direct Assistance. Create direct grant programs to help small creative businesses and cultural organizations recover from the pandemic and build financial resilience. When developing any direct assistance programs, ensure that nonprofits and the smallest businesses (such as artists who work as freelancers or sole proprietors) are eligible and can access this relief. Collaborate with organizations that offer small business planning and financial training.

6 Revitalize downtown areas and create artful spaces. Assistance to small businesses and cultural organizations could include support to enhance creative public gathering spaces for COVID-19 mitigation (e.g., outdoor performance spaces, parklets, patios) or to improve the built environment of the neighborhood (e.g., façade improvements, artistic signage).

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St. Albans City concert in the park