

Pandemic Recovery in Vermont's Cultural Sector

A REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY | 2021

“Without the intentional cultivation of the arts and humanities in Vermont, we risk losing sight of where we’ve been, where we are now, and where we want to go.”

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Dear Friends,

Cultural organizations were among the first to close and will certainly be among the last to recover from the Covid-19 pandemic, yet they are vital to the long-term success of Vermont communities.

Museums, libraries, theaters, galleries, and art centers provide support to individuals and families at critical moments in our lives. These organizations allow us to integrate and share our human experience. When a community gathers to celebrate or mourn, learn or connect, **Vermont’s cultural organizations often provide the physical infrastructure, as well as the context and meaning.**

Without the intentional cultivation of the arts and humanities in Vermont, we risk losing sight of where we’ve been, where we are now, and where we want to go.

This report lays out the work that we have done in partnership with the state of Vermont, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the National Endowment for the Humanities to save Vermont’s cultural organizations from the most devastating impacts of the pandemic. It also notes where we have fallen short and illustrates the critical need for an ongoing, sustained investment in Vermont’s recovery.

Vermont’s artists and humanists are key voices in the ongoing discussion about how our communities can recover from Covid-19. We urge you to engage with the following stories and **join us to ensure that the arts and humanities continue as vital hubs in our cities, towns, and villages.**

Sincerely,



Karen Mittelman

Karen Mittelman
Vermont Arts Council



Christopher Kaufman Ilstrup

Christopher Kaufman Ilstrup
Vermont Humanities

CULTURAL RECOVERY IS VERMONT RECOVERY

In 2019, Vermont's **arts and culture sector added \$1.1 billion in value** to Vermont's gross domestic product. The sector ranked a close third behind retail and construction.

Vermont's cultural organizations are **critical to individual and community recovery** from the Covid-19 pandemic.

These organizations:

- Support the social and emotional health of individuals and families
- Connect people more deeply to each other by building community
- Drive local economic activity
- Attract new residents and retain existing residents
- Bring visitors
- Sustain the vibrant cultural landscape that makes Vermont a great place to live

CULTURE AND COVID

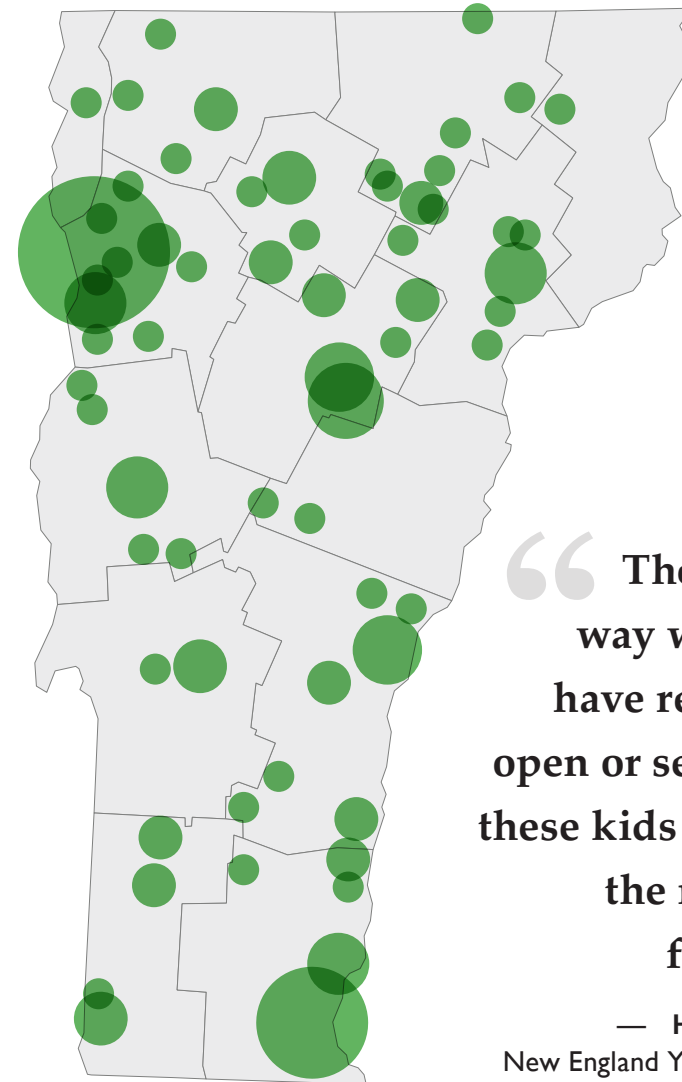
The Covid-19 pandemic has profoundly jeopardized the economic viability of Vermont's cultural organizations, large and small. They were among the first to close to protect public health and the last to re-open.

197 APPLICANTS REPORTED **\$36M** IN LOST REVENUE & **1.7M** PEOPLE NOT REACHED AS A RESULT OF COVID-19.



Pictured: Members of Sandglass Theater and the Vermont Refugee Resettlement Program teach Vermonters about the refugee experience through an interactive game.

Vermont Cultural Recovery Grant Program | 2021



To offset continued economic fallout from the pandemic, the Vermont Arts Council (VAC) and Vermont Humanities (VH) have awarded **\$1.2 million in recovery funding to 146 Vermont arts and humanities organizations** through a collaborative grant program made possible by American Rescue Plan Act funds from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the National Endowment for the Arts.

“ There is no way we could have remained open or served all these kids without the recovery funding.”

— Hallie Flower,
New England Youth Theatre

The Vermont Cultural Recovery Grant Program is the second joint VAC-VH program providing rapid-response funding to arts and humanities organizations facing financial hardship as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. In 2021, cultural organizations across the state used this funding to adapt their programs to the challenges presented by

Covid, create new programs to meet evolving community needs, or to simply survive.

Arts and/or humanities organizations incorporated in the state of Vermont with a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status were eligible to apply for the grants, which covered general operating or project expenses of \$5,000 to \$15,000 depending on the organization's size.

Both councils are committed to equitable grantmaking. Special consideration was given to organizations serving and led by members of communities traditionally under-resourced in the arts and humanities.

Last year's Cultural Relief Program distributed more than \$780,000 to 123 cultural organizations, as detailed in the [2020 CARES Act Report to the Community](#).

\$1.2M
awarded

146
grantees

14
counties

\$8,114
average grant

74%
of applicants funded



Photo Credit: Abe Olson

Keeping Communities Alive

CENTER FOR CARTOON STUDIES | WHITE RIVER JUNCTION, VT

The Center for Cartoon Studies (CCS) in White River Junction was the first higher education institution to offer a Master of Fine Arts degree in cartoon studies. It's a small school with a huge impact, serving 30-35 full-time students and over 200 others who attend workshops annually. Thousands more from across the world attend public lectures and exhibitions.

Dave Lloyd is the operations director at CCS. When he moved to Vermont with his wife in 2007, the village of White River Junction had many vacant storefronts. "It was a town in progress," he says, "but fast-forward to today, you can see the positive economic impact the school has had, with 60 people who work for or study at the school year-round. Plus people come in from all over to eat, stay at a hotel, and do some shopping while they're here."

CCS generates between \$1.5 and \$2 million in economic activity per year, but dollars don't paint the full

“ We had something to offer that parents and kids really needed.”

picture. When the pandemic hit and kids were out of school, CCS began offering hour-long cartooning classes online three times per week.

"It was amazing to see all these kids popping in from across the country—California, Alaska—craving that social interaction. And their parents just needing a break," remembers Lloyd.

CCS didn't profit from the program, but Lloyd says it was well worth the time and effort: "For parents, the initial shutdown of the pandemic was brutal. We had something to offer that parents and kids really appreciated, really needed," Lloyd recalls. "Wouldn't it be nice if we could assign a dollar amount to that?"

The Center for Cartoon Studies will use Cultural Recovery Grant funding to continue its scholarship program for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) students.

Recovery Takes Time

CLEMMONS FAMILY FARM | CHARLOTTE, VT

Clemmons Family Farm (CFF) is much more than a farm. The organization is simultaneously empowering a growing network of Black artists in Vermont, preserving the 138-acre Clemmons Farm, and curating opportunities for visitors to discover the history, culture, arts, and sciences of the African-American and African diaspora.

Vermont is often noted for a lack of racial diversity, a critique that ignores the over 36,000 Vermont residents who identify as non-white. CFF's Vermont African-American/African Diaspora Artists' Network currently serves 220 musicians, singers, poets, spoken word artists, hip hop artists, DJs, dancers, hair braiders, painters, photographers, videographers, film editors, graphic designers, actors, historians, and scholars.

During a time of increased hate crimes and hostility toward members of the Black community, the need for programs that support them are in high demand. But **the Black leaders running these programs are often over-extended as they manage the fallout from Covid-19 and increased racial tension this past year.**

"We need to slow down and accommodate these artists and culture bearers who are handling so much right now," says Lydia Clemmons, CFF's president and executive director, referring to the negative health impacts of Covid-19 on Black artists who were already facing disparities and the daily stress of racism.

“ We need to slow down and accommodate these artists.”

She predicts that artist recovery will continue slowly as the organization's collaborators regain both their financial footing and their emotional and physical well-being. Meanwhile, the organization has seen the successful launch of a remote learning platform, the return of in-person artist engagements in the classroom, the addition of a Creative Arts Director staff position, and a new collaboration with the National Association of Black Storytellers.

Clemmons Family Farm will use Cultural Recovery Grant funding to support a new Kwanzaa Storytelling Program and cover general operating costs.



Photo Credit: Nani Clemmons

Left to right: Damascus Kafumbe, KeruBo, and Toussaint St. Negritude at the 2019 Vermont African-American/African Diaspora Artists Network Summit at Clemmons Farm.

2021 Vermont Cultural Recovery Grants

ARTS GRANTS

Art in the Neighborhood	\$5,000	Brattleboro
Barre Opera House	\$10,000	Barre
Bella Voce Women's Chorus	\$5,000	Essex Junction
Brattleboro Music Center	\$15,000	Brattleboro
Briggs Opera House	\$5,000	White River Junction
Burlington City Arts	\$15,000	Burlington
Cabot Arts	\$5,000	Cabot
Cambridge Arts Council	\$5,000	Cambridge
Carving Studio and Sculpture Center	\$10,000	West Rutland
Chandler Center for the Arts	\$10,000	Randolph
Circus Barn	\$15,000	Greensboro
Community of Sound	\$5,000	Burlington
The Current	\$10,000	Stowe
Dorset Players	\$5,000	Dorset
Dorset Theatre Festival	\$15,000	Dorset
Epsilon Spires	\$5,000	Brattleboro

The Foundry Workshop	\$5,000	Passumpsic
Gallery at the VAULT	\$5,000	Springfield
Generator	\$10,000	Burlington
Greater Barton Arts	\$5,000	Barton
Green Mountain Youth Symphony	\$5,000	Montpelier
Hinesburg Artist Series	\$5,000	Hinesburg
Island Arts	\$5,000	North Hero
Kingdom County Productions	\$10,000	Barnet
Latchis Arts	\$5,000	Brattleboro
Lost Nation Theater	\$10,000	Montpelier
Lyric Theatre Company	\$10,000	South Burlington
Main Street Arts	\$5,000	Saxtons River
Milton Artists' Guild	\$5,000	Milton
The MINT Rutland Makerspace	\$5,000	Rutland
Monteverdi Music School	\$5,000	Montpelier
New England Center for Circus Arts	\$15,000	Brattleboro
New England Youth Theatre	\$10,000	Brattleboro
Next Stage Arts Project	\$10,000	Putney
Northeast Kingdom All Stars	\$5,000	St. Johnsbury

Northeast Kingdom Arts Council	\$5,000	Hardwick
Off Center for the Dramatic Arts	\$5,000	Burlington
Oldcastle Productions	\$10,000	Bennington
Opera Company of Middlebury	\$5,000	Middlebury
Paramount Center	\$15,000	Rutland
Pentangle Arts	\$10,000	Woodstock
River Arts of Morrisville	\$10,000	Morrisville
River Gallery School of Art	\$10,000	Brattleboro
Rockingham Arts and Museum Project	\$5,000	Bellows Falls
Rutland Area Art Association	\$5,000	Rutland
Scrag Mountain Music	\$5,000	Marshfield
Seven Stars Arts Center	\$5,000	Sharon
Shelburne Art Center	\$5,000	Shelburne
Society of Vermont Artists and Craftsmen	\$5,000	Ludlow
South End Arts and Business Association	\$5,000	Burlington
Springfield Community Players	\$5,000	Springfield
Spruce Peak Arts	\$15,000	Stowe
Stage 33 Live	\$5,000	Bellows Falls
Studio Place Arts	\$5,000	Barre

Taconic Music	\$5,000	Manchester
Theater Adventure, Inc.	\$5,000	Brattleboro
Upright Steeple Society	\$5,000	Lyndon
Vermont Arts Exchange	\$10,000	North Bennington
Vermont Dance Alliance	\$5,000	Burlington
Vermont Stage Company	\$10,000	Burlington
Vermont Youth Orchestra Association	\$10,000	Colchester
Vermont Youth Theater	\$4,000	Barre
Yellow Barn	\$15,000	Putney
Young Tradition Vermont	\$5,000	Fairfax

HUMANITIES GRANTS

Barre Historical Society	\$5,000	Barre
Billings Farm and Museum	\$15,000	Woodstock
Cabot Historical Society	\$5,000	Cabot
Cobleigh Public Library	\$5,000	Lyndonville
Craftsbury Public Library	\$5,000	Craftsbury Common
Ethan Allen Homestead	\$5,000	Burlington
Fairbanks Museum and Planetarium	\$15,000	St. Johnsbury

Uphill Climb: The Need Remains

NEW ENGLAND YOUTH THEATRE | BRATTLEBORO, VT

Hallie Flower, director of the New England Youth Theatre (NEYT), has a plan if recovery funding for cultural organizations dries up: “We’ll pull back programming again and go bare bones,” she says. “That means another round of furloughs. And it means saying no to some percentage of the young people who want to be here.”

From Shakespeare to European clown tradition to holiday musicals with a live band, NEYT offers a delightfully diverse array of theatre opportunities for K-12 youth, both on stage and behind the scenes.

Young people are hungry for places of belonging, where they can be themselves and express themselves. Flower

says that, for the nearly 1,000 youth who engage with NEYT in a normal year, the theatre is where they feel at home. And that the need is greater now than before the pandemic: **“They’re carrying a lot of trauma. We are part of how the community is going to heal.”**

When the theatre reopened with outdoor programming in the summer of 2020, the NEYT community literally came running. Flower got emotional thinking back on it: “I watched these two young women race toward each other that first day, stopping just short of a hug. It was the first time they’d seen another peer in months.”

While the theatre continues to operate at limited capacity, staff are working twice as hard to support the kids, keep folks safe, and do it all within a greatly reduced budget. “Kids and families want us back all the way, but the earned revenue isn’t there until we can pack the audience.”

New England Youth Theatre will use Cultural Recovery Grant funding to bring back programming and provide more normalcy for the youth it serves.

“We are part of how the community is going to heal.”



“We are actually very adept at managing a crisis.”

Crisis-Fueled Innovation

LAKE CHAMPLAIN MARITIME MUSEUM | VERGENNES, VT

When the pandemic hit, Susan McClure said that Lake Champlain Maritime Museum had no problem adapting: “We’re all creatives: naturally flexible and innovative. So we’re actually very adept at managing a crisis.”

McClure is the museum’s director who oversaw an impressive number of Covid-friendly programs and adaptations over the last year, including a website-as-museum overhaul and a museum-site accessibility plan.

McClure says the hardest part of the pandemic has been recovering lost revenue. In a typical year, Lake Champlain Maritime Museum reaches nearly 10,000 people from across the world. Considered nonessential, the museum was quick to close its doors and slow to reopen them.

When the museum finally did welcome visitors again in May 2021, it did so under a new free admission model, which resulted in a 30% increase in museum visits. The jump demonstrates the demand for humanities programming and the financial barrier that made it inaccessible for much of the local population.

“Having stable, unrestricted support at the state and federal level allows us to focus on our impact,” she says. “When we have time to learn how to be a better museum, we actually become a better museum. And then more people show up.”

Lake Champlain Maritime Museum will use Cultural Recovery Grant funding to continue offering free admission.

HUMANITIES GRANTS (continued)

Friends of the Fletcher Free Library	\$5,000	Burlington
The Governor’s Institutes of Vermont	\$15,000	Winooski
Haskell Free Library	\$5,000	Derby Line
Henry Sheldon Museum of Vermont History	\$10,000	Middlebury
Heritage Winooski Mill Museum	\$5,000	Winooski
Highgate Library and Community Center	\$5,000	Highgate
Jericho Historical Society	\$5,000	Jericho
John Woodruff Simpson Memorial Library	\$5,000	East Craftsbury
Lake Champlain Maritime Museum	\$15,000	Vergennes
Londonderry Arts & Historical Society	\$5,000	Londonderry
Main Street Museum	\$5,000	White River Junction
Mercy Connections	\$10,000	Burlington
Northeast Kingdom Collaborative	\$5,000	Craftsbury
Northwoods Stewardship Center	\$10,000	East Charleston
Norwich Historical Society	\$5,000	Norwich
Orleans County Historical Society	\$10,000	Brownington
Preservation Trust of Vermont	\$15,000	Burlington
Robert Frost Stone House Museum	\$5,000	Bennington

Rokeby Museum	\$5,000	Ferrisburgh
Saint Albans Museum	\$5,000	St. Albans
Snelling Center for Government	\$10,000	Shelburne
St. Johnsbury History and Heritage Center	\$5,000	St. Johnsbury
Vermont Council on World Affairs	\$10,000	Burlington
Vermont Historical Society	\$15,000	Barre
Vermont Ski & Snowboard Museum	\$5,000	Stowe
Westminster West Public Library	\$5,000	Putney
Wheelock Mountain Farm	\$5,000	Greensboro Bend
Worcester Historical Society	\$5,000	Worcester

JOINT ARTS AND HUMANITIES GRANTS

AHA Abenaki Helping Abenaki	\$5,000	Shelburne
Bennington Museum	\$15,000	Bennington
Big Heavy World	\$5,000	Burlington
Brattleboro Literary Festival	\$5,000	Brattleboro
Brattleboro Museum & Art Center	\$10,000	Brattleboro
Bread and Puppet Theatre	\$10,000	Glover
Brighton Community Forum	\$5,000	Island Pond
Bryan Memorial Gallery	\$5,000	Jeffersonville

Catamount Film and Arts Center	\$15,000	St. Johnsbury
Center for Arts and Learning	\$5,000	Montpelier
Center for Cartoon Studies	\$15,000	White River Junction
Chittenden Community Television	\$10,000	Burlington
Clemmons Family Farm	\$10,000	Charlotte
Community Access Television (CATV)	\$10,000	White River Junction
Fairfield Community Center Association	\$5,000	East Fairfield
Fleming Museum of Art	\$15,000	Burlington
Flynn Center	\$15,000	Burlington
Green Mountains Review	\$5,000	Johnson
Inclusive Arts Vermont	\$10,000	Essex Junction
Lost Mural Project	\$5,000	Burlington
Maquam Bay of Missiquoi	\$5,000	Swanton
Middlebury New Filmmakers Festival	\$5,000	Leicester
Migrant Justice	\$10,000	Burlington
Northern Stage Company	\$15,000	White River Junction
Out in the Open	\$5,000	Brattleboro
Outright Vermont	\$15,000	Burlington
Pride Center of Vermont	\$15,000	Burlington
Retreat Farm	\$15,000	Brattleboro

Ruth Stone House	\$5,000	Goshen
Sandglass Center	\$5,000	Putney
Shelburne Museum	\$15,000	Shelburne
Southern Vermont Arts Center	\$15,000	Manchester
Sundog Poetry Center	\$5,000	Johnson
Swanton Arts Council	\$5,000	Swanton
T.W. Wood Art Gallery	\$5,000	Montpelier
Town Hall Theater	\$15,000	Middlebury
UVM Lane Series	\$10,000	Burlington
Vermont Folklife Center	\$10,000	Middlebury
Vermont Granite Museum of Barre	\$5,000	Barre
Vermont International Film Festival	\$10,000	Burlington
Vermont Jazz Center	\$10,000	Brattleboro
Vermont Studio Center	\$15,000	Johnson
Vermont Symphony Orchestra	\$15,000	Burlington
Weston Playhouse Theatre Company	\$15,000	Weston
White Pine Association	\$5,000	West Braintree
Wonder & Wisdom	\$5,000	Greensboro
Young Writers Project	\$5,000	Burlington



Photo Credit: Hartford Memorial Middle School



Join Us

Theaters, community arts centers, galleries, museums, libraries, and hundreds of other cultural organizations are still struggling financially.

To ensure their sustainability for generations to come, we must invest in:

1
FACILITY ADAPTATION GRANTS
to support Covid-safe buildings.

2
PROGRAM ADAPTATION GRANTS
to support Covid-safe programming.

3
RECOVERY GRANTS
to cover fixed monthly costs for organizations still operating at limited capacity.

Cultural recovery is Vermont recovery.

The Big Picture

Our advocacy and communications efforts over the past year were critical to securing the largest cultural funding allocation in the history of Vermont:

\$5 million set aside for arts and cultural nonprofits in emergency economic relief, followed by an allocation of **\$1.15 million** in state funds to specifically address the digital capacity needs of cultural non-profit organizations.

Despite an influx of funding, cultural organizations are still struggling:

- The future remains uncertain
- Federal and state grants didn't meet the need
- Many are still operating at limited capacity
- Recovery is expensive

Cultural organizations are essential infrastructure.

A growing body of research demonstrates the power of the creative economy as a catalyst for growth and change, particularly in rural places, and particularly in times of crisis and recovery.

- Our communities won't bounce back without our cultural organizations
- State and federal Covid-19 relief funding was critical to helping stabilize the sector
- Recovery is slow and the need for funding remains

Cultural recovery is Vermont recovery.

Federal and State Covid-19 Relief Grants for Vermont Cultural Organizations*

2020 - 2021

SOURCE	NO.	AMOUNT
Federal Shuttered Venue Operators Grants **	50	\$ 8,332,746
VT Economic Recovery Grants	181	\$ 4,773,040
VAC-VH Covid-19 Cultural Recovery Grants	146	\$ 1,189,000
VAC-VH Covid-19 Cultural Relief Grants	123	\$ 781,000
NEH Direct ARPA Grants	2	\$ 693,154
NEFA New England Arts Resilience Grants	36	\$ 550,000
NEH CARES Act Grants to VT organizations	5	\$ 382,190
NEA CARES Act Grants to VT organizations	6	\$ 300,000
GRAND TOTAL	549	\$ 17,001,130

*NEA Direct ARPA Fund Awards TBA spring 2022

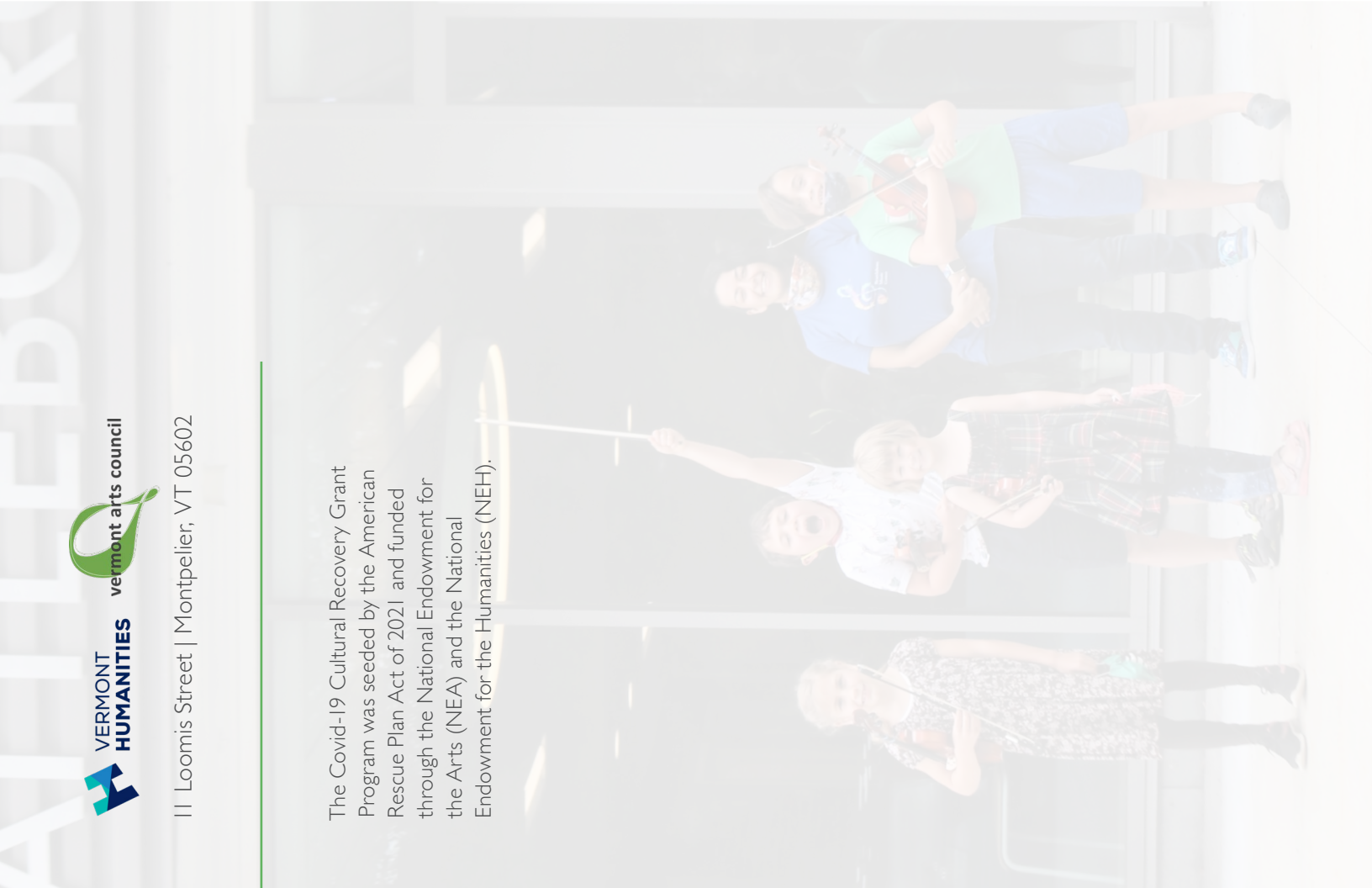
**Federal Shuttered Venue Operators Grant to cultural nonprofits as of 12/06/21.

Lessons Learned

1 Vermont's cultural organizations are resilient and creative. These organizations have shown remarkable courage, often re-inventing their missions and business models overnight.

2 Hundreds of venues face an uncertain future. They need assistance to manage the high cost of Covid-safe supplies, re-boot programs, re-engage their audiences, and devise new financial models to survive.

3 The cultural sector is poised to help Vermont recover. These organizations drive the local economy, promote individual wellbeing, hold our history, and connect communities.



VERMONT
HUMANITIES



vermont arts council

11 Loomis Street | Montpelier, VT 05602

The Covid-19 Cultural Recovery Grant Program was seeded by the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 and funded through the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH).

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