



Animating Infrastructure Grant | FY2024 Guidelines

Introduction

The Vermont Arts Council is offering a funding opportunity to communities that are poised to integrate works of public art into upcoming infrastructure projects. The Council seeks proposals for projects that provide opportunities for artists to engage with the community in the design and/or fabrication of permanent or temporary public art for an interior or exterior site that is accessible to the public.

The Animating Infrastructure program is designed to foster partnerships between communities and artists. The intent is to enhance a sense of community pride and identity, foster social connections, and improve the livability and vibrancy of Vermont communities, downtowns, villages, and neighborhoods. Through the development and installation of site-specific works of public art, Vermont communities can reflect their vision, values, and creative spirit.

For the purposes of this program, the Vermont Arts Council's definition of infrastructure is broad and includes community facilities and services such as buildings, trails, water or sewer systems, roads, power systems, parks, and more. Functional components of infrastructure such as sidewalks, railings, benches, walls, signs, stairs, tree grates, fences, water fountains, and more in the built and/or natural environment have the potential for artistic enhancement that creates unique places where people want to live, work, visit, and play.

A panel will review the project pitches and select a small number of applicants to invite to submit full proposals. The Arts Council will ultimately award funds to three to five projects that demonstrate a collaborative process that sparks a creative, lively integration of public art into existing or proposed community infrastructure projects. For the funded projects, the Council will provide guidance to the grantee in the artist selection process, as well as assistance in outreach to Vermont artists. The community will be responsible for implementation. Grantees will be asked to document their process and product through stories, photos, videos, models, etc.

Who May Apply or Receive Funding

Vermont 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations, educational institutions, and municipalities are eligible to apply. Community groups without tax-exempt status may apply using a fiscal agent. A fiscal agent must be a charitable nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization incorporated in Vermont. All applicants (or the fiscal agent) must have a [Unique Entity ID \(UEI\)](#) from the federal government. Proposals from Vermont designated downtowns, village centers, or neighborhood development areas are encouraged. Applicants should have strong, supportive community leadership in place to give the project high potential for being completed successfully.

Who May Not Apply

- Organizations that have received any other Arts Council grant in the same fiscal year to support the same project
- Organizations with outstanding or incomplete reporting for any Vermont Arts Council grant
- Individual artists

Eligible Activities

Animating Infrastructure provides communities with funds to engage and work with an artist. Funds will be awarded for:

- **Public Art Design** (\$5,000 maximum): Grant funds may be used to conduct a process to select an artist(s) or to work with an already identified artist for your public art project. The grant should support the artist(s) fees to design the artwork and to engage the community.
At the end of the grant period, the grantee will submit a final report that includes a final design with a budget, drawings or models, and details about specific materials. It should also include a timeline and information on fundraising, fabrication, installation, site preparations, and maintenance requirements for the proposed artwork. Final designs may then be used by the community to raise the necessary funds to compensate the artist(s) for fabrication and installation of the designed artwork. This could include future Animating Infrastructure implementation grants, crowdfunding opportunities, and/or other funding sources. (Successful completion of a final design grant does not guarantee that the project will be funded through a future Animating Infrastructure grant.)
- **Public Art Implementation** (\$15,000 maximum): Grant funds may be used to support an artist in the fabrication and installation of public art for a previously designed project.
Applicants to this category will be asked to submit the concept behind the design and provide a specific timeline for the fabrication, installation, and completion of the art project if invited to submit a full proposal. This should include information about the durability and safety of the proposed artwork, its resistance to theft and vandalism, and how it will respond to exposure to weather, etc. The timelines should include information about when and where the work will be fabricated, when it will be installed, and when the project will be completed.

All eligible project proposals are welcome. The Council is especially interested in:

- projects where art is integrated into functional components of the infrastructure
- projects in their early planning
- projects that foster connections among people with diverse financial, educational, health, employment, or social resources; people from diverse abilities, races, cultures, genders, and/or ages

As a partner with the Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development, the Council also encourages applicants to consider the development of a public art design (with a design grant) that could be submitted for consideration to the [Better Places](#) program, a crowdgranting program that matches community fundraising goals 2:1.

What We Do Not Fund

- The purchase, lease, or exhibition of pre-existing artwork or editions
- Any ongoing operational expenses of the applicant organization or partner
- Capital improvements not directly related to the public artwork
- The purchase of land or property
- Design of artwork that will not be publicly accessible or visible

Grant Amounts and Matching Requirements

Grants will range from \$1,000 to \$15,000. Up to \$5,000 will be awarded for design grants and up to \$15,000 will be awarded for implementation grants.

Grants will not require a match, but grantees will be responsible for any additional expenses above the grant amount. At least 80% of grant funds must be used to support artist honorariums/fees related to the design, and/or artist expenses for fabrication and/or installation of artwork. The remaining 20% of the funds may be used to support project management, community engagement activities, online application/software fees, space rentals, and/or community outreach.

Selection Criteria

A successful application will demonstrate a unique opportunity for the integration of public art into infrastructure and will relate the community to the place. The following represents specific criteria for different phases and funding categories.

Project Pitches

Competitive proposals will demonstrate project potential with:

- a clearly defined place and proposed art in infrastructure project that has high community visibility
- clearly defined vision with specific goals and outcomes
- strong community leadership and cross-sector partnership opportunities
- opportunities to celebrate and/or tell a story of what is unique and special about the community/place
- appropriate/realistic scope and scale

Additional consideration will be given to projects that:

- have potential to be a model project for other communities because of the project location, the community engagement, it presents a unique opportunity, it is an uncommon project, and/or projects where art is integrated into functional components of the infrastructure
- articulate compelling reasons why the project is important to the community at this time

If an applicant is invited to submit a full proposal, the following criteria will be used to assess applications.

For Design or Implementation Grants

Competitive proposals will have high potential for success by demonstrating:

- a clearly defined place and proposed art in infrastructure project that has high community visibility
- a clearly defined vision with specific goals and outcomes
- strong and supportive community leadership and collaborating cross-sector organizations
- diverse, cross-sector representation on a local review committee that includes/included at least one member of the arts community and addresses artistic merit
- potential for community engagement that fosters connections among people with diverse financial, educational, health, employment, or social resources; people from diverse abilities, races, cultures, genders, and/or ages
- community activities and the completed artwork will provide meaningful access to people with various disabilities
- what is unique and special about the community, place, and/or people
- the potential to inspire community attraction to, or interaction and/or engagement with the space, structure, or the community
- an appropriate and realistic scope and scale with a well-thought budget and fundraising ideas

For Implementation Grants (artwork has already been designed)

Competitive proposals must meet the above criteria and have high potential for success by demonstrating:

- the selected artist(s) has demonstrated the ability to successfully manage and implement the proposed project on time and on budget
- the proposed artwork has high artistic merit (based on uploaded artistic design documents)
- the durability and safety of the proposed artwork relative to maintenance requirements, theft, vandalism, and exposure to weather and location

Grantee Requirements

Grantees will be expected to sign a contract agreeing to specific funding requirements. The Council shares success stories with other communities and continues to support creative placemaking efforts. Therefore, a final report with a narrative, final budget, visual documentation (e.g., photos, drawings, and/or video) of the process and final design will be required at the end of your project. The report will be due no later than thirty days after the completion of the funded activities.

Application Submission and Deadlines

- **June 1, 2023: project pitches due**
- July 14, 2023: finalists invited to develop full proposal
- September 14, 2023: full proposals due
- October 20, 2023: applicants notified of grant award
- October 21, 2023: projects begin
- November 1, 2024: projects completed
- December 1, 2024: final reports submitted

Applications must be submitted through the Council's [online granting system](#). The Council welcomes conversations well in advance of your application. Our role is to help you prepare the strongest possible application and support your process.

Access and Nondiscrimination Policy

The Vermont Arts Council is committed to supporting entities that maintain an environment free from discrimination on the basis of race, religion, color, creed, national origin, age, sex, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, genetic bias, disability, citizenship, veteran status, or other category protected by applicable state or federal law. Arts Council grant recipients who receive federal or state funds must be in compliance with the requirements of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (504), the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), and the ADA Amendment Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-325) which became effective on January 1, 2009.

Questions?

Inquiries about the Animating Infrastructure program should be made by sending an [email to Michele Bailey](#) or by calling 802.402.4614.

Inquiries about using the online application system should be made by sending an [email to Meredith Bell](#) or by calling 802.402.4478.