New Direction Conversations: A Focus on Arts-Based Placemaking

The COA is hosting a series of public forums to communicate its new direction to the arts & cultural community and to engage constituents in a planning discussion regarding the reorganization of programs and services for FY13. Christopher "Kip" Bergstrom, DECD's Deputy Commissioner, and COA staff will be present. There will be time for Q & A and public comment. Each forum will include small group breakout sessions to exchange ideas about constituent needs. COA offers these forums as a opportunity to add the public's experience and wisdom in developing COA's new direction on arts-based place-making.

Art makes great places. Great places attract great talent. Great talent creates great jobs. If we can prove this connection, we can significantly increase annual arts funding.

- Christopher "Kip" Bergstrom, Deputy Commissioner, DECD
January 9, 2012 Hartford Business Journal

On July 1, 2011, the Commission on Culture & Tourism was consolidated into the Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD). We are now the Connecticut Office of the Arts (COA) within the Department of Economic and Community Development. DECD also incorporates a separate Connecticut Office of Tourism and a State Historic Preservation Office.

In order to strengthen and align the effectiveness and impact of arts and cultural organizations, artists and emerging groups, and to focus outcomes on collaborative activities that create jobs and revitalize communities, the new direction of the Connecticut Office of the Arts will change as of July 1, 2012. COA will strategically integrate current grant programs including Arts Access (Arts Presentation and Creative Collaboration), Artists Fellowships, Arts Project Support, General Operating Support and the Local Arts Agency Program into one wide-ranging, comprehensive resource designed to give constituents practical and creative options when applying for grant support. **These programs currently receive $1.6 million annually in funding. In FY 2013, a total of $3.1 million will be available, almost double the current level.**

The new strategy will be designed to generate a broader impact through fewer but larger grants to organizations of all sizes, as well as to individual artists, in an open and competitive grant program. Art in Public Spaces, Arts Endowment, HOT Schools, Poetry Out Loud, Peer Advisor Network and the Connecticut State Troubadour/Connecticut Poet Laureate programs will continue as is.

The strategic link among all aspects of the integrated program is a focus on "place-making" while maintaining our existing standards of artistic merit. Place-making is a multi-faceted approach to the planning, design and management of public and private space(s) and the people who use them, that leverages the assets of the creative sector – artists, arts and cultural organizations, arts-related business – along with residents, schools, businesses and local governments, to improve the community's economic conditions and quality of life. It creates artistic communities with a rich variety of participants and events involving large cultural institutions, small emerging organizations with fresh ideas, community and educational organizations, and artists who flourish in a supportive environment.

A special emphasis will be made on supporting new cross-sector collaborative initiatives between arts and culture organizations, artists and other sectors of the community. Grants will also be made to sustain, leverage and enhance exemplary preexisting creative place-making projects. All proposed projects may be customized to the local circumstances and needs of all regions of Connecticut. Revised criteria for all funding will be developed with input from the public, CT Office of the Arts staff, DECD staff, regional arts agencies and individual organizations.

Please join us at one (or more) of the following public forums:

February 21, 3-5 p.m. - Thomaston Opera House, Thomaston
Hosted by the Northwest Connecticut Arts Council
Important note: The original date was February 1

February 8, 10 a.m.-12 noon - Westport Country Playhouse (White Barn), Westport
Hosted by the Cultural Alliance of Fairfield County
Important note: This forum has reached capacity. Please consider another forum.

February 14, 3-5 p.m., Quinebaug Valley Community College, Danielson
Hosted by the Northeast Cultural Alliance

February 15, 2-4 p.m. - Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford
Hosted by the Greater Hartford Arts Council

* Those interested in attending should register in advance *

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For the most up-to-date information on the public forums,
please visit www.cultureandtourism.org.
If you have questions, or in case of inclement weather,
please email Rhonda.olisky@ct.gov or call (860) 256-2752.