

# New Bedford creative sector selected for Barr Foundation investment

New Bedford's sizzling creative sector continues to set a blistering pace of return value to the community with more exciting news this autumn: New Bedford Creative, housed at the New Bedford Economic Development Council, has been selected as the lead partner on a year-long training and grant program supported by the Barr Foundation.

The funding will support a program that is part of a national "Creating Connection" initiative directed by Minneapolis-based Arts Midwest. The effort will draw on data-driven strategies to support New Bedford organizations in messaging the value of the creative sector to the city for residents and visitors alike.

"Once again, the inspiring work of New Bedford artists and cultural trailblazers is being recognized by the Barr Foundation, and now the respected Arts Midwest national organization, for its ability to positively impact and transform the city," says Margo Saulnier.

Margo Saulnier is the Creative Strategist for the city and directs New Bedford Creative. That's the umbrella platform for the city's arts and culture planning initiative, which comprises the New Bedford Creative Consortium. The group is made up of city creative professionals and supporters to guide and shape arts planning. It is a program within the New Bedford Economic Development Council, and receives staff support from the City Departments of Planning, Tourism & Marketing, Parks, Recreation & Beaches, and the Mayor's Office.

Now in its sixth year, Arts Midwest's "Creating Connection" is

a research and messaging initiative that helps creative organizations connect their messages and programs to existing community values. It aims to help expand audiences and support for the arts by helping organizations deepen relevance and learn new messaging strategies. The program has supported organizations across the country in this work, including in-depth training and investment in 10 Massachusetts-based arts organizations between 2016-2019.

“Our investment in bringing Creating Connections to New Bedford recognizes the momentum and great work of the creative community underway. New Bedford arts organizations and artists have demonstrated an incredible ability to move the hearts and minds of their community,” says

SueEllen Kroll, Senior Program Officer at the Barr Foundation.

“As the city reimagines itself in the wake of the pandemic and racial justice reckoning, there is a great opportunity for the arts to bring people together to connect across difference, to inspire, and to foster a sense of belonging.”

“Thanks to the solid foundation we’ve laid in New Bedford, the creative sector is ready to embrace this new opportunity to blaze a new path into the future for the benefit of the entire city and region,” concludes Tony Sapienza, President of the NBEDC. “Being part of Creating Connection will enable more residents, entrepreneurs, and arts organizations to realize their potential and support their efforts to bring more arts, culture and creativity to every part of this city.”

The launch of this program will be Friday, October 15th, at 12:00pm, with a free “Creating Connection 101” webinar led by experts from Arts Midwest. Anyone interested in learning more or participating throughout the year is invited to join. Visit [newbedfordcreative.org](http://newbedfordcreative.org) to register for free.

Arts Midwest believes that creativity has the power to inspire and unite humanity. Based in Minneapolis, Arts Midwest supports creative organizations and communities throughout a

nine-state Midwest region and nationally. One of six nonprofit United States Regional Arts Organizations, Arts Midwest's history spans more than 30 years. For more information, visit [artsmidwest.org](http://artsmidwest.org).

The Barr Foundation's mission is to invest in human, natural, and creative potential, serving as thoughtful stewards and catalysts. Based in Boston, Barr focuses regionally, and selectively engages nationally, working in partnership with nonprofits, foundations, the public sector, and civic and business leaders to elevate the arts, advance solutions for climate change, and connect all students to success in high school and beyond. Founded in 1997, Barr now has assets in excess of \$3 billion, and has contributed more than \$1 billion to charitable causes. For more information, visit [barrfoundation.org](http://barrfoundation.org) or follow @BarrFdn.

New Bedford Creative is housed at the New Bedford Economic Development Council, and tasked with implementing the city's first-ever strategic arts and culture plan, published in December 2018. The vision of the plan is that "In New Bedford, the creative community is an engaged and powerful partner, inspiring social, economic, and cultural growth. In this authentic seaport city, each and every person enjoys an opportunity to experience a diversity of cultures. Art is everywhere, encouraging fun, provoking thought, and nurturing the soul." Funding is provided by the New Bedford Arts, Culture and Tourism Fund, proposed by Mayor Jon Mitchell in the spring of 2016 and signed into law by Governor Baker in January 2017. The New Bedford Economic Development Council has a three-year agreement to manage the fund for the City. This work is led by the Creative Strategist, a 24-member volunteer Creative Consortium, with staff support from the NBEDC and Departments of City Planning, Tourism & Marketing, Parks, Recreation & Beaches, and the Mayor's Office. Additional funding is provided by Barr Foundation, Bristol County Savings Bank, Mass Cultural Council, MassDevelopment/TDI, and New

England Foundation for the Arts. For more information, visit [newbedfordcreative.org](http://newbedfordcreative.org).