



## Initial Application Evaluation Instructions

### National Creative Placemaking Fund Summary

The National Creative Placemaking Fund (NCPF) is one of four ArtPlace America (ArtPlace) programs. The NCPF is designed to invest in planning and development projects that deploy arts and culture to strengthen their community.

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### Definitions

Here are a few definitions for terms we often use:

**Creative placemaking:** Projects in which arts and culture play an intentional and integrated role in place-based planning and development that is human-centric, comprehensive, and locally informed. The “creative” simply invites artists and arts organizations to join their neighbors in shaping communities’ futures; not necessarily in making places more creative.

**Community:** A group of people related by geography, whether a block, neighborhood, town, city, or region. Applicants should be able to draw the boundaries around their community on a map. An applicant should draw the circle at the scale at which engagement, participation, and change is probable. If the circle is drawn too large, it may be hard to believe that impact is possible for everyone within the circle. If the circle is drawn too small, it may raise questions about the unanticipated impacts a project may have on the people left outside the circle.

**Community planning & development:** Community planning and development takes many different forms, and in the spirit of making the world digestible and easier to understand, ArtPlace has developed [this matrix](#) to map our understanding of how this field organizes itself.

**Arts & culture:** ArtPlace often refers to the National Endowment for the Arts’ working definition, from its [How Art Works](#) publication, of art as “an act of creative expression done within the confines of a set of known or emerging practices and precedence that is intended to communicate richly to others.” Culture is often based in tradition, and may manifest in language, food, music, and much more. ArtPlace intentionally uses a broad definition of arts and culture so that we can support all kinds of work, strategies, and approaches.

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### Criteria & Scoring

At this stage in the application process, the only thing we have asked applicants to do is to propose a project that aligns with our definition of creative placemaking. It is vital that you do not try to assess the applicants’ capacity, experience, or ability to implement a project. This application was not designed for them to provide us with that information. Please only evaluate their success at submitting a project that aligns with ArtPlace’s definition of creative placemaking by scoring each application according to the following four criteria.

## Criteria:

1. Provides a clear description of a geographic community.
2. Clearly defines a place based planning and development challenge or opportunity the community wants to address through this project.
3. Describes a clear and compelling way that arts and culture will be deployed to address this specific community development challenge or opportunity.
4. Establishes how this community will know change is happening.

## Scoring:

To assess initial applications, we've developed scoring protocol that asks you to rank projects by criteria. Each criteria will be scored from 1 through 4 for a total potential score of 16. Please review the entire application, and then score each criteria from 1 to 4 with the following definitions:

- 1 = Does not meet criterion
- 2 = Might meet criterion
- 3 = Meets criterion
- 4 = Strongly meets criterion

We have provided space for you to add comments to each criteria you are rating. The only **required** comment that a reviewer must provide, is to write in their response to "one thing that ArtPlace **must** know about this particular proposal" (bad, good, strength, weakness, concerning, or exciting, etc.).

## Tips for scoring:

We have provided some questions to consider for each criteria that we hope will help you in your scoring:

1. **Are you excited about funding this project? (Yes/No)**
2. **Please tell us the one thing that ArtPlace must know about this particular proposal" (bad, good, strength, weakness, concerning, or exciting, etc.)**  
*Does the application...*
  - *Are you really excited about funding this project? If yes, why? If no, why not?*
  - *Is there unusual risk to funding this project? If yes, why? Please list any challenges here.*
  - *Is there anything about this project you don't like?*
  - *Tie to other projects or activities occurring within the community?*
  - *Seem appropriate for the community?*
  - *Bring a thoughtful analysis to the racial, economic, and/or social contrasts in the community they have described?*
  - *Build on the distinctiveness of the place and reflect the assets that are already present?*
  - *Seem keyed into the local community or seem a little tone deaf?*
  - *Fully integrated into the community?*
  - *Understand how their own power or privilege affects their standing in the community?*

- *Amplify and/or respond to psychological effects or historical layers present in the community?*

**3. Provides a clear description of a geographic community.**

*Does the application...*

- *Refer to a group of people related to each other by geography? If a community related by some other affinity (e.g. women, elders, youth, or other affinity) is described, then they have not met this criteria.*
- *Take into account the existing built environment, natural environment, regulatory environment, demographics, history, and/or the economic state of the geographic area?*
- *Build on the distinctiveness of the place and reflect the assets that are already present?*

**4. Clearly defines a place based community planning and development challenge or opportunity this project will address.**

*Does the application...*

- *Choose one community planning and development (“CD”) challenge or opportunity from the “CD matrix”?*
- *Present a compelling argument on why this “CD” challenge or opportunity is relevant to the community they previously defined?*
- *Articulate a thoughtful process for how this “CD” challenge was selected or prioritized?*
- *Articulate who “chose” this “CD” challenge or opportunity (i.e. is it articulated by people who live, work, and/or play in the community)?*

**5. Describes a clear and compelling way that arts and culture will be deployed to address this specific community development challenge or opportunity.**

*Does the application...*

- *Present a compelling argument on why this “AC” category is relevant to the community and the “CD” challenge or opportunity they previously defined?*
- *Articulate a thoughtful process for how this “AC” category was chosen, and who it was chosen by?*
- *Have a strong sense of how the proposed work will strengthen this particular place?*
- *Have art/artists/culture as an integral component?*
- *Have an ambitious and/or unique approach to “CD” through arts and culture?*
- *Have (or will it have) an artist associated with it? If so, does the method for selecting the artist seem appropriate for this community? If not, do the applicants have a clear and appropriate sense of how the artistic vision will be developed and/or how the artist(s) will be chosen?*

**6. Establishes how this community will know change is happening.**

*Does the application...*

- *Have a clear sense of the change they are trying to realize?*
- *Transformation won't happen during our funding period, and, is there a clear benchmark articulated?*
- *Describe indicators/signals for their project so that they will know when something is working or not?*
- *Discuss the change this project will accomplish at the same level of geography as they described their community?*
- *Plan to tangibly affect the social, physical, and/or economic character of the place it's located?*
- *Plan to improve the quality of life and/or change the way in which the community interacts with that place?*

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## FAQs

Here are a questions we often get asked in the review process:

### **What makes a project ineligible?**

These are the things that would make a project ineligible:

1. The project doesn't take place in the U.S.
2. Two applications are submitted by the same applicant
3. The same project is proposed twice by different partners

### **What should I do if I come across a project that is ineligible?**

ArtPlace will try to pre-screen all of the applications for eligibility. We will remove ineligible projects as we come across them, but you may find some projects that do not follow the guidelines. In these cases, we ask you to email us for confirmation. Once confirmed, please give the project the lowest ratings possible and put a note in the comments that the project is ineligible along with the justification for ineligibility.

### **What if the amount requested does not fall in the range ArtPlace has specified (i.e. \$50,000-500,000)?**

The National Creative Placemaking Fund generally provides support between \$50,000 and \$500,000 for individual projects. Decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis, so if a project requests an amount greater or less than the specified range, you should still score the application and mention it in the required comments section.

### **How long are project periods? What if the project length period exceeds 2020?**

Beginning this year, applicants will be able to select their own project period.

In the application, we ask the following question to gauge a project period: *"We anticipate that selected projects will receive ArtPlace funding in a single payment on or before January 1, 2018. If this project is funded, by when would you fully spend this money? (Please select a date between June 30, 2018 and June 30, 2020)."*

In the applicants' response to this question, we want to understand by when they expect to use ArtPlace resources that will be disbursed on January 1, 2018. If someone

suggests a date outside the eligible range please still score the application and mention it in the required comments section.

**What should I do if I have a conflicts of interest?**

Earlier this year you completed a conflict of interest form. Staff has worked to ensure we do not assign conflicting proposals to you, and if you come across a proposal in your queue for which you feel you have a conflict, we ask that you send us an email recusing yourself so that we can reassign this proposal. This includes applications for which you are (or have been a staff or board member within the last year), any family members work, or organizations in which you have a business/financial interest. You may review a proposal from a group you are familiar with professionally.

**Should I score applications from previously funded ArtPlace projects, or finalists, more competitively?**

No. Despite previous ArtPlace funding, you should score each application on its own merit and how well they answer the four points.

**Should I look up additional information on each applicant?**

No. You should only use the information provided in the application and should score each application on its own merit and how well they answer the four points. In cases where applicants include links to information on the web you are not allowed to follow those links as this does not conform to our application guidelines that require responses in pre-defined character count maximums.

**Besides the criteria I am scoring on, what makes an application truly stellar?**

We recognize that the review process is not entirely objective and that you will likely bring your own lens or analysis to each review. We provided prompting questions for you to ask yourself when scoring an application. You may want to consider the prompting questions under the required comments section in your review.

**How long should I devote to each application? How many hours a week am I expected to read?**

We've made the application much shorter this year. We are approximating that each reviewer will read 225 applications over a three week period and that each application will take 15-30 minutes to review. That is about 30-40 hours a week that we're asking you to devote to this work. We're grateful for your time and hope this will prove to be a rewarding experience for you!

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