



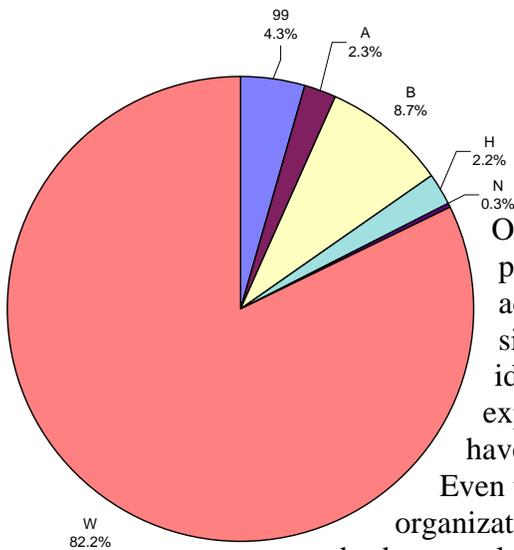
Rhode Island State Council on the Arts
Narrative for State Application – ARRA Federal Stimulus Money for the Arts

- a. Describe your proposed subgranting program, how it is consistent with the NEA’s American Recovery and Reinvestment Act program, and how it will directly impact salary support and/or fees for artists and contractual personnel among a broad constituency that you serve.

The Rhode Island State Council on the Arts (RISCA) intends to follow the federal program closely. We intend to focus our support on helping nonprofit organizations in our state “preserve jobs” in the arts by seeking to identify high impact positions in organizations that have either been eliminated or are in jeopardy as a result of the economic downturn. We will gather information on how the organizations have or would be affected by the elimination or downscaling of these important positions, and establish metrics that would allow us to track – and demonstrate in a transparent fashion to all – that the investment of stimulus funds has made a difference in the ability of the supported organization to contribute to the local and state economy.

We have been in close contact with a number of the organizations that would be qualified to apply for these stimulus funds (see below). They have contributed to our guidelines, as has our state’s Economic Recovery office and Governor’s Office. Our goal is to make a meaningful difference through the use of these funds, and that will require supporting projects that have the best chance for success.

- Your proposed **applicant pool**. Detail the geographic range, the number of applicants that you anticipate, and the artistic disciplines represented. Provide a representative list of organizational names and the range of budget sizes.



After discussion with our board and with the Governor’s Office, we plan to offer this opportunity as inclusively as possible to our state’s nonprofit organizations. We will accept applications from any nonprofit organization with a significant arts program, or one where the arts are an identified part of the organization's overall mission. We expect that a number of applicants will include those that have received a grant from RISCA during the past four years. Even there, that provides us with a significant group of organizations, fully representative of large and small; urban, suburban, rural; mainstream and culturally diverse organizations (chart on the left shows the racial distribution of the past RISCA applicants, using National Standard categories), organizations that produce and present work of diverse disciplines, as well as organizations that serve a community of people (and artists) with disabilities. In reaching out to other nonprofits we will seek applications from organizations that represent or serve groups that are not as well represented in our traditional RISCA applicant pool.

- Your **plans for making this applicant pool aware** of the funding opportunity that you will provide. Where appropriate, **efforts to reach organizations that serve underserved populations.**

We have already begun communicating with nonprofits we have worked with in the past. Emails are beginning to go out to all organizations eligible to apply under the previously described criteria. We plan to work particularly hard to encourage organizations that are underrepresented to apply, such as culturally/racially diverse organizations and those that serve communities of people with disabilities. We will offer to review drafts of applications prior to the application deadline, and will communicate with them throughout the pre- and post-deadline period to ensure that we have all the information we need to address panel questions or concerns.

We plan to offer a workshop to all potential applicants, in order to explain this opportunity and help applicants prepare the most competitive applications possible.

In addition, our Governor's Office plans to promote this opportunity, and we are already discussing a press event where the Governor would "certify" his acceptance of these funds in order to publicize its existence. We are also working with Rhode Island Citizens for the Arts on an event with U.S. Senator Sheldon Whitehouse to promote the arts stimulus funds.

- Your **plans for receiving and reviewing requests** for support. Describe the review criteria that you will use as well as the process itself.

RISCA is working with its sister state arts agencies in New England, along with the New England Foundation for the Arts, to develop a joint application form that each agency can use. It will seek to gather the following information:

1. How has the current economic downturn affected your organization?
2. What is the job you wish to restore or retain using these arts stimulus funds, and why is it important to your organization?
3. What would happen if this job was unfilled?

In each instance we will also gather basic "metrics" that can be tracked over time to see if those organizations we fund (and, frankly, those organizations we don't) are improving. Metrics include the basic National Standard data fields, as well as more detailed information on both earned and contributed income, programming and staffing statistics.

Following our May 1 application deadline staff will review applications for completeness and assemble a qualified panel. We are considering using out-

of-state panelists, but may be required to use Rhode Island reviewers for financial reasons.

The panelists will review each application and rank it based on the following criteria:

- the importance of this position or positions to the organization and its ability to continue to achieve its core artistic and/or administrative mission,
- the level of “public value” that will result from either restoring or retaining the position(s) indicated, including the importance to the local and/or state economy, and
- the ability to show, over time, that these funds have made a difference in either stabilizing or expanding the work of the organization.

We have decided that these funds will only be meaningful if the amount awarded is meaningful itself. We are therefore awarding either \$12,500 or \$25,000 grants, fully realizing that this may limit the number of grants we award, but feeling that the level of support is in direct relationship to the potential success of the program.

- b. The **appropriateness of this project** to the mission and core work of your own organization.

We feel that this federal stimulus project is absolutely central to the mission and core work of RISCA. We are engaged in working with the Rhode Island arts community in ways that ensure its health and contribution to the well-being of our state, economically, educationally and in our high quality of life. In recent months we have tracked how the economy has affected our state’s arts organizations (see <http://www.arts.ri.gov/special/econ-crisis/>), and this program allows us to play a role in helping address some of the issues we have researched and brought to the public’s consciousness.

- c. The **impact of administering** this subgranting program on your own organization and the staff or contractual resources that it will require.

It is clear that this program – and the quarterly reporting requirements that follow the awarding of these stimulus grants – will be time-consuming and a drain on an already overtaxed staff. Our Governor, however, has made it clear that these funds are designed to support Rhode Islanders, and we will therefore make every effort to manage this program with available resources. RISCA’s Executive Director will be managing the grant program, with assistance from staff as necessary, and we will therefore not be requesting administrative support from the stimulus package funds.