What's the Challenge?
Systems make all of these important steps to economic security difficult.

- Artist educational programs often fail to provide business training necessary to grow a creative practice.
- Artists report a lack of opportunities to gain information about financial literacy relevant to their experience and circumstances.
- Grant writing and project completion can be complicated and the process can lack transparency.
- Legal barriers and government rules can be complex and costly for artists; political systems can often feel mysterious.

“Many artists didn’t feel fully equipped to successfully complete applications or strategize around how to create a funding plan to pursue opportunities. For instance, one disclosed that when they contacted their local Cultural Affairs office, the staff member simply told them what they needed to do to apply for a grant, when they were actually seeking information on how to execute the proposal. “[They need to] listen to what our needs are, and respond accordingly and to put on the mind frame of [being] our agent.”

– Anonymous Artist 2023
What Can We Do? Solutions to Try

Consider Creating Educational Opportunities

- Offer direct support through training and mentorship. Try a regional approach, like NVLAA, to reach a wide array of creatives.
- Provide a search engine for available grants to artists.
- Convene artists interested in developing shared space and provide support for the development planning.
- Provide advocacy guidance by teaching the public and local artists about policy issues regarding public and private funding.
- Share information and support for businesses and local government officials interested in working with artists, like the Art-Train program and the Municipal Artist Partnership.
- Conduct artist consultations to determine how best to respond to these educational needs. For example, some agency officials report that workshops are not well attended, though artists often request them. Talking with some local artists may provide perspective on the offering or marketing gaps.
- Create staff positions that focus on artist-support matters, like assistance regarding funding, editorial guidance for grant writing, and mentorship to artists creating a small business.

For some arts administrators, their positions in Local Arts Agencies have allowed them to have influence within these sectors. One participant shared: “I have an odd position where I'm dual hatted as a city employee and I run the arts council. I get to be that connection point for the community and I have an in with the mayor and the city council.”
- Anonymous Local Arts Agency Representative 2023

Advocate for Local Policy

- Advocate for changes to local government application and contracting processes that recognize barriers created and the capacity limitations of individual artists.
- Extend opportunities for assistance with project development and budgeting for RFPs and RFQs.
- Promote financial literacy and entrepreneurial training at all levels of education.
- Utilize officials in a position to bridge the community and the local government.

Artists Thrive is a growing initiative offering activities, practices, language, visions and values of what it means to succeed and thrive as an artist – and what it means to have a thriving arts sector and, eventually, thriving communities.

For more information about Americans for the Arts' Supporting Individual Artists Field Research Project and findings, please read the full report or reach out to services@artsusa.org.