

# Creative Futures Grant Program

May 11, 2023



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CREATIVE  
NETWORK  

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create vermont



vermont arts council  
working for a creative state



# Staff Introductions

**Amy Cunningham** – Deputy Director &  
Creative Futures program manager

**Kathy Mulvaney** – Creative Futures program manager

# Vermont Arts Council

## The Mission

Cultivate and advance the arts and creativity throughout Vermont.

## The Vision

The Council is committed to building a Vermont where art, culture, and creativity are at the heart of our communities. Engagement with the arts transforms individual lives, connects people more deeply to each other, energizes the economy, and sustains the vibrant cultural landscape that makes Vermont a great place to live. Three priorities currently guide the Council's grant-making and programs:

- [expanding arts opportunities](#)
- [cultivating creative placemaking](#)
- [energizing Vermont's creative economy](#)

## The Organization

Since 1965, the Vermont Arts Council has been the state's primary provider of funding, advocacy, and information for the arts in Vermont. The Vermont Arts Council is unique. It is the only designated state arts agency in the U.S. that is also an independent nonprofit organization.



# Creative Futures Grant Program

- A grant program to support the recovery of Vermont's creative sector from the Covid-19 pandemic and to set a path for growth
- Made possible by a grant from the State of Vermont through the Agency of Commerce and Community Development, Department of Economic Development
- A one-time program



# Act 183

*"The amount of \$9,000,000.00 is appropriated to the Vermont Arts Council to **provide grants for monthly operating costs, including rent, mortgage, utilities, and insurance, to creative economy businesses and nonprofits that have sustained substantial losses due to the pandemic.**"*

## Creative Futures Grant Program

Applicants are encouraged to review the program guidelines, application preview, FAQs, and other support materials available in the sidebar. If accessing this page on desktop, view the sidebar to the right. If accessing this page on mobile, scroll to the bottom of the page to view the sidebar.

During the 2022 state legislative session, the Vermont Arts Council and the Vermont Creative Network advocated for increased investment in economic recovery for the creative sector. One outcome of this session (a part of [Act 183](#)) was the allocation of \$9 million of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to the Vermont Arts Council for grants to creative sector entities that have sustained economic harm due to the pandemic. [Read more about our advocacy efforts during the session.](#)

[View a list of funding recipients.](#)

### What is the Creative Futures Program?

The aim of this program is to provide aid to creative sector organizations and businesses that continue to struggle financially due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

This program is open to all Vermont-based creative economy nonprofits and for-profit businesses including sole proprietors that can demonstrate economic harm caused by or exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic. Unincorporated arts, humanities, or cultural groups without official nonprofit status may apply using a fiscal agent provided they are otherwise eligible.

Funding amounts will be based on 2019 (pre-pandemic) operating revenue.

These funds are for any **regular operating expenses**, including but not limited to payroll and benefits, utilities, rent, and insurance. Please refer to the guidelines for more details.

Applications will be evaluated using the following criteria:

- **Severity of Covid-19 pandemic harm**
- **Community and cultural impact**
- **Economic impact**

### Questions?

We welcome conversations well in advance of your application. Our role is to help you prepare the strongest application possible and support you in the application process. See the sidebar for information about grant-seeker workshops and scheduling a time to meet with a program staffer. Inquiries about the Vermont Creative Futures Program can be made by sending an email

### Grant Contacts



Amy Cunningham



Kathy Mulvaney

802.402.4409  
[creativefutures@vermontartscouncil.org](mailto:creativefutures@vermontartscouncil.org)

**Office Hours:** [Sign up here for a phone or video meeting](#) with a program officer.

### Details

[Creative Futures Guidelines](#)  
[NAICS Codes](#)  
[FAQs](#)

### Grantseeker Workshops

May 11, 10-11 a.m. via Zoom  
[Register](#)

May 23, 4-5 p.m. via Zoom  
[Register](#)

### Application

Application Preview:  
[PDF preview](#)  
[DOC preview](#)

[Apply online](#)

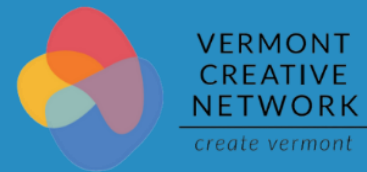
### Key Dates

- Round 1: open Sept. 15 – deadline Nov. 1; notifications by mid-December
- Round 2: open Jan. 3 – deadline Feb. 28, 2023; notifications by mid-April
- Round 3: open May 1 – deadline June 30, 2023; notifications by late August

### Grant Portal

New user? [Be sure to register!](#) Your account will be reviewed and approved in 1-2 business days. All Creative Future applicants (include sole proprietors) should register as an "organization applicant."

# Timeline



# Grant Timeline

~~Round 1: open **Sept. 15 – Nov. 1**; notifications by mid-December~~

~~Round 2: open **Jan. 5 – Feb. 28, 2023**; notifications by mid-April~~

**Round 3: open **May 1 – June 30, 2023**; notifications by late-August**



# Deferred Applicants

## Round 1 & 2



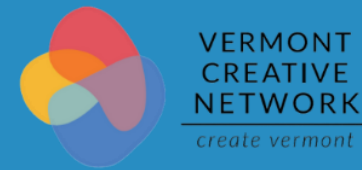
# Deferred Round 1 Applicants

If you applied and *did not* receive funding in Round 1 & 2, we need you to update your materials for consideration in Round 3.

**We have reopened your application for updates. Please add:**

- A tax return for your most recently completed fiscal year
- Financial documents for the current unfinished fiscal year
- Any new information regarding other pandemic relief (Ex: you since received funds from the VEDA forgivable loan program)
- Other substantial changes in your circumstances make the information submitted in your application inaccurate.

**Review and resubmit your application by June 30, 2023**



# Deferred Round 2 Applicants

If you applied and *did not* receive funding in Round 2, your application will automatically move for consideration in Round 3.

**No action is required on your part unless:**

- You have since filed a tax return for your most recently completed fiscal year
- Your information regarding other pandemic relief has changed (Ex: you since received funds from the VEDA forgivable loan program)
- Other substantial changes in your circumstances make the information submitted in your application inaccurate.

If any of the above circumstances apply to you, please contact us to reopen your application.

# Eligibility

# Eligibility Requirements

*"creative economy businesses and nonprofits that have sustained substantial losses due to the pandemic"*

- Nonprofit organizations and for-profit businesses, including sole proprietorships, which are part of the Vermont's creative sector
- Experiencing continued economic harm due to the pandemic
- Located in Vermont
- Fewer than 500 employees
- In operation or had taken steps toward becoming operational as of 3/13/2020
- Created as a new creative sector business after 3/13/2020 **due to pandemic changes** and has documented income from qualifying creative sector work

# What Is the Creative Economy?

- **Culture & Heritage** – Historical societies, museums, libraries, independent curators, and exhibit designers
- **Design** – Product, interior, graphic, architecture, and fashion design firms and designers
- **Film & Media** – Creators of film video, animation, digital games, including technicians, costumers, editors
- **Literary Arts & Publishing** – Print or electronic publishing businesses and content creators, editors, and writers
- **Performing Arts** – Producers, venues, studios, sound and light technicians, set designers, and performers
- **Specialty Foods** – Specialty and artisanal food producers.
- **Visual Arts & Crafts** – Galleries, artists, artisans, craftspeople, culture bearers, and makers

# Determining Creative Economy Eligibility

- Applicants' work or mission must be predominantly rooted in the creative sector
- Applicants will choose a business code based on the **North American Industry Classification System (NAICS)\*** to indicate their place in the creative sector
  - For-profit businesses can find this code on their tax return under "principal business activity code"
  - Nonprofit organizations will have to search and choose a code

\*VAC has created a list of NAICS codes available on the website

# Eligible Businesses and Organizations

- C Corporation
- Cooperative Association
- S Corporation
- Limited Liability Corp
- Limited Liability Partnership
- Sole Proprietorship
- Nonprofit
- Unincorporated nonprofit using a fiscal agent



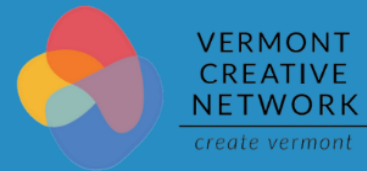
# What is Pandemic Harm?

- Lost or decreased revenue
- Lost space
- Increased costs
- Risk of permanent closure
- Challenges meeting payroll or other financial obligations
- Staff layoffs
- Unplanned use of savings/reserves/endowment
- Other

# Not Eligible to Apply

- Individuals who are not working as sole proprietors
- Businesses owned by persons under age 18
- Businesses that are franchises or chains
- Religious, political, or advocacy organizations
- Government agencies
- Pre-K through Grade 12 schools
- Universities, colleges, and academic departments. (Arts and cultural organizations that operate under the umbrella of a college or university with 501c3 status may apply.)
- Sporting event entities, karaoke, exotic dancing, fitness studios

# Funding



# Use of Funds

These funds are for **regular operating expenses**, including but not limited to:

- Payroll and benefits
- Utilities
- Rent
- Mortgage
- Insurance

# Award Amounts

Awards will be based on 2019 operating revenue, or 12 full months of pre-pandemic revenue as documented in your tax return.\*

Awards based on a tiered system

- Awards will be about 10% of 2019 operating revenue
- Minimum grant \$5,000 (anyone under \$50K in revenue)
- Maximum grant of \$200,000

\*VAC will determine appropriate grant awards for applicants with an incomplete or irregular pre-pandemic tax year.

# Award Levels for Organizations

2019 Operating Revenue	Award Amount
over \$2M	\$200,000
over \$1.75 M - up to \$2 M	\$187,500
over \$1.5 M - up to \$1.75 M	\$162,500
over \$1.25M - up to \$1.5 M	\$137,500
over \$1M - up to \$1.250	\$112,500
\$900,001 - \$1,000,000	\$95,000
\$800,001 - \$900,000	\$85,000
\$700,001 - \$800,000	\$75,000
\$600,001 - \$700,000	\$65,000
\$500,001 - \$600,000	\$55,000
\$400,001 - \$500,000	\$45,000
\$300,001 - \$400,000	\$35,000
\$200,001 - \$300,000	\$25,000
\$100,001 - \$200,000	\$15,000
\$50,001 - \$100,000	\$7,500
up to \$50,000	\$5,000

# Applying

# Materials Needed to Apply

1. An organization account in the Vermont Arts Council's grant portal
2. A completed application
3. Tax and financial documents for 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, and 2023 as .pdf attachments
4. List of past Covid-19 relief funding including amounts received or pending



# VAC Grant Portal



## Welcome!

We have a new grant system! Are you a new user? Please register by clicking on the link below.

User ID (Email address)

Password

Keep me signed in

[Sign In](#)

[Register](#) / [Send password hint](#) / [Reset password](#)

If you run into issues with registration or signing in, please send an



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# Registering in the VAC grant portal

**EVERYONE** must register as **Organization Applicant** (do not choose Individual Artist)

## **Returning organizations:**

- Search to find your existing account in the VAC grant portal
- Update information as needed and apply

## **New organizations and businesses:**

- Create a new account by clicking the **“Create New Organization”** button
- Start making a profile and apply

## **New and Returning Individuals (Sole Proprietors)**

- Do not use an existing individual artist account
- Start a new account by clicking the **“Create New Organization”** button
- You may now have 2 accounts in the system. That is okay.

# Application Questions

Describe your organization's:

- **Severity of pandemic harm** - financial insecurity; decreased revenue; increased costs; challenges meeting payroll; and other operating costs
- **Cultural and community impact** - mission; cultural significance; and communities served
- **Economic impact** - role in local economic recovery; ability to retain or rehire jobs; unique products or services provide; likelihood of post-pandemic resilience

# Required Financial Documents

## 1. Federal Business Tax Returns for Fiscal Years 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022\*

- Sole proprietors or LLCs who file as sole proprietors: **Form 1040 schedule C** [Note: remove or redact all SSNs]
- Nonprofit: **Form 990 or 990EZ**
- Corporation: **Form 1120**

\*Note: some applicants may need to include 2018 returns if fiscal year falls in the middle of a year and up until most recently filed

# Required Financial Documents

- 2. Management-prepared financial statements for year-to-date of the current fiscal year** (and any prior year for which a tax return is not yet filed)
  - **Profit and Loss statement** for the period [Note: all applicants must submit a P&L for the current year and any year for which taxes are not finalized]
  - **Balance sheets** from beginning of each Profit & Loss period submitted [Note: balance sheets are not required for any business or sole proprietor with revenue under \$50,000]

# Required Financial Documents

## 3. Other financial documents and information as required

- Profit & Loss Statements for each year a nonprofit files 990EZ
- Business plans or documents for entities organized prior to March 13, 2020, but had not yet become fully operational
- Business plans or documents for creative sector entities started as the result of the pandemic

# Past and Pending Pandemic Funding

## Past funding

- SBA Loan – Payroll Protection Program
- SBA Loan – Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL)
- SBA Grant – EIDL Emergency Grant
- Vermont Economic Recovery Grant
- Vermont Economic Recovery Grant – Supplemental
- Shuttered Venue Operators Grant
- VT Cultural Relief Grant Program through Vermont Arts Council and Vermont Humanities (2020)

- VT Cultural Recovery Grant Program through Vermont Arts Council and Vermont Humanities (2021)
- NEA Direct ARPA Grant
- NEH Direct SHARP Grant

## Current/Pending

- VEDA Forgivable Loan Program
- Community Recovery and Revitalization Grant

# Evaluation Process



# Evaluation Process

- Applications reviewed for eligibility by VAC program staff
- Applications evaluated by outside panel
- VAC staff compiles recommendations for funding
- VAC Board approves funding recommendations

# Evaluation Criteria

## **Severity of Pandemic Harm**

financial insecurity; decreased revenue; increased costs; challenges meeting payroll; and other operating costs

## **Community and Cultural Impact**

mission; cultural significance; and communities served

## **Economic Impact**

role in local economic recovery; ability to retain or rehire jobs; unique products or services provide; likelihood of post-pandemic resilience

## **Special Consideration Groups**

organizations serving and led by members of communities traditionally under-resourced in the arts and humanities

# Special Consideration Groups

- People of color or indigenous people
- People who identify as LGBTQ+
- People who live in rural areas
- People with disabilities
- People who identify as immigrants or refugees
- People whose first (or only) language is not English

# Opportunities to Learn More



# Opportunities to Learn More

- Watch recording of this grantseeker workshop on our website once posted
- Consult [FAQs](#) on our website
- Make an appointment to talk one-on-one with program staff <https://calendly.com/kmulvaney-vac/30min>
- Email staff at [creativefutures@vermontartscouncil.org](mailto:creativefutures@vermontartscouncil.org)
- Call staff at 802.402.4409

# Questions