

# The National Endowment for the Arts and Rural Communities



The National Endowment for the Arts is the nation's only funder—public or private—to support the arts in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and U.S. territories in every Congressional District in the country. The NEA encourages broad access to its funding by maintaining few application eligibility requirements for grants for organizations as well as providing significant technical assistance to those seeking funding.

In addition to awarding grants to nonprofit organizations, the NEA partners with other federal agencies and national organizations on arts and cultural programs, is the national leader in producing and funding arts research, and has a robust collection of free resources to help advance the arts field.

## Grantmaking:

**Funding proportional to population:** The percentage of NEA funding in rural and small, metropolitan communities mirrors the percentage of the population living in those places. Small metropolitan communities are those with fewer than 250,000 residents. Rural, non-metro areas have fewer than 50,000 residents and are geographically isolated according to the USDA's Office of Rural Development.

Small Metropolitan Communities: Nine percent of the U.S. population live in small, metropolitan communities. An almost identical share (8.5 percent) of NEA-supported activities took place in these communities in FY 2016.

Rural, Non-Metropolitan Communities: Fourteen percent of the U.S. population live in rural, non-metropolitan communities. In FY 2016, 13 percent of the NEA's supported activities took place in these communities.

**Funding proportional to organization size:** Although the NEA funds organizations of all sizes, small and medium sized organizations are represented proportionally. Small organizations are those with less than \$500,000 in prior year expenditures while medium organizations have prior year expenditures of \$500,000 to \$2 million.

In FY 2017, small organizations received 31 percent of the NEA's direct grants while medium sized organizations received approximately 34 percent.

**Funding totals and examples:** More recently, in FY 2017 the NEA awarded:

161 grants totaling \$4 million in small metropolitan communities, including:

**First Peoples Fund in Rapid City, South Dakota** received \$100,000 in NEA funding to support their Rolling Rez Arts van that brings art classes, banking, and marketing opportunities to artists on the Pine Ridge Reservation.

133 grants totaling \$3.5 million in rural communities, including:

**Symphony in Flint Hills, Cottonwood Falls, Kansas**, received \$150,000 in NEA funding to support rural community workshops and artist residencies.

**NEA provides broad access to funding opportunities:** The NEA's funding programs for organizations are open to any non-profit organization with three years of arts programming history to apply. This is important for organizations in rural communities that lack local public funders and private philanthropies from which to obtain support.

**NEA invests in helping people:** NEA program staff spend significant time on the phone and through email with applicants to help them submit strong applications and provide feedback and panel comments to those whose applications are not successful. In the NEA's FY 2016 applicant survey, the satisfaction rate was 82.9 percent.

**Partnerships:** As a federal agency, the NEA is best positioned to partner with other federal agencies, as well as national organizations, than are other public or private organizations that don't have a mission of national scope. For rural communities, collaboration among national partners leverages resources and can be particularly effective in addressing community challenges. For example:

- [Citizens' Institute on Rural Design \(CIRD\)](#), is an NEA partnership with the **Department of Agriculture and Project for Public Spaces**, along with the Orton Family Foundation. CIRD works in communities of 50,000 residents or less to host two-and-a-half day community design workshops centered on tackling a local challenge.
- [Our Town](#), an NEA partnership with the **United States Conference of Mayors** and its Mayors' Institute on City Design, supports local efforts to enhance quality of life and opportunity for existing residents, increase creative activity, and create or preserve a distinct sense of place.
- [Delta Creative Placemaking Initiative](#), a partnership with the **Delta Regional Authority**, a federal agency that supports the eight-state region along the Mississippi River, to launch a program that strengthens the Delta economy and improves the quality of life for the region's 10 million residents.

**Research and Resources:** The NEA produces and funds the creation of research, toolkits, and other content intended to help rural artists and arts organizations advance the arts and positively impact their communities.

- *Rural Arts, Design, & Innovation in America: Research Findings from the Rural Establishment Innovation Survey* looks at the relationship between arts organizations and innovative businesses in rural communities and their interconnected impact on their local economy.
- Exploring Our Town online resource features eight [rural-based case studies](#) and four [tribal community-based case studies](#) along with lessons learned that highlight best practices for creative placemaking in those communities.
- Citizens' Institute on Rural Design has an [extensive library of resources](#) for rural creative placemaking.
- Through the Our Town Knowledge Building program, the NEA has funded creation of several resources including Art of the Rural and the Rural Policy Research Institute's, **[Next Generation Digital Exchange](#)** and **[Next Generation National Rural Creative Placemaking Summit](#)**
- [Leveraging Change – Increasing Access to Arts Education in Rural Areas NEA Director of Arts Education](#) Ayanna N. Hudson hosts a webinar discussing methods of disseminating arts education throughout remote, rural populations.