

**NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS
AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN (ARP) GRANT NEW APPLICANT FOCUS GROUP**

I. EMAIL INVITE

To: [EMAIL]
From: research@arts.gov
Subject: American Rescue Plan (ARP) New Applicant Focus Group Invitation

Dear **[NAME]**:

Thank you for applying to the American Rescue Plan (ARP) **[program here]** grant program, which had an application deadline of **[deadline here]**. The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) is conducting a virtual focus group to collect feedback on your experience as a first-time applicant for the ARP grant opportunity. We invite you to participate in the focus group on your organization's behalf. **Your participation will help us to better serve future applicants.**

The focus group will be held on **[date and time here]**. Please return your acceptance or decline to this event **no later than [date and time here]**.

In advance of the focus group we will ask you to please set aside time to review ARP application materials and resources as a refresher. You can find an overview of Parts 1 and 2 of the application here **[include link]** and technical assistance videos here **[include link]** for review.

The focus group will last no longer than 60 minutes, and participation is completely voluntary. Your contributions to the focus group will remain anonymous. Neither your participation nor your comments will affect the outcome of any present or future National Endowment for the Arts award.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions. We sincerely hope that you will volunteer to participate in this important focus group.

Thank you,

Liz Deichmann
Grants Management Analyst
Office of Research & Analysis
National Endowment for the Arts

II. FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL FOR NEW GRANTS TO ORGANIZATIONS APPLICANTS WITH AN INCOMPLETE AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN GRANT APPLICATION

I. Welcome

Hello everyone! Thank you for agreeing to participate in today's focus group hosted by the National Endowment for the Arts. My name is [moderator name] and I will be facilitating today's conversation. I am joined by [notetaker name] who will help take notes and NEA staff [staff names] who will observe and assist with facilitation.

You have been invited to today's focus group because your organization began to apply to the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Grants to Organizations grant program, which had an application deadline of August 12, 2021. Today's discussion will focus on your experience as a first-time applicant to the NEA for the ARP grant opportunity. As such, you will be asked to reflect on the grant application process that occurred last summer.

As the focus group will ask questions about application materials, we suggest you review the ARP grant instructions via the link shared in the chat. We will pause now for about 5 minutes to give you time for a refresher before we begin.

[Add to chatbox]

- Overview of Parts 1 & 2: <https://www.arts.gov/grants/american-rescue-plan-grants/american-rescue-plan-grants-to-organizations/how-to-apply>
- ARP Technical Assistance Video Playlist: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLFeYW9T9Ff4RTbNETR1dpCYfB8Sd0jm-3>

[Five-minute break]

I hope taking the time to review grant instructions was a helpful refresher.

II. Ground Rules and Reminders

Before we begin our discussion, we will quickly discuss ground rules for participating in today's virtual discussion. For today's conversation:

- If possible, please keep your camera on so we can more easily interact with one another.
- If you would like to contribute please raise your hand and wait to be called on by one of the facilitators. You can raise your hand by navigating down to the "reactions" icon on the bottom right of your screen and clicking the "raise hand" button.
- When you are not actively speaking, please keep yourself on mute.
- The chat feature is disabled for participants; however, you can message the facilitators with comments and questions.

Next, here are several important reminders for today's conversation:

- Your participation is completely voluntary.
- The focus group will last no longer than 60 minutes.

- Your contributions today will not be attributed to you in any reports; any identifying information will be removed from our notes. Additionally, neither your participation nor your comments will affect the outcome of any present or future National Endowment for the Arts award.
- Out of respect of the privacy of other participants, please do **NOT** attribute specific comments to participants or share their identities. Today's conversation should remain confidential, even after it has been completed, so everyone can say what is on their mind.
- Today's discussion will be recorded so we can accurately capture your thoughts, examples, and insights and be able to actively participate.

We encourage you to be thoughtful and honest about your experiences resulting from your participation in the program; there are no right or wrong answers.

II. Background

With the ARP grant program, the NEA expanded its efforts to engage organizations new to federal and NEA funding. As a result, the ARP grant program received over 7,500 grant applications, 37% of which were from organizations that had not applied to the NEA within the last ten years. The NEA is committed to continuing to reach new applicants and improving the grant application process. Today, we will discuss your experience as a new applicant to the ARP grant program to help us to better serve future first-time applicants.

[Visual: Application Part 1 and Part 2] Lastly, it is important to note that the application had both Part 1 and Part 2. Part 1 required Grants.gov and SAM.gov registrations and asked your organization to fill out the Application Federal Domestic Assistance/Short Organizational Form. Part 1 is a federal requirement and the NEA does not have any control over it. Part 2 was submitted via the NEA's Applicant Portal and focused on the content of your application. As you answer focus group questions, we ask you keep in mind the NEA's ability to change only Part 2 of the application, though our technical assistance for both Part 1 and Part 2 can be improved.

Do you have any questions before we get started?

III. Introductions

Before we begin, could you each introduce yourself by first name?

IV. Questions

- Please describe the main reason your organization applied to the ARP grant program.
 - Probe: Is this the first time your organization heard about and/or knew it was eligible for a grant from the NEA?
 - Probe: In contrast to other NEA grant opportunities, the ARP grant program offers general operating support and does not require matching funds to apply. Did either influence your decision to apply?
- Please describe the main reason your organization did not complete an ARP grant program application.
 - Probe: Did your organization request and receive the assistance it needed to complete the application process?

- Probe: Was any part of the grant application process too burdensome for your organization? Please remember the NEA's ability to change only Part 2 of the application.
- **[Visual: technical assistance video playlist]** The NEA made a number of ARP technical assistance videos available via YouTube. Were you aware of these videos? If so, which, if any, were most useful during the application process? You will find a link to a playlist of ARP technical assistance videos on YouTube in the chat. If needed, please review as a refresher.

[Add to chatbox]

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLFeYW9T9Ff4RTbNETR1dpCYfB8Sd0jm-3>

- **[Visual: other technical assistance resources]** Did your organization use any other technical assistance or resources, like contacting NEA staff or attending live Q&A sessions? If so, which ones and were they useful during the application process?
- Can you suggest ideas for technical assistance or resources you would find helpful, or think new applicants would find helpful, when applying for a grant from the NEA? Please make sure to consider both Parts 1 and 2 of the application. Again, we ask you keep in mind the NEA's ability to change only Part 2 of the application, though our technical assistance for both Part 1 and Part 2 can be improved.
- Does your organization plan to apply to an NEA grant opportunity in the future? Why or why not?
- Now consider your overall experience applying to the ARP grant program. How, if at all, did it impact your perception of the NEA?

V. Closing

We're just about done with today's focus group. As we wrap up, is there anything else you'd like to share about your experience as a first-time applicant to the NEA that we haven't talked about today?

Before we depart, I would like to remind you to not attribute specific comments to participants or share their identities. Today's conversation should remain confidential out of respect of the privacy of other participants.

Again, thank you again for your participation. Have a great day.

III.) FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL FOR NEW GRANTS TO LOCAL ARTS AGENCIES FOR SUBGRANTING WITH AN COMPLETE AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN GRANT APPLICATION

I. Welcome

Hello everyone! Thank you for agreeing to participate in today's focus group hosted by the National Endowment for the Arts. My name is [moderator name] and I will be facilitating today's conversation. I am joined by [notetaker name] who will help take notes and NEA staff [staff names] who will observe and assist with facilitation.

You have been invited to today's focus group because your organization applied to the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Grants to Local Arts Agencies for Subgranting grant program, which had an application deadline of July 22, 2021. Today's discussion will focus on your experience as a first-time applicant to the NEA for the ARP grant opportunity. As such, you will be asked to reflect on the grant application process that occurred last summer.

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[Add to chatbox]

- Overview of Parts 1 & 2: <https://www.arts.gov/grants/american-rescue-plan-grants/american-rescue-plan-grants-to-local-arts-agencies-for-subgranting/how-to-apply>
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[Five-minute break]

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With the ARP grant program, the NEA expanded its efforts to engage organizations new to federal and NEA funding. As a result, the ARP grant program received over 7,500 grant applications, 37% of which were from organizations that had not applied to the NEA within the last ten years. The NEA is committed to continuing to reach new applicants and improving the grant application process. Today, we will discuss your experience as a new applicant to the ARP grant program to help us to better serve future first-time applicants.

[Visual: Application Part 1 and Part 2] Lastly, it is important to note that the application had both Part 1 and Part 2. Part 1 required Grants.gov and SAM.gov registrations and asked your organization to fill out the Application Federal Domestic Assistance/Short Organizational Form. Part 1 is a federal requirement and the NEA does not have any control over it. Part 2 was submitted via the NEA's Applicant Portal and focused on the content of your application. As you answer focus group questions, we ask you keep in mind the NEA's ability to change only Part 2 of the application, though our technical assistance for both Part 1 and Part 2 can be improved.

Do you have any questions before we get started?

III. Introductions

Before we begin, could you each introduce yourself by first name?

IV. Questions

- Please describe the main reason your organization applied to the ARP grant program.
 - Probe: What this the first time your organization heard about and/or knew it was eligible for a grant from the NEA?
 - Probe: Compared to other NEA grant opportunities, the ARP grant program is for general operating support and does not require matching funds to apply. Did these policies influence your decision to apply?
- Please describe any significant challenges your organization faced during the application process.
 - Probe: Was any part of the grant application process a burden for your organization?

- Probe: Did subgranting requirements, like subgrantee final descriptive reports or other terms, pose a significant challenge?
- In your opinion, would any of these challenges prevent your organization from reapplying to the NEA? Why or why not?
- **[Visual: ARP Technical Assistance Video Playlist]** The NEA made a number of ARP technical assistance videos available via YouTube. Were you aware of these videos? If so, which, if any, were most useful during the application process? You will find a link to a playlist of ARP technical assistance videos on Youtube in the chat. If needed, please review as a refresher.

[Add to chatbox]

<https://www.arts.gov/grants/american-rescue-plan-grants/american-rescue-plan-grants-to-local-arts-agencies-for-subgranting/how-to-apply>

- **[Visual: other technical assistance resources]** Did your organization use any other technical assistance or resources, like contacting NEA staff or attending live Q&A sessions? If so, which ones and were they useful during the application process?
- Can you suggest ideas for technical assistance or resources you would find helpful, or think new applicants would find helpful, when applying for a grant from the NEA? Please make sure to consider both Parts 1 and 2 of the application. Again, we ask you keep in mind the NEA's ability to change only Part 2 of the application, though our technical assistance for both Part 1 and Part 2 can be improved.
- Does your organization plan to apply to an NEA grant opportunity in the future? Why or why not?
- Now consider your overall experience applying to the ARP grant program. How, if at all, did it impact your perception of the NEA?

V. Closing

We're just about done with today's focus group. As we wrap up, is there anything else you'd like to share about your experience as a first-time applicant to the NEA that we haven't talked about today?

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Again, thank you again for your participation. Have a great day.