



Steering Committee Meeting Notes

12 – 1:30 PM

January 28, 2022

Present: Michele Bailey, Sally Blanchard-O'Brien, Carrie Cleveland, Eileen Corcoran, Amy Cunningham, Jamie Duggan, Tom McMurdo, Ben Rose, Joseph Watson

Guests: Craig Nutt

Working Group Updates

Supply Bin Working Group: The group is trying to figure out how to deploy the caches. One option is to have fewer, more robust caches with people willing to transport them around the state. Either ARPA funds or VHRP grant funds can be used to pay for the caches.

AFR Network Meeting on Communications

Many VACDaRN steering committee members attended the AFR meeting earlier this month. Networks from Georgia, Texas, and Massachusetts presented on their communications strategies, including mailing lists, social media platforms, events, and special projects. Of particular note was the Georgia cultural asset mapping project; we may want to consult with them and look at their documentation once VACDaRN is ready to start this.

Craig Nutt & CERF+ Information on Advocacy

CERF+ was the recipient of very competitive ARPA funding via the National Endowment for the Arts. CERF+ has been involved in arts legislation over the years and currently, there are seven bills in Congress that are arts related. The big one is the Promoting Local Arts and Creative Economy Workforce (PLACE) Act that has several sections CERF+ is advocating now and has advocated for in other formats in the

past. Section 207 is a carryover from earlier legislative versions. It would change FEMA regulations that currently exclude self-employed workers from eligibility and removes the requirement that applicants must be first rejected from a Small Business Association loan. Section 209 shifts the calculation of disaster unemployment assistance from net profit to business expense receipts. Section 506 establishes a fund for an office of recovery within the National Endowment for the Arts, which gives them a greater role in participating in disaster recovery and preparedness with other Federal agencies.

The House Committee on Small Business had a recent hearing on the creative economy. While it was unfortunate that all the witnesses were from performing arts and there was no representation from visual/studio arts, the testimony was compelling. CERF+ will be submitting written testimony that talks about disaster issues, and written testimony can be submitted until February 5.

CERF+ is also analyzing pandemic assistance to see where it fell short and where they can expand what worked. It was a big plus that self-employed workers were included in the assistance; the Federal additions for unemployment were a game changer for them. CERF+ wants to see this extended into disaster unemployment assistance. However, the Paycheck Protection Program was based on the payroll of employees so non-employer businesses (which are a large percentage of the arts sector) fell through the cracks. Vermont has a higher percentage of self-employed in the creative sector and CERF+ has talked with Representative Welch about this issue. CERF+ is pushing for future loan programs that work for vulnerable non-employer businesses.

At this point, VACDaRN organizations can endorse the seven Congressional bills, especially the PLACE Act, and we can encourage our delegation to be co-sponsors of the bills.

Other Updates

Jamie: Historic Sites is quiet now and working on budgets. A long-time employee (34 years!) is retiring, and they are working to fill that vacancy. The Division was involved with the historic train station move in New Haven. They were also able to look at the Strong House in Vergennes because the owner might be at a point where they're ready to sell or have work done on the house; it is in poor shape from nearly 50 years of neglect. The Division is also planning on how to make their sites (buildings and trails) more accessible and is considering ARPA funding for improved ventilation in buildings.

Joseph: Middlebury delayed starting the current spring semester by a week due to COVID, but the semester has gone smoothly since. A class on the history of the book is being taught in conjunction with the library.

Tom: The Department of Libraries is looking at ARPA infrastructure funds and put in a request in their budget proposal to include capital funds for public libraries. Vermont has a lot of old library buildings that need repair and accessibility improvements and the state's libraries have not seen significant capital funding since the 1990s. The new State Librarian is starting February 14; she is originally from Vermont and recently was chief of branches of the San Francisco public library system.

Eileen: VHS, DOL, and VSARA/VHRP were awarded a planning grant for developing a statewide digital repository. ARPA funds have also been added to this initiative to help prepare by getting equipment and

temporary staffing to pilot digitization projects. The Vermont Historical Society has replaced their old alarm system in the museum and hope to in the library soon.

Ben: Has been working on the Flood Resilient Community Fund initiative to have a state hazard mitigation program that's not tied in with FEMA. ARPA funds are going into this program. There could be opportunities for cultural organizations to go through this new program first; come to Ben with ideas. The state's emergency operations center has been activated for the Omicron surge and the state is looking at deploying the National Guard to help at medical facilities where resources have been really stressed.

Carrie: The analysis of crisis mitigation training cohort are working on getting the cohort members to pilot training and Carrie volunteered Vermont as a place. It would involve a workshop connecting artists and emergency management. The curriculum is still being finalized; Carrie is hopeful the training can be offered in the spring.

Sally: The Vermont Historical Records Program recently launched a resource library on their website to provide basic guidance and resources for collections care. The VHRP will also be launching its environmental monitoring program soon; they're currently looking at which monitors to buy and which institutions to pilot it with. Tom mentioned that DOL is also buying some environmental monitors for public libraries with ARPA funding; VHRP and DOL will collaborate on this further.

Amy & Michele: The UMass Amherst arts extension service that reached out to the Vermont Arts Council about piloting a program to look at climate change and cultural organizations, especially green energy and climate justice. VAC would be an early recipient of some of the trainings, which will eventually be distributed nationally. There is a survey component which may be shared with VACDaRN Steering Committee members to share with constituents. VAC is providing resources for local arts advocates to push their municipalities to spend ARPA funds on the creative sector; they worked with the Vermont League of Cities and Towns on these resources and to conduct some workshops. Vermont's communities have a lot of flexibility with spending local ARPA funds, and the funds can be used as matching funds for other grants. VAC is recommending municipalities take their time to plan out how the money will be spent in conjunction with other opportunities; ARPA money does not have to be slated until 2024. There is also no requirement to go through community engagement or voting to spend ARPA money, but it's highly recommended as it's a good opportunity to engage with the local community and plan together. Some towns have created ARPA committees. VAC is asking the Legislature for \$17.5 million from ARPA for the creative economy and so far there is tri-partisan support. Parts of the bill might be split out into others and VAC wants to make sure that small organizations and self-employed don't fall through the funding cracks.