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Governor Bill Richardson Announces \$297,000 in Federal Recovery Funds for Arts Jobs in New Mexico

SANTA FE- Governor Bill Richardson today announced that New Mexico Arts, the state arts agency and a division of the Department of Cultural Affairs, has been awarded \$297,000 in federal funds from the National Endowment for the Arts to preserve arts jobs in New Mexico under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

“The arts are extremely important economic and tourism drivers in New Mexico,” said Governor Bill Richardson. “We want to insure that our artists and arts organizations not only survive but thrive during these tough economic times.”

Loie Fecteau, executive director of New Mexico Arts, said the state arts agency successfully submitted a plan to the National Endowment for the Arts to allocate \$247,000 from its total NEA recovery funds to nonprofit arts organizations across New Mexico.

“We’re very pleased we got a green light from the NEA to get these Arts Jobs funds out to nonprofit arts organizations across our state,” Fecteau said. “We appreciate that Congress understands the importance of the arts in the economic recovery.”

Under NEA rules, the arts recovery funds may only be used to pay for “salary support, full or partial, for one or more positions that are critical to an organization’s artistic mission and that are in jeopardy or have been eliminated as a result of the current economic climate and/or fees for previously engaged artists and/or contractual personnel to maintain or expand the period during which such persons would be engaged.”

Fecteau said nonprofit arts organizations may apply to New Mexico Arts for an Arts Jobs Grant for either up to \$20,000 in salary support for an endangered arts job or up to \$7,500 to pay for artists’ fees or contractors, as specified in the NEA rules and criteria.

“Priority will be given to arts organizations that serve our underserved populations, especially in rural New Mexico,” Fecteau said. “We expect to be able to give out between 15 and 20 of these Arts Jobs Grants.”

New Mexico Arts plans to collaborate with the Western States Arts Federation (WESTAF), which also is regranting ARRA funds for the NEA in the Western states, and with the Santa Fe Arts Commission, which has applied to the NEA to regrant ARRA funds. NEA rules stipulate that organizations may only get ARRA arts funds from one source. “If the Santa Fe Arts Commission is designated a regranter by the NEA, we expect them to handle Santa Fe, and we will focus on the rest of the state,” Fecteau said.

Fecteau said New Mexico Arts plans to use WESTAF’s online grants application system, which it uses for its regular arts grants, and which WESTAF is making available for free for the ARRA funds. “We expect to accept applications online for the Arts Jobs Grants later this Spring,” Fecteau said.

To be eligible to apply for an Arts Jobs Grant, nonprofit arts organizations must have received a regular arts grant from New Mexico Arts in the last three years (FY09, FY08, or FY07) or be a current applicant for FY10 and be in good standing.

“The NEA is being very strict with how these Arts Jobs funds can be used,” Fecteau said. “But we think our system for distributing these funds in New Mexico will satisfy their reporting requirements and performance measures.”

New Mexico Arts expects to announce the Arts Jobs Grants awards after a special meeting this summer of the New Mexico Arts Commission, its 15-member advisory body appointed by Governor Richardson, and hopes to get the funds out to arts organizations by the fall.

The NEA also has approved plans by New Mexico Arts to use \$44,000 of the ARRA funds to hire a state public art contractor and \$6,000 to cover Arts Jobs administrative costs, including a peer panel to review the Arts Jobs Grants applications and the special meeting of the New Mexico Arts Commission, Fecteau said. “We plan to use our own portion of the stimulus funds to hire a contractor for an important public art position that has been frozen due to the recent budget cuts in state government,” she said.

New Mexico Arts has been conducting a survey over the past month to gauge the state of the arts in New Mexico during this economic recession. “We plan to use our survey to come up with strategies to best be of service,” Fecteau said. “We want to make sure we’re doing everything we can to help all our artists and arts organizations.”