

# Hartford Courant.

Four CT arts organizations awarded over \$100K in grants to serve underserved communities



(Courtesy of HartBeat Ensemble) HartBeat Ensemble artistic director Godfrey L. Simmons. HartBeat received \$100,000 from a new NEA funding initiative to hire new staff and create a local storytelling program. (Courtesy of HartBeat Ensemble)



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Four Connecticut arts organizations, two of them Hartford-based, have each received \$100,000 or more under [ArtsHERE](#), a new national government-funded arts initiative.

ArtsHERE is a pilot program created by a partnership between the [National Endowment for the Arts](#) and [South Arts](#). The stated goal of ArtsHERE is to “expand access to arts participation across the nation.” Other regional arts organizations are also part of the program, including the [New England Foundation for the Arts](#). The regional groups recommend non-profit arts organizations in their areas for non-matching grants that range from \$65,000 to \$130,000.

The grants fund specific projects that “sustain meaningful community engagement and increase arts participation for underserved groups and communities,” according to a press release. They also provide opportunities for tech assistance and peer instruction.

One hundred and twelve organizations around the country received ArtsHERE grants. The four Connecticut non-profits that were granted funding are:

Waterbury's [Afro Caribbean Cultural Center](#) was awarded \$130,000 to "support strategic planning, data collection, professional development and marketing to deepen ACCC's understanding of the Afro-Latino diaspora of the region and state and build awareness of their work so they can serve more individuals."

Hartford's [Community Partners in Action](#) received \$130,000 to increase staffing and improve marketing and long-term planning for its Prison Arts Program. The decades-old program provides art supplies and workshop opportunities to Connecticut prisons, holding an annual exhibit of artworks by the incarcerated or formerly incarcerated.

Hartford's [HartBeat Ensemble, Inc.](#) received \$100,000 to develop a storytelling program and hire a development director and artistic producer. The theater company creates progressive theater productions that are often directly about the Hartford community and its diverse neighborhoods.

New Haven's [NXTHAVN, Inc.](#) got \$130,000 to support a disability justice project through forming a working group, conducting research and other steps. NXTHAVN was founded in 2016 as an arts education and mentorship program located in New Haven's Dixwell neighborhood.

Besides the money, ArtsHERE grant recipients can take part in regular workshops, cohort sessions and meetings with peers and experts.

Over 4,000 organizations applied for ArtsHERE funding. The applications, submitted in late 2023 and early 2024, were subjected to multiple review panels and had to meet certain criteria including engagement with underserved communities. The projects for which the funding was received are all scheduled to take place between next month and June 2026.

Overall, ArtsHERE awarded \$12,356,000 in grants in the pilot program's first year.

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