



# MINUTES

**Thursday – November 17, 2022**

**5:30 PM**

**The Arlington Common**

Present: Andrew McKeever, Nick Zaiac, Cat Bryars, Walter Klinger, Jim Hand, Jay Reichman, Dixie Zens, Brian Lent, Nancy Faesy, Sheila Kearns, Rich Zoppel, Martha Cornwell, Carol Farley, Michael Fernandez, Bruce Lierman, John LaVecchia Jr., Matthew Perry, Johanna de Graffenreid, Zon Eastes

Staff: Jonathan Cooper, Callie Fishburn, Jim Sullivan, Bill Colvin, Scott Grimm-Lyon, Jim Henderson,

After enjoying a meal from Bonnie & Clyde's Corner Market, the meeting was called to order at 6:05PM.

I. Minutes of September 15, 2022

Motion to approve (Kearns). Second (Klinger). Passed unanimously.

II. BCRC Executive Committee Openings

Special Interest Commissioner openings: Michael Fernandez of the Bennington County Conservation District was appointed Conservation Commissioner. Shires Housing Executive Director, Cat Bryars, was appointed BCRC's Housing Commissioner.

Executive Committee openings: Janet Hurley has resigned as chair to take a position at BCRC. John LaVecchia Sr. has also resigned.

Sheila Kearns was nominated to serve on the executive committee. Motion to elect Sheila Kearns as secretary of the BCRC executive committee (Zaiac). Second (Reichman). Passed unanimously with SK abstaining.

There is still one open position on the executive committee. If you are a commissioner, please let Bill Colvin know if you are interested.

III. Arlington Common Project Update

Arlington Common board member, Carol Farley, gave an overview of the project. [The Arlington Common](#) initially received a planning grant and Brownfields grant to fund the project and the buildings were purchased in November 2021. The vision of the Common is community creativity, wellness, and culture. They now have 15 classes, and have hosted several events including a fly-fishing festival, film fest and housing summit. The second floor is available to rent as a coworking space and there are new pickle ball courts. The Common is currently featuring a Norman Rockwell Christmas exhibit and there will be events every Friday until Christmas.

IV. Presentation on Vermont Creative Network & CreateVT Action Plan

Jonathan Cooper introduced Johanna de Graffenreid of [Vermont Creative Network](#), a program of the Vermont Arts Council. The Vermont Creative Network developed the CreateVT Action Plan which was just named Plan of the Year by the Northern New England Chapter of the American Planning Association.

The VT Creative Network was created in 2015 by legislative mandate. There are six creative zones throughout the state, each is unique but all have the same three visions: arts, culture and creativity are essential to VT infrastructure; VT communities thrive through creative expression and enterprise; and creative enterprises succeed in a diverse, equitable, connected and collaborative environment. VCN maintains a [research page](#) with creative sector economic information and other resources including the Bennington County Cultural Plan (2019). They also Maintain a list of [grant programs](#) in the creative sector. Some of the zones have done workforce development and professional development workshops for sole proprietors and other creatives.

V. This was Jim Sullivan's last BCRC meeting before his retirement. Incoming director, Bill Colvin, recognized Jim for his 30+ years of service to BCRC.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:07PM.

# Empowering the Creative Sector

## Eligible Ways to Use ARPA Funds

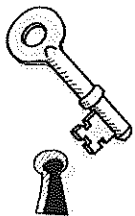
VERMONT LEAGUE OF CITIES AND TOWNS

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?

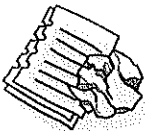
### The creative sector is key to local economic recovery and renewal.

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.



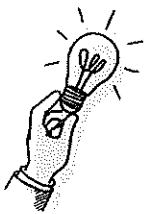
### Vermont's creative sector was hard hit by the COVID-19 pandemic.

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.<sup>1</sup>



### 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.<sup>2</sup> 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>

# 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)

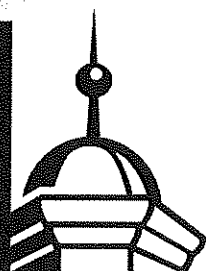
**5 Direct Assistance.** Create direct grant programs to help small creative businesses and cultural organizations recover from the pandemic and build financial resilience. When developing any direct assistance programs, ensure that nonprofits and the smallest businesses (such as artists who work as 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).

FIND VLCT'S ARPA RESOURCES AT

[VLCT.ORG/ARPA](https://vlct.org/arpa) 

HAVE AN ARPA RELATED QUESTION? EMAIL [ARPA@VLCT.ORG](mailto:arpa@vlct.org)



St. Albans City

# createVT

## VISION & ACTION FRAMEWORK

action plan for  
Vermont's creative sector

[vermontcreative.network.org](http://vermontcreative.network.org)

We believe that **CREATIVITY IS ESSENTIAL** to the **CULTURAL & ECONOMIC VITALITY** of Vermont.

### VISION

#### ARTS, CULTURE AND CREATIVITY ARE ESSENTIAL VERMONT INFRASTRUCTURE

- 1 Creative enterprises have equitable access to robust public, private and community funding and resources
- 2 Educational systems develop creative talent, skills, access to, and appreciation for arts and culture
- 3 State and local policies are designed to equitably support creative enterprises, infrastructure

### GOALS

#### VERMONT COMMUNITIES THRIVE THROUGH CREATIVE EXPRESSION AND ENTERPRISE

- Communities are infused with opportunities for creative economic development, expression and engagement
- 4 Creative people are engaged in community building and leadership
  - 5 Cross-sector collaborations amplify creativity and local economies

#### CREATIVE ENTERPRISES SUCCEED IN A DIVERSE, EQUITABLE, CONNECTED, & COLLABORATIVE ENVIRONMENT

- 4 Creative people and enterprises have abundant access to the resources they need to succeed
- 5 Vibrant networks support creative people, industries, and communities of practice
- 6 Vermont is promoted as a hub for creative talent, experiences and communities

### ADVOCACY AGENDA

- Invest in creative spaces & infrastructure
- Expand creative economic development
- Invest in broadband & digital capacity for creative enterprises
- Develop creative business skills

### NETWORK AGENDA

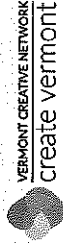
- Grow & diversify the Vermont Creative Network
- Expand networking & partnerships
- Strengthen resources & support for creative people & enterprises
- Measure & share sector impacts

### LOCAL AGENDA

- Join or build local teams & networks
- Strengthen local plans & policies
- Improve accessibility of creative spaces & programs
- Make creativity happen, anywhere & everywhere

### ACTION

The Vermont Creative Network (VCN) is a broad collective of organizations, businesses, and individuals working to advance Vermont's creative sector. Authorized by the Vermont Legislature in 2016, the VCN is an initiative of the Vermont Arts Council. We are grateful for major grants from Jane's Trust and The Windham Foundation and support from the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development, the National Life Group Foundation, the Ruth and Peter Metz Family Foundation. Research consultants: Mt. Auburn Associates, Community Roots, and Stuart Rosenfeld. Planning consultants: Community Workshop and Shanta Lee Gander. Vision artwork: Juniper Creative LLC. Learn more at [vermontcreative.network.org](http://vermontcreative.network.org).





# Vermont's creativity moment is now

Creativity and innovation are the heart of Vermont's strength. When we invest in our creative sector, it can pave the way to a thriving, equitable future.

From Bennington to Barton, creative people, projects, and enterprises are everywhere. Our state's reputation for innovation is a vital part of the Vermont "brand," attracting tourists and entrepreneurs, driving economic growth, and anchoring vibrant communities.

Creative people, businesses and ideas are key to helping Vermont recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and address major challenges like racism, climate change and affordability. Just like roads and bridges, creativity and innovation are essential infrastructure for Vermont's future.

**VERMONT'S  
CREATIVE  
SECTOR**

**9.3%** of all  
Vermont  
jobs

that's

**41K** Vermont  
creative  
sector jobs

in

**7** major  
segments

**KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS** In 2020, the Vermont Creative Network completed an ambitious statewide study to document the scope and economic impact of the creative sector. Our research demonstrates the substantial economic power of the creative sector and a compelling need to invest in the sector's future growth.

➤ At 9.3%, Vermont has a greater share of creative sector jobs than the U.S. average.

➤ The majority of those jobs are in design, specialty foods, and visual arts and crafts.

➤ Nearly 50% of Vermont's creatives are self-employed or freelance (compared to 40% nationwide)

➤ Growth in Vermont's creative sector is lagging (8% growth from 2010 to 2018 vs. 14% nationally)

Building on the research findings, the Vermont Creative Network launched CreateVT—a vision and action planning process. The final plan incorporates the ideas of thousands of people and serves as a roadmap for growing a robust, inclusive, and resilient creative sector.

**CREATEVT  
WITH US**

