CAPE COD
COMMISSION

Barnstable County
FY27 License Plate Grant Application Submission

Arts Foundation of Cape Cod

CONTACT INFORMATION

Organization Name: Arts Foundation of Cape Cod
Location: Barnstable, MA
Project Manager Name: Julie Wake
Project Manager Title: Executive Director
Project Manager Email: jwake@artsfoundation.org

PROJECT INFORMATION

Name of Project: Creative Conversations

Brief Project Description:
Creative Conversations serves to connect the arts sector to other key Cape Cod industries with the goal of facilitating connections and relationships; encouraging cross-sector collaborations; and transforming ideas into action that address important issues facing our community.
Through the program, local artists, creatives, and arts organizations will have a seat at the table, and be viewed as a viable partner to raise awareness, stimulate dialogue, and enact positive change when it comes to enhancing the quality of life and tackling public challenges in our region.

How does the project advance one or more 2024 Cape Cod CEDS Key Actions?
Creative Conversations advances four Key Actions identified in the 2024 Cape Cod Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS): supporting year-round community activity and civic engagement; providing opportunities for organizations and entrepreneurs to pilot ideas; supporting growing industries; and connecting the workforce to educational and training opportunities.
Creative Conversations is a free, public forum connecting individuals working in the arts with those in other key sectors, including healthcare, environment, housing, education, hospitality, and municipal government. Through dialogue, relationship building, cross-sector collaboration, and investment in promising ideas, the program creates opportunities to address shared regional challenges.

The program supports year-round community activity and civic engagement by bringing people together to discuss regional issues and identify ways to address them. The Arts Foundation launched Creative Conversations in March with nearly 50 individuals at the Harwich Conservation Trust's Old Bank Street Firehouse. Three artists and three local land trust leaders explored opportunities to connect the arts and conservation.

One tangible result has already emerged. In October, Barnstable Land Trust will launch Write Out Cape Cod, inspired by that first Creative Conversation. The program will encourage educators, students, families, community groups, and local leaders to get outside, observe, reflect, write, and share stories about the world around them.

Creative Conversations also advances the CEDS Key Action of providing opportunities for organizations and entrepreneurs to pilot ideas. The Arts Foundation plans to provide seed funding for promising collaborations that emerge from these conversations, creating a pathway for ideas to move from discussion to action.

The program supports growing industries by strengthening connections between Cape Cod's creative economy and other important regional sectors. The Cape & Islands Workforce Investment Board estimates that Cape Cod has more than 400 creative entities supporting approximately 7,000 local jobs. Future Creative Conversations will connect this creative workforce with healthcare, housing, education, hospitality, municipal government, and other sectors.

Finally, Creative Conversations creates educational and professional development opportunities for the workforce. Artists gain greater understanding of other sectors and their challenges, while professionals in those sectors learn how artists and creative approaches can contribute to their work. Networking and relationship building can also lead to new partnerships and professional opportunities.

At its core, Creative Conversations responds to the CEDS recognition that Cape Cod's economic challenges are interconnected and that "new collaborations and reinforced partnerships will be essential" to successful implementation. By intentionally building those relationships, generating ideas, and investing in collaborations, Creative Conversations turns dialogue into action.

What economic development needs/priorities will this project address?

Creative Conversations addresses several interconnected economic development priorities identified in the CEDS: building a more resilient and diverse year-round economy, strengthening cross-sector collaboration, supporting the region's creative economy, and reinforcing the connection between arts, tourism, and local businesses.

The CEDS recognizes that Cape Cod's economic challenges are closely connected to broader regional issues, including housing affordability, wastewater infrastructure, and climate change, and that "new collaborations and reinforced partnerships will be essential" to strengthening the region's economy, places, and people.

Creative Conversations is designed to build those partnerships. The program brings artists and arts leaders together with professionals working in healthcare, housing, education, the environment, municipal government, hospitality, and other sectors. Brief presentations demonstrate connections between sectors, followed by facilitated discussion focused on identifying opportunities for collaboration.

The Arts Foundation's goal is to provide seed funding for promising projects that emerge from these conversations, moving ideas from discussion to action and creating opportunities to pilot collaborative approaches to regional challenges.

The project also strengthens an important component of Cape Cod's economy. The Cape & Islands Workforce Investment Board estimates that Cape Cod has more than 400 creative entities supporting approximately 7,000 local jobs, 13 percent more than the national average. Investing in connections between this workforce and other sectors can create new partnerships, opportunities, and economic activity.

Arts and culture also support Cape Cod's tourism and year-round economy. Cultural activity generates spending at restaurants, lodging, retail establishments, and other local businesses while contributing to vibrant downtowns and communities. Massachusetts Cultural Council reports that cultural tourists spend more per day and per trip than other travelers, demonstrating the broader economic impact of investment in the arts.

Ultimately, Creative Conversations addresses the CEDS priority of creating "a stronger year-round economy, one with more diverse industries and employment opportunities." By strengthening the creative economy and connecting it with other sectors, the program builds relationships that can lead to new projects, partnerships, and approaches to some of Cape Cod's most pressing challenges.

What is the anticipated impact of this project on these economic development needs/priorities? How will this project support Cape Cod's economic resiliency?

This program is focused on ways the arts — artists, arts organizations, and arts businesses — can better understand and contribute to addressing key challenges facing our region. It serves as a connector, putting the arts sector in the same room as individuals working in healthcare, housing, the environment, education, hospitality, municipal government, technology, and more.

That connection is the first step. Through strategic and purposeful dialogue, attendees will learn more about the challenges facing our community and how the arts are being, and can be, integrated into addressing those challenges.

From dialogue, the next step is to encourage cross-sector partnerships, turning ideas into action that creates meaningful change in our community. The Arts Foundation plans to support this work through seed funding for promising collaborations that emerge from Creative Conversations.

This builds economic resilience by creating stronger connections between the arts and other sectors, demonstrating how involving artists and arts organizations can be mutually beneficial.

These relationships can lead to new projects, partnerships, audiences, and opportunities for artists, arts organizations, and creative businesses.
Over time, these expanded networks can make the arts sector more resilient by diversifying opportunities and creating relationships that help artists and organizations withstand future economic challenges. At the same time, professionals in other sectors will have a greater understanding of how the arts can help advance their own goals.
The anticipated impact is a stronger network of cross-sector relationships that moves beyond individual conversations. Creative Conversations creates a pathway for artists and arts organizations to become active partners in addressing regional challenges while strengthening the role of the creative sector in Cape Cod's year-round economy.

Are there any anticipated challenges to implementing the project within the required timeframe of the grant award?
We do not anticipate any significant challenges that would prevent us from implementing Creative Conversations within the required grant timeframe. Our goal is to hold 4-6 sessions over the course of the year.
The primary logistical challenge will be coordinating each session, including identifying venues, securing speakers, finding dates and times that work for all presenters, and marketing each conversation to drive strong participation and engagement.
The larger challenge is ensuring continuity. Meaningful change will not happen after a single Creative Conversation. Each session will require intentional follow-up, additional opportunities for participants to connect, and ways to build momentum around promising ideas.
The Arts Foundation will address this by continuing conversations beyond the initial sessions and identifying opportunities to support collaborations that emerge, including through seed funding. Our goal is not simply to convene people, but to create a pathway from conversation to relationships, ideas, and ultimately action.

Would the funding be used to support a grant program? Yes / No
No

Which municipality or municipalities are supportive of this project? (Optional)
We have not targeted any municipalities through Creative Conversations, but our goal is to connect with towns and town leaders in the future. There have been examples (Boston) of where municipalities have hired artists-in-residence to support the work of governments. That is one potential area where we could create a forum around ways that artists can be embedded in municipal departments to enhance the delivery of local services.

SCOPE OF WORK AND TIMELINE

Task 1

Description: The Arts Foundation will hold anywhere from 3-4 Creative Conversations over the course of the next year with different key sectors on the Cape (healthcare, housing, the environment, education, science, technology, municipal government, hospitality).
Deliverable: Each session will focus on a different sector to establish a relationship between the arts and that specific sector. A strategic conversation will be held, featuring presenters from the arts and other sectors, followed by a purposeful dialogue intended to generate ideas and encourage cross-sector partnerships.
Estimated Completion Date: The Creative Conversations will start January 2027 and end in December 2027.

Task 2

Description: Hold 1-2 Creative Conversations that serve to follow up on ones that had previously been held among the arts and that other sector.
Deliverable: By holding cross-sector conversations on a continuous basis, we will ensure that relationships are strengthened and partnerships begin to form. We may tailor these sessions differently to encourage more interaction to stimulate ideas and opportunities for collaboration.
Estimated Completion Date: The follow up Creative Conversations will start in January 2027 and conclude in December 2027.

Task 3

Description: Encourage artists in our current and past Capacity-Building Programs to attend and participate in Creative Conversations.
Deliverable: Our Capacity-Building Program is a professional development program that is entering its fifth year in January 2027. Through the program, artists develop a business plan; take workshops aimed at strengthening their creative practice; participate in one-on-one and small group coaching sessions; and receive a $1,000 stipend at the end of program completion.
By involving these artists in Creative Conversations, we will help them think about their work in new ways. It also gives them an opportunity to broaden their network and grow their business by forging partnerships across different sectors.
Estimated Completion Date: This task will kick off on January 2027 and conclude in December 2027.

Task 4

Description: The Arts Foundation will contribute its own funding to invest in anywhere from 3-6 projects that arise from Creative Conversations.

Deliverable: The Arts Foundation wants to showcase the power of cross-sector collaboration in addressing important community issues. It will look to fund 3-6 projects that are the result of Creative Conversations, encouraging attendees to submit proposals that showcase how partnerships can drive meaningful change.
Estimated Completion Date: The Arts Foundation will kick off its investments in projects that arise from Creative Conversations, starting in January 2027. Depending on when we receive suitable cross-sector project proposals, this will conclude into spring 2028, ending with a final report on project impact.

PROJECT PARTNERS

Project Partner 1:

Name: Michael Lach
Title: Executive Director, Harwich Conservation Trust
Email: mike@harwichconservationtrust.org
Role/Description: In March 2026, the Arts Foundation held its first Creative Conversation series at the Harwich Conservation Trust's Old Bank Street Firehouse. The building was filled with individuals from the arts as well as conservation. Our goal is to continue this with a Creative Conversations in the next year. We will work with Michael to guide that session, and ways we can move collaboration between the arts and conservation forward.

Project Partner 2:

Name: Sue Dahling Sullivan
Title: Director of Communications & Programs
Email: Sue@BLT.org
Role/Description: Barnstable Land Trust will serve as a community and outcomes partner, providing insight into how cross-sector relationships developed through Creative Conversations can lead to new programs and collaborations. BLT's Write Out Cape Cod initiative grew directly from the first Creative Conversation and will provide a tangible example for assessing the program's impact and potential for replication.

FY27 LICENSE PLATE GRANT APPLICATION BUDGET

Please upload this sheet as a PDF as part of your application.

Please fill in all budget categories relevant for your proposed project, including a brief description of the funds requested. The total amount requested should equal the total amount noted in the scope of work. All project expenses are provided on a reimbursement basis.

Category	Amount Requested	Match Amount (optional)	Total Project Cost	Budget Narrative
Personnel, 240 hrs. x $45	$10,800.00	$0.00	$10,800.00	Supports 240 hours of dedicated staff time at $45/hour to coordinate Creative Conversations, including partner and speaker coordination, event planning, participant outreach, follow-up, relationship building, and tracking project outcomes.
Fringe Benefits (from Staffing Plan)				
Travel				
Equipment				
Supplies				
Contractual/Consulting	$4,200.00		$4,200.00	Supports facilitators, speakers, and other specialized professional services needed to plan and deliver Creative Conversations sessions.

Small Grants Program		$6,000.00		AFCC-funded seed support for 3–6 cross-sector pilot projects emerging from Creative Conversations. No License Plate Grant funds will be used for these awards.
Other	$3,000.00		$3,000.00	Supports direct program expenses including venue costs, outreach and marketing, accessibility needs, participant materials, and other event-related expenses.
Total Direct Cost				
Indirect Costs*				
Total	$18,000.00	$6,000.00	$18,000.00	

*Maximum of 15% of project direct cost unless the project applicant has a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement.

FY27 LICENSE PLATE GRANT APPLICATION STAFFING PLAN

Please upload this sheet as a PDF as part of your application.

For each individual participating in this project, please share their name, title, and associated hourly rate, number of hours. In addition, please l
member/volunteer will participate in. The staffing plan should be uploaded at the end of the application.

Staff Name and Title	Hourly Rate	Number of Hours	Total Project Cost	Amount Requested
Amy Neill, Creative Exchang	$45.00	240	$10,800.00	$10,800.00
Total Personnel				
Fringe (enter fringe rate as percent):				
TOTAL:	$45.00	240	$10,800.00	$10,800.00

Amy Neill	Coordinate Creative Conversations and follow-up sessions; identify and schedule speakers, partners, and venues; r participant communications; engage artists from AFCC's Creative Exchange programs; cultivate cross-sector relatio up activities; and track participation, partnerships, project ideas, and outcomes.

ist the tasks that each staff

Match Amount

manage outreach and
nships; coordinate follow-

BARNSTABLE LAND TRUST

September 25, 2026

Cape Cod Commission
3225 Main Street
Barnstable, MA 02630

To Whom It May Concern,

I am pleased to support the Arts Foundation of Cape Cod's application for Cape Cod License Plate Grant funding to expand its Creative Conversations initiative.

Barnstable Land Trust participated in the Arts Foundation's first Creative Conversation last spring, which brought together people working in arts and culture, conservation, and other sectors to explore where our work intersects and what might be possible through greater collaboration. For us, the conversation did exactly what it was intended to do: it sparked an idea that led to action.

Inspired by the energy and connections from that convening, as well as the willingness of the Arts Foundation team to partner with us, we recently launched *Write Out Cape Cod*, a new regional initiative taking place October 11–25 that connects Cape Cod's cultural and conservation communities through writing and the outdoors. We are inviting schools, libraries, land trusts, cultural organizations, and other community partners across the region to participate in ways that work for them, from hosting programs and sharing writing prompts to encouraging people to explore local trails and share their own writing.

The Arts Foundation has agreed to partner in helping us spread the word and connect this initiative to the broader cultural community. What began as a conversation has grown into a first-of-its-kind regional collaboration that we hope can become an annual Cape Cod tradition as well as a national model.

Write Out Cape Cod illustrates the potential that can be unleashed by Creative Conversations. By intentionally bringing people together from different sectors, the Arts Foundation is creating opportunities for relationships and ideas to emerge that might not happen otherwise. Just as importantly, those conversations can lead to new partnerships, programs, and community engagement beyond the convening itself.

I encourage the Cape Cod Commission to support the Arts Foundation's efforts to expand Creative Conversations through the Cape Cod License Plate Grant program. Cape Cod's challenges and opportunities do not exist within individual sectors, and Creative Conversations provides a framework for people to find connections between their work, learn from one another, and turn ideas into action. As Robert J. Shiller, Nobel Laureate in Economics, said: "In the longer run and for wide-reaching issues, more creative solutions tend to come from imaginative interdisciplinary collaboration." Supporting the Arts Foundation's Creative Conversations series has the potential to do just that. I hope you agree.

Sincerely,

Susan D. Sullivan

Sue Dahling Sullivan
Director of Communications and Programs
Barnstable Land Trust

HARWICH CONSERVATION TRUST
Preserve • Restore • Explore

P.O. Box 101, South Harwich, MA 02661

ph. 508-432-3997 ● email: info@harwichconservationtrust.org ● www.harwichconservationtrust.org

Cape Cod Commission
3225 Main Street
Barnstable, MA 02630

September 21, 2026

Dear Cape Cod Commission,

On behalf of the Harwich Conservation Trust, I am writing to express strong support for the Arts Foundation of Cape Cod's application seeking Cape Cod License Plate Grant funding for its Creative Conversations program.

Harwich Conservation Trust (HCT) was fortunate to participate in the launch of this program in March. Held at the Old Bank Street Firehouse in Harwich Port, it drew a spirited crowd of nearly 50 people from two different sectors — land conservation and the community of arts & culture. Discussion centered on ways the two sectors intersect; past examples of successful collaboration between the arts and land trusts; and opportunities for future partnerships.

The conversation did not end there as the Arts Foundation plans on holding future sessions that will show how cooperation can serve multiple purposes including creating jobs, launching new initiatives, strengthening the Cape's economy, and enhancing our overall quality of life.

Next month, the Barnstable Land Trust is introducing a new initiative, Write Out Cape Cod, that encourages everyone to step outside, connect with nature, and take part in place-based writing that deepens our relationship with the world around us. The project was inspired by the Creative Conversations session hosted by HCT in March. It is a concrete example of how collaboration can serve to educate and compel action.

As land trusts continue to explore more opportunities for relationship building through Creative Conversations, I anticipate more initiatives that sit at the intersection of arts and conservation will become commonplace.

During the March discussion, an attendee shared that, "Conservation makes you think. Science makes you think. Art makes you feel and resonates more when you leave a place." By combining the arts with land conservation, we elevate the two sectors and help raise awareness of the importance of both to our community.

I encourage investment of Cape Cod License Plate Grant funding in a program like Creative Conversations which fits with several of the Cape Cod Commission's action items in its most recent Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, including providing opportunities for organizations and entrepreneurs to pilot ideas and supporting year-round community activity as well as civic engagement.

Should you have any questions about the Harwich Conservation Trust's support of the Arts Foundation's application or the positive difference that its Creative Conversations will have on our work as well as that of land trusts across the Cape, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Michael W. Lach

Michael Lach
Harwich Conservation Trust Executive Director
508-432-3997 | mike@harwichconservationtrust.org