

Introduction to the Federal Resource Guides

The Americans for the Arts Federal Resource Guides are a set of six documents that provide information on sources of federal funding for nonprofit arts organizations. Read on to find out more about how the guides were created and how you can best use them to find funding opportunities for your organization.

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Above: Photo of the United States Capitol Building by Simon Fittall.

Background and Acknowledgements

Americans for the Arts originally created the Federal Resource Guides for Nonprofit Arts Organizations in 2005 to introduce arts organizations to federal funding opportunities beyond the National Endowment for the Arts. The guides featured background on different grant programs, examples of previous arts recipients, and contact information for organizations looking to learn more. Between 2005 and 2011, Americans for the Arts' Vice President of Government Affairs and Education Narric Rome published 11 of these guides, which were the centerpiece of an annual session titled, "Federal Treasure Hunt" that was presented at our annual conference alongside federal grant officials.

During the summer of 2021, Rena Cohen, a Federal Affairs Fellow at Americans for the Arts sponsored by the Harvard Presidential Public Service Fellowship, consolidated and revised the original guides to create six updated guides: Rural Development, Community Development, National Service, Congressional Earmarks, Environmental Protection, and Economic Development. In addition to updating the guides with current legislation and examples, Cohen coordinated and conducted interviews with grant recipients and program officers to feature as case studies.

Accessing the Guides

On the [Federal Resource Guides webpage](#), you will find links to the guides, which are offered for free to download through the Americans for the Arts Bookstore. In order to download the guides, you must have an Americans for the Arts account. You can create an account for free by registering [here](#).

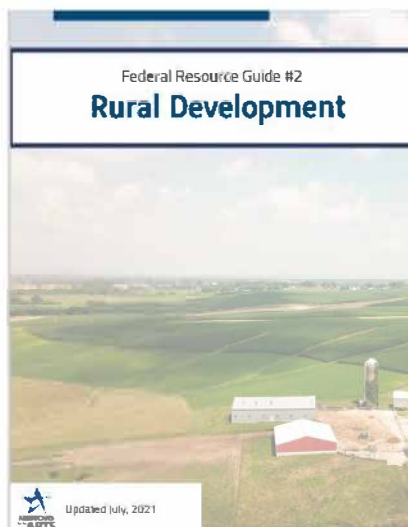
If you have any questions about downloading the resource guides through the store, please [contact the Americans for the Arts membership team](#).

How to Use the Guides

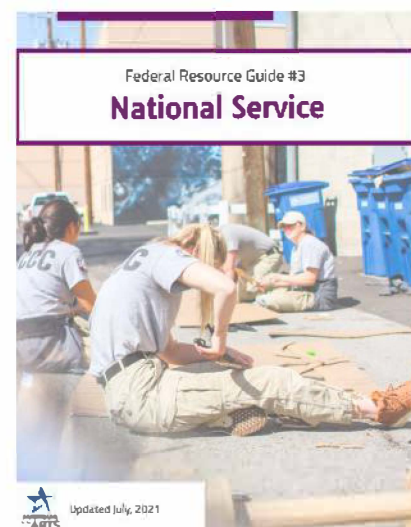
1) Figure out which of the six guides might be most useful to you:



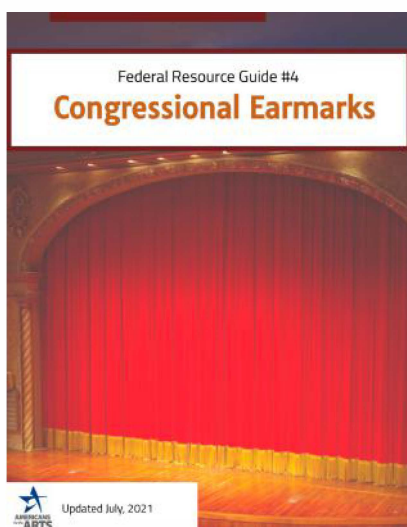
Community Developments: Federal funds administered by local or state governments for buildings, facilities, and public services (including arts-related programs) benefiting low-income residents .



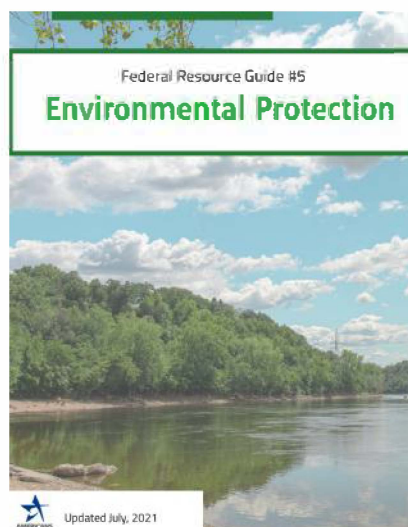
Rural Development: Funding for organizations in rural areas (generally, population 20,000 or fewer) to improve community facilities (such as buildings or equipment), build organizational capacity, and help rural micro-entrepreneurs .



National Service: Funding for organizations to support volunteers doing short- and long-term service work, or to host service programs or other events.



Congressional Earmarks: Federal funding applied for by your member of Congress that can be used for a wide variety of purposes, which has traditionally been a large source of funding for cultural institutions.



Environmental Protection: Funds for organizations looking to build on, clean up, or evaluate polluted sites, as well as funding for environmental education and social justice programs that incorporate the arts.



Economic Development: Funding administered through the EDA and SBA that supports construction, planning, and technical assistance for organizations that create regional economic development or help micro-entrepreneurs.

2) **Read the guide** in order to better understand the different programs available and how other arts organizations have successfully used them in the past.

3) **Follow the “next steps” in the guide**, and if you find a program you think would be a good fit, to get in contact with a staff representative, who can provide you with further information.

4) **Get your DUNS number and register with SAM.**

A DUNS number is a unique nine-character number used to identify your organization. The federal government uses the DUNS number to track how federal money is allocated. To get your DUNS number, click [here](#). Once you have obtained your DUNS number, you can register with [SAM](#), the System of Awards Management, which centralizes information about grant recipients and also provides a central location for grant recipients to change organizational information.

5) **Apply for funding!**

INCLUDED IN THE GUIDES

- Overviews of funding/resource opportunities at federal agencies that may apply to nonprofit arts organizations, including application deadlines, basic eligibility requirements, contexts, and links to more information.
- Brief examples and longer case studies highlighting arts organizations that have successfully received funding through these programs.
- Insights about what arts organizations might use these grants for and tips about how to be a successful applicant.

NOT INCLUDED IN THE GUIDES

- In-depth descriptions of eligibility requirements and application procedures (for more information on those, contact the agency that administers the grant directly).
- Funding opportunities from non-federal sources, such as private corporations or state or local arts agencies (to view a number of resources on other funding sources, click [here](#)).
- Funding opportunities for individual artists.
- COVID-19 relief funding (for more information on that, click [here](#)).

General Tips

- 1) **Obtaining and administering funding is hard:** For all the organizations featured in the guide that successfully obtained funding, there were many more that applied and did not receive it. Additionally, Americans for the Arts spoke to several organizations that received federal funding but opted not to take it because of the time-intensive administrative reporting requirements. Be realistic about the possibility that you may not receive the funding you apply for, and ask for help as much as possible.
- 2) **Agency offices want to help you:** Many of the case studies we spoke with attributed their success in part to a strong, ongoing relationship with a staff representative at the relevant federal agency. By attending info-sessions, calling them with updates, and checking in with them throughout the year, they were better able to navigate the complex federal funding process.
- 3) **Tie in the arts with economic development:** Though the programs they applied to varied widely, nearly all case studies believed that framing the arts as a tool for economic development (particularly when the program helped people who were low-income) was one of their most compelling arguments in receiving grant funding. This ranged from using the arts to teach business skills to underprivileged youth to using the arts to revitalize a Main Street in a struggling rural town.

More Ways to Look for Federal Funding

1) **Search on [grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov):** This comprehensive database of all federal grants allows you to search by eligibility, keyword, agency, or funding instrument type.

Note: Filtering by category to include only “arts” grants typically leaves just NEA grants and grants relating to cultural diplomacy. Think creatively to figure out what other opportunities may apply to you!

2) **Check out the [NEA's Resource Page](#):** Along with the funding they provide directly, the NEA publishes a list of federal funding opportunities at agencies such as the Institute of Museum and Library Sciences, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the National Institute of Health, the U.S. Department of Education, and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. These are not agencies that are covered under the Americans for the Arts Federal Resource Guides, so make sure to check this page out if you think these areas may apply to your project.

3) **Advocate!** Americans for the Arts and other arts advocates continue to work with pro-arts champions in Congress and state legislatures to strengthen resources to help applicants improve access and advance their programming. Our advocacy includes increased appropriations and eligibility policy on an annual basis. Help us [advocate here!](#)