

**DECD press release - For Immediate Release - January 9, 2012**

Contact: Jim Watson, DECD, 860-270-8182 (office), 860-306-3737 (cell)

[jim.watson@ct.gov](mailto:jim.watson@ct.gov)



**DECD ANNOUNCES NEW STRATEGIC  
DIRECTION FOR THE STATE'S ARTS PROGRAMS**

*Arts Office to Hold Public Forums*

With arts funding slated to increase next fiscal year, the Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) is implementing changes that will better integrate the state's arts programs and economic development efforts.

The new direction, effective July 1, 2012, combines an arts-based placemaking strategy with the state's current arts programs. The goal is to bolster the impact of arts organizations and to focus outcomes on organizations and collaborations that create jobs and revitalize communities.

"These changes are an important step in maximizing the economic impact of the arts in our communities and on our economy as a whole. We will continue to focus on promoting the economic benefits of the state's arts attractions while funding projects that have higher job growth potential," said Catherine Smith, commissioner of DECD.

DECD's Connecticut Office of the Arts (COA) will host a series of public forums to present its new direction to the arts community and other stakeholders. The forums will include small group breakout sessions to exchange ideas so the public will have an opportunity to comment.

"Through the forums, we will be directly engaging the arts community in helping shape and define the new direction we are taking. Their support, energy and enthusiasm will be key to our collective success moving forward," noted Smith.

In July, all current grant programs, including Arts Access (Arts Presentation and Creative Collaboration), Artists Fellowships, Arts Project Support and the Local Arts Agency Program will be incorporated into one overall grant program. The programs altogether receive \$1.6 million annually now, however, in 2013 the one grant program will nearly double with an available \$3.1 million.

The integrated strategy will generate a broader impact through fewer but larger grants to organizations of all sizes in an open and competitive grant program. A special emphasis will be made to support new initiatives of cross-collaboration within the arts community as well as between arts organizations and other sectors of the

community. Collaborative placemaking projects or initiatives that facilitate vibrant arts communities will be given priority in the process.

“Placemaking is the concept of using a community’s natural, inherent strengths and assets when planning and designing public redevelopment projects. It’s a collaborative approach that involves the community and gives them a stake in the revitalization of their neighborhood,” Christopher “Kip” Bergstrom, deputy commissioner of DECD, said. “Adding the arts element simply enhances the process. Along with residents, schools, and businesses, we’re also leveraging the creative sector — artists, arts and cultural organizations, and arts-related businesses — to improve an area’s economic condition and quality of life.”

The forum schedule is as follows:

January 24, 3-5 p.m.- Long Wharf Theatre, New Haven  
*Hosted by the Arts Council of Greater New Haven*

February 1, 9:30-11:30 a.m. - Thomaston Opera House, Thomaston  
*Hosted by the Northwest Connecticut Arts Council*

February 8, 10 a.m.-12 noon - Westport Country Playhouse (White Barn), Westport  
*Hosted by the Cultural Alliance of Fairfield County*

February 14, 3-5 p.m. - Quinebaug Valley Community College, Danielson  
*Hosted by the Northeast Cultural Alliance*

February 15, 2-4 p.m. - Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford  
*Hosted by the Greater Hartford Arts Council*

For more information, please visit [www.cultureandtourism.org](http://www.cultureandtourism.org). For questions, or in case of inclement weather, please email [Rhonda.olisky@ct.gov](mailto:Rhonda.olisky@ct.gov) or call (860) 256-2752.

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