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# Norwich foundation creates fund to help arts, cultural organizations

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Norwich — Concerts, plays, art shows and festivals mostly have fallen victim to the coronavirus since March, leaving countless individual performers and host arts agencies struggling to pay bills and figure out how to recover.

But those same organizations often have to compete with nonprofit human service agencies responding to local residents' emergency needs for recovery grants, said Wendy Bury, executive director of the Southeastern Connecticut Cultural Coalition. That's why Bury was excited and grateful for a new partnership with the **Edward and Mary Lord Foundation** (<https://theewardandmarylordfoundation.org/>) in Norwich to help arts and cultural organizations directly.

The Lord Foundation has created a new Special Fund for Arts & Culture, with \$100,000 dedicated to assisting nonprofit arts and cultural organizations in New London County that have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Southeastern Connecticut Cultural Coalition is promoting the new grant fund and has suggested possible uses for the funds.

Examples include small capital improvements, technology upgrades to expand online programs, general operating support for organizations that cannot yet reopen under COVID-19 restrictions and multi-agency regional collaborations.

Kathryn Lord, director and trustee of the Lord Foundation, said those are only suggestions to give “idea bubbles” to potential applicants.

“The cultural coalition has been instrumental in helping me set this thing up to reach the largest community,” Lord said. “I don’t have the resources to get the word out.”

The grants have a quick turnaround process. Letters of interest are due to the Lord Foundation by Aug. 15. The three foundation trustees will review the letters and send out invitations to apply to organizations by Aug. 31. Once applications are received, the trustees plan to make grant awards, hoping to “have money in their hands” in October.

The foundation has received about 10 letters of interest thus far. Agencies should send letters of interest to the Edward and Mary Lord Foundation, Kathryn F. Lord, Director, 116 Case St., Norwich, CT 06360.

Lord said at the outset of the pandemic, the foundation donated \$100,000 to the Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut’s **Neighbors to Neighbors** (<https://www.cfct.org/Our-Initiatives/Response-to-COVID-19-Neighbors-for-Neighbors-Fund>) Fund to help human services nonprofits provide basic needs to people in the region.

“We thought about it,” Lord said, “and we thought, afterward, when this whole thing is done and over with, it would be an important thing that all the doors and venues of culture and arts are still open for us. And they’re suffering. They’ve had to shutter their places. They can’t do what they do, and that’s how they get their revenue stream.”

Bury said many arts and cultural organizations in the region are both in trouble and trying to navigate the uncharted waters of the pandemic. Some have come up with creative ways to promote their offerings online, but most cannot reopen their physical doors until the state has a Phase 3 reopening of more businesses and events.

“Those that have facilities are doubly challenged,” Bury said. “They have the cost of maintaining facilities. They can’t just shut off the air conditioning. And there’s the **Eversource bill issue** (<https://www.theday.com/local-news/20200729/as-energy-bills-soar-eversource-and-millstone-point-fingers>). There are a number of factors that challenge organizations in many ways. That’s why these dedicated funds are so critical.”

The Cultural Coalition also has established the Culture **SECT Economic Recovery Fund** (<http://culturesect.org/economic-recovery-fund/>) through the Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut. The fund seeks donations of any amount to “support the sustainability and recovery of arts & cultural institutions, including individual artists,” the description posted on the coalition website said.

Bury said with this fund, the cultural coalition will oversee the grant application process for the economic recovery fund, which also can help small creative businesses and individuals. The goal is to receive applications and be able to distribute grant money in October or November.

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**Editor’s Note:** *This version provides an updated link to the Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut Neighbors to Neighbors fund.*

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