



CREATIVE FORCES

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

CREATIVE FORCES NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER COMMUNICATIONS SUPPORT

SECTION A. INTRODUCTION

Background

Creative Forces®: NEA Military Healing Arts Network is an initiative of the National Endowment for the Arts in partnership with the U.S. Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs that seeks to improve the health, well-being, and quality of life for military and veteran populations exposed to trauma, as well as their families and caregivers. Creative Forces is managed in partnership with Americans for the Arts, the Henry M. Jackson Foundation for the Advancement of Military Medicine, and Mid-America Arts Alliance.

The mission of Creative Forces is to improve the health, well-being, and quality of life of trauma-exposed military service members and veterans, as well as their families and caregivers, by increasing knowledge of and access to clinical creative arts therapies and non-clinical community arts engagement. The initiative currently supports creative arts therapies, virtual arts engagement and community arts engagement programs for targeted military connected populations¹ in clinical and community-based settings², as well as telehealth activities in partnership with the VA Rural Veterans Tele-Rehabilitation Initiative (RVTRI). The knowledge and products generated by Creative Forces activities are disseminated through the online [Creative Forces National Resource Center \(NRC\)](#). The latest phase of Creative Forces, a national grants program, was launched by National Endowment for the Arts in partnership with the Mid-America Arts Alliance in September 2021.

Purpose:

Americans for the Arts on behalf of the Creative Forces®: NEA Military Healing Arts Network is issuing this Request for Proposals (RFP) for the purposes of identifying a contractor to assist the National Endowment for the Arts and the Creative Forces cooperators in planning for, supporting and coordinating public communications, marketing and digital engagement strategies associated with programming and content for the online Creative Forces National Resource Center.

¹ We define “Military-Connected Populations” to include active duty service members, National Guard, reserve, veterans, military families, spouses, and caregivers.

² Creative Forces clinical sites include Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER), Anchorage AK; Fort Carson, CO; James A. Haley Veterans’ Hospital, Tampa FL; National Intrepid Center of Excellence (NICoE) at Walter Reed Bethesda, Bethesda, MD; Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, Jacksonville, NC; Fort Hood, TX; Fort Belvoir, VA;; Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Tacoma, WA. Creative Forces RVTRI sites include North Florida/South Georgia Veterans Health System, Gainesville, FL; Youngstown VA Outpatient Clinic, OH; Richard L. Roudebush VA Medical Center, and; G.V. (Sonny) Montgomery VA Medical Center, Jackson, MS.

Agreement Type: General Agreement

The contract award is being made utilizing funds from a cooperative agreement between AFTA and the NEA therefore must comply with the legal, financial, and administrative requirements outlined in the [National Endowment for the Arts General Terms & Conditions for Grants and Cooperative Agreements to Organizations](#).

Project Description:

Americans for the Arts on behalf of Creative Forces seeks to retain a communications consultant to provide ongoing communications planning and outreach in support of Creative Forces activities, content and engagement disseminated through its National Resource Center (www.creativeforcesnrc.arts.gov). The NRC is an online resource that shares knowledge about clinical and community best practices in serving the target military populations that have been served through the activities Creative Forces has been engaged in since its inception. In addition, Creative Forces invests in clinical research on the impacts and benefits—physical, social, and emotional—of these innovative treatment methods. Among the kinds of public-facing information, products and activities under the NRC include toolkits, training materials, webinars, and online exhibits. Creative Forces® is a registered trademark of the National Endowment for the Arts.

SECTION B: ELIGIBILITY

This contract utilizes federal funds and is open to entities eligible to conduct business with a federal department or agency of the federal government including non-profit organizations, for-profit organizations, individuals, state and local government agencies, etc. All contractors and subcontractors are required to certify to the best of their knowledge that they or any other principal person working on the contract have not been disbarred or suspended from participation in a transaction with any federal agency.

SECTION C: PROJECT SCOPE OF WORK AND DELIVERABLES

The contract shall be overseen by Americans for the Arts Creative Forces Project Director and payments managed by the Project Administrator. All content developed through this contract will be coordinated through the NRC Project Director and will be subject to approvals by the NEA Creative Forces Project Director and the NEA Office of Public Affairs (OPA).

The Scope of Work outlines services equivalent to approximately a .75FTE over the course of the contract. In addition to average weekly hours that are likely needed to achieve the deliverables outlined below, it is anticipated that additional hours per week may be scheduled as needed during the times when the NRC is gearing up for a large content push or webinar and as part of agreed upon timelines.

C.1 Communications Content Generation and Coordination (20%)

- Propose, write, edit, and promote a variety of different content to support communications and marketing efforts, including, but not limited to, announcements, newsletters, website

copy, brochures, emails, blogs, articles and press releases primarily designed for online and multimedia platforms.

- Contribute to and execute plan to develop existing and generate new Creative Forces social media content linking to the National Resource Center (NRC) in coordination with the National Endowment for the Arts.
- Coordinate Creative Forces image database in Bynder ensuring all appropriate rights and releases have been secured for every submission.
- Manage social media and outreach accounts.
- Ensure all related press content scheduled for NRC and social media publication has been vetted by and signed off on by appropriate individuals with oversight authority, including NRC Director, content area experts, national team leads, Arts Endowment Office of Public Affairs (OPA), and Arts Endowment Office of Research and Analysis (ORA) as required.
- Provide Creative Forces information, photos and video with related permissions on request to support National Endowment for the Arts Office of Public Affairs media inquiries.
- Advise and/or collaborate with graphic designers on art direction of design/layout for wide-variety of media, including print, web, collateral, online/digital media.
- Draft and/or advise on video scripts and participate as part of production teams to ensure effective messaging as needed.
- Ensure content compliance with federal policies including FedRamp, Reduction in Paperwork Act and accessibility requirements.

C.2 Create and Coordinate Digital Communications (20%)

- Work with Creative Forces national team and NEA Office of Public Affairs to support an integrated digital communications strategy that delivers consistent and timely messaging across all channels.
- Support the identification and coordinate communications needs for activities taking place under each of the Creative Forces participating cooperators, including the Henry M. Jackson Foundation for the Advancement of Military Medicine, Mid-America Arts Alliance and Americans for the Arts.
- Use including social marketing determine appropriate channels for target populations and create effective messages that are tailored to the intended audience(s).
- Assist in planning, communicating and marketing public events and new NRC content including, but not limited to, developing press and social media kits, updating and maintaining subscription outreach lists and implementing communications timelines.
- Ensure media inquiries coming through the NRC or Creative Forces cooperators are routed through the NEA OPA.
- Monitor and track information requests coming through the NRC site; craft standard responses as needed or redirect question to appropriate contractor. Aggregate questions and answers into FAQs that can be posted on the NRC.

C.3 Data collection, analysis, and reporting: (5%)

- Contribute summative data regarding communications activities related to content and their outcomes to quarterly NRC Content Report..
- Provide weekly reports on content status, challenges and opportunities to the Creative Forces National Resource Center Director.
- Create specific reports detailing per event/activity the successes and failures of communications campaigns and strategies based on google analytics.

C.4 Communications and Contract Reporting (5%)

- Participate in National Resource Center weekly team meeting calls.
- Provide written weekly status reports on NRC communication strategy progress and communicate opportunities/challenges.
- Ensure consistency of messaging and non-duplication of communication efforts in consultation with NEA's Office of Public Affairs and Cooperators.
- Provide bi-weekly invoicing organized by deliverables to creativeforces@artsusa.org.
- Once approved, the contractor will complete the scope of work within the contract period. Requests for changes to the project scope of work and/or budget must be submitted in writing to creativeforces@artsusa.org and be approved by the AFTA Creative Forces Project Director at least two weeks prior to the anticipated change activity or event.

C.5 Deliverables and Delivery Schedule

<p>Onboarding:</p>	<p>Kick Off Meeting within 7 Days after Contract Start</p> <p>Prepare a detailed timeline and work plan in collaboration with NRC Director and Americans for the Arts incorporating input from the kick-off meeting due within 2 weeks of Kick Off Meeting.</p>
<p>C1. Communications Content Generation and Coordination</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Execute plan to develop and generate social media, blog and news content for the National Resource Center. • Coordinate workflow and approvals to vet content prior to placement on the National Resource Center and social media outlets. • Provide Creative Forces information, photos and video with related permissions on request to support National Endowment for the Arts Office of Public Affairs media inquiries. • Maintain Creative Forces image database in Bynder. • Coordinate publicity around events, webinars, new content releases • Manage social media and outreach accounts. 	<p>Ongoing throughout the duration of the contract</p>
<p>C2. Create and Coordinate Digital Communications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop, update and maintain an integrated digital communications strategy that delivers consistent and timely messaging across all channels. • Identify and coordinate communications needs for activities taking place under each of the Creative Forces participating cooperators, including the Henry M. Jackson Foundation for the Advancement of Military Medicine, Mid-America Arts Alliance and Americans for the Arts. • Create and publish social media posts • Update and maintain subscription lists • Provide communications for summits, webinars, and internal and external programming 	<p>Ongoing throughout the duration of the contract</p>

<p>C3. Data collection, analysis, and reporting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribute to quarterly NRC Content Report inclusive of all communications strategies and outcomes. • Create reports detailing the successes and failures of communications campaigns and strategies based on Google Analytics. 	<p>Analysis of quarterly google analytics report submitted within one week of end of each quarter.</p>
<p>C4. Communications and Contract Reporting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekly written status reports 	<p>Weekly status updates and participation in NRC team meetings</p>

Budget

Please provide a budget detailing the number of hours and rate to complete the deliverables as outlined in the RFP. This is a firm fixed contract. All required expenses should be included in the quote submission.

SECTION D: CONTRACT PERIOD AND AWARD AMOUNT

Contract Period

The work contained under this contract shall begin on or about December 1, 2021 and conclude on or about December 15, 2022.

Award Amount

The award amount for this contract shall not exceed \$96,000. A detailed breakdown of budget expenses including hourly rates for specific activities and services should be provided. The total award amount is inclusive of the cost for all support services and deliverables associated with the project and detailed in the project budget.

Requests for changes to the project scope of work and/or budget must be submitted in writing to creativeforces@artsusa.org and be approved by the AFTA Creative Forces Project Director at least two weeks prior to the anticipated change activity or event. All travel for events requiring on-site communications support must be submitted in writing to creativeforces@artsusa.org and be approved by the AFTA Creative Forces Project Director in advance. Travel will be reimbursed separate and apart from this contract.

The contract award is being made utilizing funds from a cooperative agreement between AFTA and the NEA and therefore must comply with the legal, financial, and administrative requirements outlined in the [National Endowment for the Arts General Terms & Conditions for Grants and Cooperative Agreements to Organizations](#).

SECTION E: QUALIFICATIONS AND SELECTION CRITERIA

Qualifications

- Possess at minimum of an undergraduate or equivalent level of field experience in communications or public relations, or arts management. A degree or demonstrated prior work experience in Communications, Journalism, marketing or other similar public relations role for government, education or nonprofit agencies is strongly preferred. If a firm or group is submitting, qualifications of all personnel involved in the project should be provided.
- At least 3 years of work experience in communications coordination for web or technology-based projects ideally for government, education or nonprofit agencies.
- Superior ability to work collaboratively and collegially across teams and agencies to secure approval and consensus while meeting challenging deadlines.
- Demonstrated technology proficiency, preferably in Canva, Adobe Creative Suite, Microsoft Office, Teams, HTML/CSS, Drupal, Mailchimp, Bynder, Hootsuite and Smartsheet.
- Demonstrated ability to coordinate the distribution of content across multimedia channels and execute a content strategy that drives high engagement.
- Strong writing skills with the ability to quickly craft news stories and summaries of content with knowledge of AP and Chicago reference styles and previous experience writing for the web.
- Previous experience developing/managing multichannel media messaging to deliver meaningful content and branded messages.
- Previous experience coordinating and supporting outreach and registration for virtual as well as in-person events.
- Willingness to learn and stay updated on industry trends in order to adjust the communications strategy as needed.
- Ability to rapidly adapt and respond to changes in environment and priorities.
- Ability to elicit cooperation from internal and external stakeholders to create relevant and reliable messaging.
- Candidates must possess strong problem solving, and analytical skills.
- Previous experience or familiarity with the field of creative arts therapies and or community-based arts programming relative to military and veteran populations is advantageous.

Selection Criteria:

Understanding of the Project 50%

The contractor demonstrates a thorough understanding of the project and a forward-thinking multi-channel approach to its communication needs. Submission does not merely repeat the RFP's Scope of Work activities but demonstrates knowledge of how and by what means the deliverables shall be accomplished.

Qualifications and Experience (Past Performance) 40%

The contractor submits the bios of all individuals who will be involved in executing the project, including writing samples and/ relevant online links to clients, communication campaigns and/or products managed, especially those that are technology and web-based. If invited for the final review, applicants will participate in a video-conference interview to further evaluate qualifications, experience and fit for the proposed scope of work.

Budget and Price 10%

The budget and per unit costs for services are reasonable and reflect the ability to accomplish the deliverables outlined in the RFP. The work contained under this contract shall begin on or about November 1, 2021 and conclude on December 31, 2022. The cost for support services and deliverables of this contract shall not exceed \$96,000.

SECTION F: SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS AND APPLICATION DEADLINES

All responses to this RFP be submitted via email to creativeforces@artsusa.org by **11:59 pm ET on WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 17**. **Failure to provide all of the required information as stated in Request for Proposal may result in an ineligible rating or may affect the overall rating.**

Submission should be no more than five (5) to ten (10) pages and include:

- Cover letter
- Brief outline of proposed approach to establishing a workplan and timeline for deliverables as well as a detailed project budget, including breakdown of expenses.
- A list and brief bios of all individuals who will be involved in implementing the project that demonstrates the qualifications and ability to execute duties, activities and deliverables as outlined in Scope of Work.
- 3 writing samples on technology/web-based platforms (blog post, e-newsletter, online promotional/marketing materials)
- A list of clients, communication campaigns and/or products managed, especially those that are technology and web-based and relevant to this RFP is highly recommended.
- Names and email addresses of three individuals who may be contacted for references.

Submitting Questions:

All questions pertaining to this solicitation must be directed by email to creativeforces@artsusa.org. All responses to applicant questions will be posted to the RFP public site at <https://www.americansforthearts.org/by-program/reports-and-data/legislation-policy/the-national-initiative-for-arts-health-in-the-military/creative-forces-nea-military-healing-arts-network>

All questions must be submitted no later than November 15 in order to guarantee posting to the public site. All responses will be publicly posted to the website on an ongoing basis.

Start Date: O/A December 1, 2021

End Date: O/A December 15, 2022

This contract is supported with federal funds through a cooperative agreement from the National Endowment for the Arts to Americans for the Arts to administer the Creative Forces: The NEA Military Healing Arts Network (the Network, or "Creative Forces") project. Americans for the Arts serves as the

contracting agency for this General Agreement. All contracts are subject to the terms of the contracting agency Americans for the Arts.