



ESSEX COUNTY
COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

CREATIVE COUNTY INITIATIVE

**A SYSTEMS APPROACH TO
STRENGTHEN ARTS, CULTURE AND
CREATIVITY IN ESSEX COUNTY**



ESSEX COUNTY
COMMUNITY FOUNDATION



Essex County Community Foundation is committed to supporting a strong ecosystem for arts, culture and creative enterprise that is **SUSTAINABLE, EQUITABLE and **ACCESSIBLE** for all in our region.**

The work of Creative County Initiative...

CREATES a regional voice for arts, culture and creative expression in Essex County.

PROMOTES transformative community and economic development.

ELEVATES arts and cultural experiences that celebrate diversity, equity, inclusion, and access across communities.

INVESTS in artists and the creative economy in an environment of rapidly changing demographics.

CELEBRATES Essex County as a vibrant place to live, work, create and collaborate.



**Barr
Foundation**

ECCF is leading this multi-year initiative in partnership with the Barr Foundation and many other private funders, providing more than \$2 million in funding through 2022.

SYSTEMS PHILANTHROPY

ECCF's innovative approach to philanthropy that delivers long-term social change:

- Begins with community engagement
- Identifies root causes
- Inspires collaboration and collective action
- Invests larger resources over a longer period of time
- Engages funders as strategic partners

The Creative County Initiative models this Systems Philanthropy approach through long-term partnerships and investment in the underlying systems that empower the creative sector to thrive.





“Cities and towns across Massachusetts are full of creative talent and cultural assets that have the power to inspire us, challenge us, and bring us together. Yet, depending on geography, art form, or networks, access to funding can be uneven – and so are opportunities to experience arts and creativity.”

**– BARR FOUNDATION,
Creative Commonwealth
Initiative**

UNDERSTANDING OUR CHALLENGES:

During the early planning period of this initiative, we spent time and resources to identify the creative sector's greatest challenges.

Six regional focus groups, 400+ respondent surveys, and economic data showed that Essex County is a culturally diverse region rich in arts and culture which are necessary for strong, connected communities. Yet, effective strategies to connect and support the creative sector across our region had not been developed.

This data showed clear needs from the arts and business communities.

The Needs:

We need **CONNECTION ACROSS THE REGION AND ACROSS THE CREATIVE SECTORS.**

We need **SHARED AND EXPANDED RESOURCES** for funding, creative spaces, and personnel/leadership development programs.

We need **EDUCATION AND TRAINING** to build capacity for collaborative work and stronger arts organizations.

We need **MORE ART IN PUBLIC SPACES** for greater access and engagement.

Our Goal:

To build an arts ecosystem across our region and invest in arts, culture, design and creative enterprise that is sustainable, equitable and accessible for all.

The Impact:

The work of CCI enables the creative community to thrive as it transforms lives, fosters community pride, improves neighborhoods, and impacts local economies.

Photo: John Andrews,
Creative Collective



CREATIVE COUNTY PILOT PHASE: 2017-2019

\$750K
INVESTED

Since partnering with the Barr Foundation in 2017, the Creative County Initiative has had significant impact in four key areas:



COLLABORATIVE PROJECT GRANTS

Dedicated grantmaking to municipalities, businesses and artists working collaboratively with nonprofit organizations on public art and creative placemaking projects.

IMPACT

More than \$300,000 awarded, bringing 12 collaborative projects to life in Essex County.



CULTURAL PLANNING

A series of sub-regional convenings to introduce the need for cultural planning and to highlight the region's critically important cultural resources.

IMPACT

More than 125 participants from 30 communities connected to discuss and support the arts and culture ecosystem.



ARTS & CULTURE SUMMIT

A regional convening of the arts ecosystem for meaningful discussion, workshops and networking designed to embolden the Essex County arts sector.

IMPACT

Over 700 attendees at the April 2018 and September 2019 events.



ESSEXCOUNTYCREATES.ORG

The first regional online platform for artists and cultural organizations to promote events and activities, enhance their visibility, and share resources across the arts community.

IMPACT

Launched in 2018, EssexCountyCreates.org has over 300 registered artists, venues and organizations with more than 2,000 events shared to date.

CREATIVE COUNTY PHASE 2 GOAL: 2020-2022

Equip the Essex County arts and culture community with knowledge, tools and systems to increase the visibility and impact of the transformative power of arts and culture.

Three-Year Investment Areas:

COLLABORATIVE PROJECTS

Public art & creative placemaking grants

CULTURAL PLANNING

Inclusive strategy-setting with municipal leaders

CAPACITY BUILDING

Knowledge and tools to help artists and arts organizations succeed

CONVENINGS

Arts and Culture Summit and Think Labs to incubate ideas

COMMUNICATIONS & CONNECTIVITY

Resources to amplify our work

\$1.3M

**MULTI-YEAR
COMMITMENT**



COLLABORATIVE PROJECTS

THE NEED:

The often siloed work within the creative sector can impede partnerships between arts and non-arts partners, hindering transformational creativity in the public realm. Cross-sector collaboration is necessary for powerful art and creative placemaking.

2020-2022 COMMITMENT:

ECCF will invest over \$400,000 in new collaborative placemaking and public art projects encouraging partnerships between the arts, municipal, business and philanthropic sectors.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES:

- **Deepen engagement and investment** in the creative sector.
- **Enhance the visibility, reputation and new funding** avenues for the arts.
- **Inspire collaborative placemaking and public art projects** by providing tools, templates and best practices.
- **Increase capacity** for cross-sector work and leadership development.

PILOT PHASE SUCCESS:

AYER MILL CLOCK TOWER, LAWRENCE

“The work of ECCF’s Creative County Initiative to illuminate the Ayer Mill Clock Tower, provide funding for the Lawrence Public Library mural project, and support Iluminaçion Lawrence overall is a powerful catalyst to celebrate the city’s spirit of resilience and incredible sense of community.”

- **MAYOR DAN RIVERA, CITY OF LAWRENCE**, *on the power of cross-sector collaboration and effective teamwork*



CULTURAL PLANNING

THE NEED:

Municipal planning that integrates creativity can improve community identity, economic gain, and quality of life. Yet historically, there has been minimal cultural planning in our region. Investing in knowledge and technical support can engage communities in planning that is inclusive of arts and culture.

2020-2022 COMMITMENT:

ECCF will invest more than \$250,000 in cultural planning initiatives that create better conditions for the arts sector to thrive.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES:

- **Essex County will be recognized as a supportive region for creative professionals.**
- **Strengthen the capacity for collaboration** within and between communities.
- **Foster inclusion and equity** among our diverse communities.
- **Broaden the value** of tangible and intangible cultural assets related to community development goals.

PILOT PHASE SUCCESS:

CuriousCity, PEABODY

“As a destination type business, CuriousCity has had a positive effect on other surrounding businesses. Families come for the museum, but they often end up eating at local restaurants and visiting other locations in Peabody as well. Exactly what you need to happen in order to have a thriving downtown.”

— DEANNE HEALEY, VICE PRESIDENT, SALEM FIVE
and President, Peabody Main Streets



COMMUNICATIONS & CONNECTIVITY

THE NEED:

Artists and organizations are often hindered from reaching new audiences, growing financial support, and connecting with each other. Consistent, data-driven communications on the value of a vibrant creative ecosystem can strengthen understanding and encourage greater investment.

2020-2022 COMMITMENT:

ECCF will invest \$200,000 in:

- **EssexCountyCreates.org** to connect artists, organizations and consumers.
- **New communications strategies** to amplify the value of arts and culture in our region.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES:

- **Inspire public appreciation** for the arts by increasing the visibility of and accessibility to local experiences.
- **Support local artists and organizations** by increasing attendance at their events and experiences.
- **Enable collaboration within the arts community** by providing a place to connect and share resources.

PILOT PHASE SUCCESS:

CREATIVE COLLECTIVE

“A unified platform to highlight and showcase the ever growing creative industries is essential to the overall growth and sustainability of arts and culture in Essex County. A simplified approach to listings and information is an essential piece in consumer awareness and taps directly into the economic engine of the creative economy.”

– **JOHN ANDREWS, OWNER, CREATIVE COLLECTIVE**, *on the need for EssexCountyCreates.org*



CAPACITY BUILDING

THE NEED:

Many small and volunteer-run arts and culture organizations are unable to access affordable professional development and capacity building opportunities, impeding their ability to further their missions and compete in our creative economy.

2020-2022 COMMITMENT:

ECCF will invest \$250,000 in capacity building trainings in the critical areas of financial management; partnership development; diversity, equity, inclusion and access; marketing; and audience development.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES:

- **Strengthen key areas** for organizational sustainability and creative business development.
- **Develop a new network** of highly trained artists, culture leaders, creative entrepreneurs, and designers.
- **Equip creative producers** with the tools to manage all aspects of the arts and culture business.

PILOT PHASE SUCCESS:

ELEVATED THOUGHT

“All young people should and could have access to wide-ranging, creative and alternative learning opportunities. By increasing capacity for creative access and exposure for our young people, we are allowing for a more humanizing approach to supporting their futures; empowering them through art in its many forms. What will the world look like when we, as a species, more readily accept the importance and power of creativity?”

– MARQUIS VICTOR, FOUNDING
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF
ELEVATED THOUGHT



CONVENINGS

THE NEED:

When people from all parts of a system come together, it's possible to identify root causes and create solutions to address challenges like barriers to funding, creative workforce support, affordable artist space, and professional leadership development.

2020-2022 COMMITMENT:

ECCF will invest \$200,000 to engage hundreds of people at:

- **The 2021 Arts & Culture Summit** providing education, inspiration and networking opportunities.
- **Four Think Labs**, bringing people together to incubate ideas in emerging areas affecting the creative sector.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES:

- **Create** stronger, cross-sector partnerships.
- **Inspire co-funders** to invest in long-term projects that address critical challenges.
- **Pilot and scale** innovative systems solutions for issues suppressing a healthy creative sector.

PILOT PHASE SUCCESS:

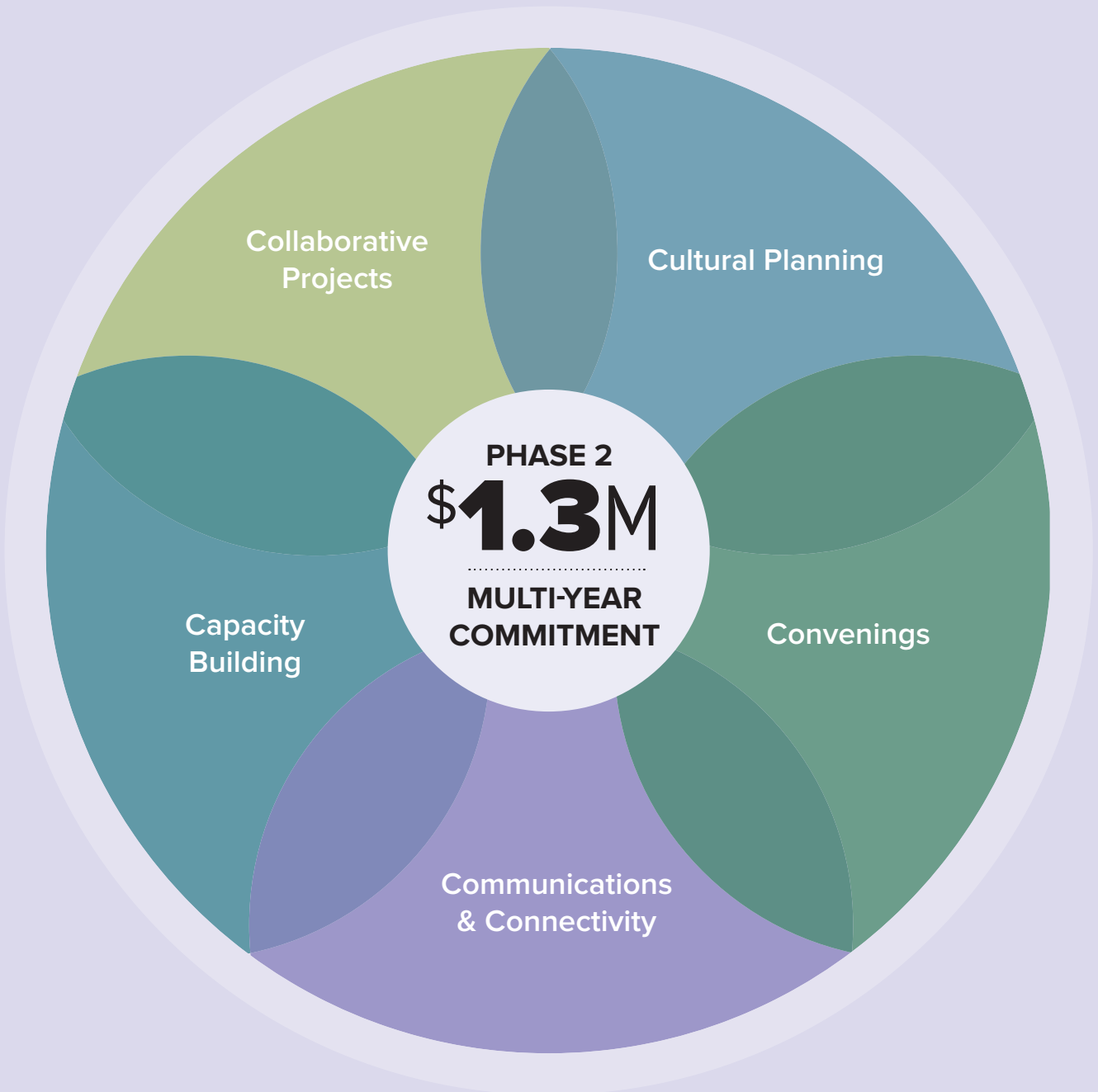
IPSWICH RECREATION & CULTURE

"The human conundrum is that we are social beings born into individuated bodies. We are, each one of us, in and of ourselves; incomplete. Art is our refined effort to bridge beyond the epicenter of self. And culture is the resulting fabric that connects us."

— **KERRIE BATES, IPSWICH RECREATION & CULTURE**



CREATIVE COUNTY INITIATIVE



**A systems approach to strengthen arts,
culture and creativity in Essex County**

PARTNER WITH US.

An effort like the CCI requires all parts of the creative system working together to bring about real change. Advocacy, financial support and engagement from across our region can shape a dynamic, thriving Essex County

How You Can Help:

ADVOCATE

Become an advocate for dedicated arts and culture funding – even a small amount can make a huge difference.

REGISTER

If you are an artist, arts organization or nonprofit, register and share your passion at essexcountycrates.org.

CALL

If you have a new idea to embolden the creative sector, call us.

DONATE

If you can support the arts with money, space, talent or time, act today.

HIRE

If you are a business leader, hire an artist and build any bridge you can between your business and the arts.

SHARE

Use your social media networks to share the critical importance of arts and culture.

PARTNER

Get involved with an arts organization in your community.

VOTE

Learn the issues and vote for policies and candidates that support arts and culture.





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Art Inspires Us.

It reflects and frames
how we engage with the world.

Culture Grounds Us.

It connects us to our past,
brings us together and lifts us up.

Creativity Propels Us Forward.

It spurs us to innovate and drives us
to imagine new possibilities.



Special appreciation to
John Andrews, Creative
Collective, for lending his
photography to
this brochure.



CREATIVE COUNTY INITIATIVE STEERING COMMITTEE

Karen Ristuben	Program Director, Creative County Initiative
John Andrews	Creative Collective LLC
Elena Bachrach	Development Manager, MassCreative
Dianne Brand	Financial Advisor
Ana Colmenero	Board Member, Peabody Essex Museum
Judith Farzan	Board Chair, Essex Arts Center
Greg Federspiel	Town Administrator, Manchester-by-the-Sea
Deborah Greel	Public Art Director, City of Salem (retired)
Lillian Hsu	Public Art Director, City of Cambridge
Steve Immerman	President, Montserrat College of Art (retired)
Sarah Jackson	Owner, SJ Consulting
Katie King	Owner, KM Recruiting
Noah Koretz	Director, Transformative Development, MassDevelopment
Kate Luchini	Artist and Arts Strategy Consultant
Pedro Miguel Soto	Associate Director, Beyond Walls
Jean Nichols	Biotechnology Executive, (retired)
Jackie Rosenthal	Community Volunteer
Casey Soward	Executive Director, Cabot Theatre
Rosario Ubiera-Minaya	Executive Director, Amplify Latinx
Jennifer Welter	Town of Lynnfield, Planning and Conservation Commission

ECCF's mission is to inspire philanthropy that strengthens the communities of Essex County. We do this by managing charitable assets, strengthening and supporting nonprofits and engaging in strategic community leadership.



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Essex County Community Foundation meets national standards for U.S. Community Foundations.