

Why Cross-Sector Collaboration Now

Arts + Infrastructure

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The arts and creativity are the soul of our nation. Now is the time for infrastructure projects to embrace the arts, culture and design fields as essential partners. Together, these sectors can humanize the key infrastructure challenges of our time and imagine better solutions. This document presents a survey of current opportunities, examples and paths forward through cross-sector collaboration. It is meant to spark conversations about future possibilities for collaborative transformation.

Key Talking Points

- Infrastructure, from bridges to parks, holds social and cultural meaning for communities.
- Artists excel at the transformative engagement, design and implementation vital to infrastructure projects.
- In the expanded field of infrastructure, artists are key cross-sector leaders to inspire, unite and sustain bold dreams.

The Opportunity

Artists are bringing innovative and creative approaches to the public sector that streamline internal government systems, strengthen relationships between government and communities, and unite government agencies to advance shared goals. The arts, culture and design fields are essential partners with government agencies to address the social connections between our built world, government and community. Across the country, artists are collaborating with public-sector leaders to ensure that infrastructure policies and projects provide Americans with access to opportunities and promote community well-being.

Now is the time to expand this work in response to two interconnected opportunities. The 2021 Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act places national focus on revitalizing the built environment and community programs. A [2022 executive order](#) calls the arts "the soul of America" and essential to our democracy. In collaboration, the arts and government can strengthen our infrastructure and promote community well-being.



In order to respond to infrastructure challenges [without re-creating past harms](#), which displaced communities and inequitably distributed investment, the arts are collaborating with government agencies to create policies and programs that advance justice and accountability. The arts bring fresh strategies and collaborative methods, making them a key partner in infrastructure redevelopment to advance equity and to address age-old problems with imaginative solutions.

Artists are currently advancing infrastructure projects across sectors and U.S. geographies:

- Of the 45 federal [Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods](#) grants, **14 recipients use arts methods** and have received \$113,066,101 in investment for artists to advance community goals. 36 are National Endowment for the Arts Our Town design grantees, building on prior federal funding to support arts in cross-sector collaboration.
- Artists are collaborating to [redesign safer transportation systems](#) in support of Vision Zero and advancing [sustainability and public health goals in state transportation work](#).
- In [nine cities and towns across America](#), artists are working with health experts, communities and government leaders as part of One Nation/One Project. The project creates large-scale projects using the arts **to foster sustainable change to support community well-being as a component of infrastructure**.

Artists are influential at every phase of infrastructure development and implementation:

Infrastructure Phase	Arts in Infrastructure Project Example
<p>Engagement</p> <p><i>Bring in underrepresented voices to define the scope</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pop Up Meeting brings communities to the people in the form of a popsicle truck gathering resident feedback to inform city agency work from parks to transportation (City of St. Paul, MN). • Our Future 35 uses creative placemaking to engage communities in an equitable redevelopment of a freeway, with Reconnecting Communities grant support (Austin, TX).
<p>Design</p> <p><i>Unite planners, engineers, other experts and communities</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Healing through Story connects community health practitioners within the county's public health strategic plan to represent all residents and communities in policy and programs (Department of Mental Health, Los Angeles County CA). • Building on the work of local community organizations, Reconnecting Claiborne is engaging communities in asset mapping to leverage arts, culture and tradition to support equitable redevelopment, with Reconnecting Communities support (Department of Transportation and Development, New Orleans, LA).

<p>Implementation</p> <p><i>Embed stories, culture and arts into infrastructure</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One Nation/One Project is connecting nine cities and towns across the country to heal communities and promote community well-being as essential social infrastructure through arts participation (nationwide). • Revitalizing Waterbury installed a welcoming gateway entrance to enhance the Stowe Street Alley, with the support of an Animating Infrastructure grant (Vermont Arts Council, statewide and Waterbury). • The 11th Street Bridge Park project commissioned four public artworks to create a deeper sense of place and community connection for residents at D.C.'s first elevated public park (Washington, DC).
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Actions to Take

There are immediate actions you can take to create a more supportive environment for cross-sector collaboration with the arts in your sector.

Short Term: Next Steps

- **Continue this conversation.** Share this document, bring in a speaker, connect with groups like [CAIR Lab](#), [NASAA](#), [Creatives Rebuild New York](#), [Springboard for the Arts](#), [Smart Growth America](#), [Communities First](#) and others that are advancing arts and infrastructure collaborations.
- **Collaborate with the arts.** Get to know your local arts community to explore collaborations that include local arts organizations as well as [regional arts organizations](#) and [state arts agencies](#).
- **Hire an artist.** Bring an artist into your team! You might do this by working with an arts organization that can facilitate the process or bringing an artist on directly to support short-term projects or advance long-term goals.

Long Term: Big Dreams

- **Help change policy.** Advocate for policy change at federal, state and local levels that connects the arts into infrastructure projects and incentivizes these collaborations.
- **Secure sustainable funding.** Impactful collaborations need to be more than pilots; they require long-term support. Help secure sustained funding for these projects to be lasting.
- **Document impacts.** Sharing the impact of your cross-sector collaboration is a vital contribution to this growing field of practice. Consider how you can measure success using tools from across infrastructure and the arts, and don't leave out the power of documenting stories and experiences.

National Assembly of State Arts Agencies

The National Assembly of State Arts Agencies (NASAA) is a not-for-profit, nonpartisan organization. In collaboration with the nation's 56 state and jurisdictional arts councils, we advance the arts as a powerful path to economic prosperity, rural resilience, good health, education success and strong communities in which everyone thrives. NASAA serves as a clearinghouse for data and research about public funding for the arts as well as the policies and programs of state arts agencies. For more information about NASAA and the work of state arts agencies, visit www.nasaa-arts.org.

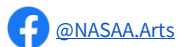


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