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# Plan to use COVID-19 recovery grants for Norwich arts programs unveiled

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Norwich — It took longer than expected to set up a program for dispensing the \$500,000 the city allocated from the American Rescue Plan for local arts organizations, programs and projects, but Norwich now has its own arts and cultural coordinator and grant applications will roll out next week.

Sarbani Hazra, the **new Norwich arts and cultural coordinator** (<https://www.theday.com/local-news/20220101/cultural-coalition-names-norwich-arts-and-culture-coordinator-works-on-arpa-funding>), and Wendy Bury, executive director of the Southeastern Connecticut Cultural Coalition, gave a presentation Monday to the City Council on the status of the grant and how funding will be allocated over the next two years.

Hazra, named to her two-year, part-time position in December, has met with representatives from local arts organizations and artists to help formulate the grant program. The coalition also hosted a recent online session attended by 47 participants who discussed arts and cultural funding needs. An online survey was launched with responses due by next Monday.

The City Council in September allocated \$500,000 of its first-year, \$14.4 million American Rescue Plan grant to the coalition to support arts and cultural organizations and programs. Hazra's position is funded with \$75,000 from the allocation.

Bury said she has heard criticism and questions about why the funding has not yet been allocated. But she argued that the time invested in learning the community's needs will benefit the goal of making long-lasting impacts with the limited funding.

The plan presented Monday calls for two rounds of grants over the next two years. In the first year, grants of up to \$10,000 will be available for nonprofits, for-profit "creative businesses" and individual artists. The money could be used for programs and activities or projects; purchasing equipment or technology; capital improvements; marketing; professional development; or staffing.

The goal of this round, Bury said, is to "get ready for 2023," when larger grants for lasting impacts will be offered. In those grant applications, she said applicants will be required to collaborate with one another to improve the arts for the entire community.

A tentative schedule calls for the first round to open next Monday with "intent to apply" forms posted online. Formal grant applications will open April 25 and close May 16. Grants could be awarded June 1.

In the second round, grants will be up to \$25,000, with applications starting this fall. Bury said the second-year grant applications will be posted online for all to see. She explained that making the applications public will encourage more collaborations. She hopes organizations will check out others' plans and reach out to partner on some proposals.

All applications in both rounds will be reviewed under the READI guidelines, Bury said, referring to "Relevant, Equitable, Accessible, Diverse, Inclusive" criteria.

To help fledgling organizations or those without professional staffing, the coalition will offer an added grant for professional development. The program will offer an additional \$1,000 to \$1,500 grant to those who commit to a one-year professional development educational program. Participants must attend workshops and classes and one-on-one consultations, with separate tracts for nonprofits, individuals and for-profit companies.

The coalition will collaborate with the Women's Business Development Council, a program within the U.S. Small Business Administration; Assets for Artists, a marketing and professional development programs for artists; the Connecticut Office of the Arts; and possibly with Global City Norwich, which provides business education programs for Norwich entrepreneurs.

"We want to give them every chance we can for success," Bury said.

The link to the survey is <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/N7TW3ML>

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