

Local Arts Network Newsletter

ARTS & CULTURE FOR ALL

“What is my role when a disaster devastates a community that isn't my own?” This question has been on my mind lately, particularly as the frequency of disasters continues to rise. According to the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), weather-related disasters have increased fivefold since the 1970s. And this doesn't even account for human-made crises like gun violence and cyber incidents, which also strain our communities. In my role at Americans for the Arts, I serve as a communication partner, with the hope of adding to the list of trusted partners providing resources and support post-emergency. After Hurricanes Helene and Milton—two of the costliest back-to-back storms in U.S. history—it has become even clearer how much more can be done. For instance, I recently collaborated with Story Tapestries, Performing Arts Readiness (PAR), and the World Institute on Disability to explore the intersection of accessibility, arts, and emergency response.

Folks working at the hyper-local level are often more attuned to the nuanced needs of individuals and groups, making you well-suited to lead community-driven organizing, which is critical for effective and nimble recovery efforts. Then, on-the-ground insights frequently inform larger service and philanthropic organizations, creating a more cohesive response. And yet, it's disheartening to see how unevenly disaster responses are handled at all levels. More than 60 days after Hurricanes Helene and Milton, the federal government still has not passed supplemental funding for the Southeast region. This contrasts sharply with the swift action following Hurricane Katrina in 2005, when Congress approved an initial \$10.5 billion in relief just three days after landfall, followed by \$51.8 billion more just six days later. Similarly, after Hurricane Ian in 2022, \$18.8 billion was allocated within two days. But support following Hurricane Maria in 2017 faced delays, with supplemental funding taking five weeks to approve. This disproportionate response highlights systemic inequities that ripple out from the federal to the local level, underscoring the importance of advocacy and action to ensure every community receives the support it needs.

In the pages to come, you will find three videos of interviews I did with local arts leaders who are facing or have faced disasters in their community. As usual, this newsletter is chock full of resources, so flag it and come back again later! No one expects you to be prepared for everything, today one step in the right direction.



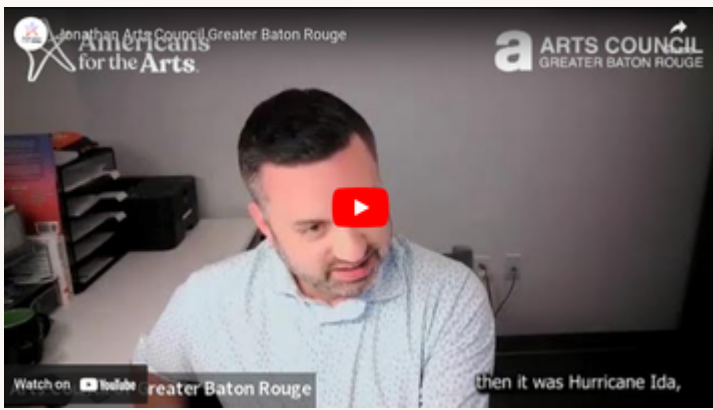
“So, you know arts and culture—you wouldn't think of us as frontline workers, but we do have a role in that.”

-Katie Cornell, Arts AVL

Image Description: Thumbnail of a white woman with shoulder-length blonde hair and turtle pattern glasses in front of a green wall and book shelves

Katie highlights disaster recovery efforts in Western North Carolina's arts sector, emphasizing preparedness and strong

partnerships. Her team coordinated with local, state, and federal organizations, addressing challenges like infrastructure damage and tourism losses. Arts groups supported recovery as distribution centers and performers, boosting morale. A key achievement was distributing over 1,200 emergency relief grants, with positive feedback inspiring continued efforts.



“It's hard to, you know, as an arts administrator and an artist ourselves—trying to mitigate what we're dealing with at home, but then also help artists and arts organizations in our community.”

- Jonathan Grimes, Arts Council Greater Baton Rouge

Image Description: Thumbnail of a white man with brown hair and greying beard in front of a grey wall and a desk to the side

Jonathan highlights the council's efforts in disaster recovery and preparedness, rooted in lessons from the devastating 2016 Baton Rouge flood. Serving a 10-parish region, the council partners with organizations like the Red Cross and CERF+ to support artists and arts organizations through initiatives such as the Creative Relief Fund and readiness grants. The arts played a vital role during the crises, from providing comfort in shelters to advocating for innovative recovery solutions. He emphasizes the importance of inclusive planning, leveraging local connections, and viewing artists as essential contributors to disaster response and resilience.



“My recommendation is figuring out how to ask the question of where the challenge is, and don't be shy about asking the question repeatedly.”

-Sean McGlynn, City of Escondido

Image Description: Thumbnail of a darkened image of a white man with greying hair in a light blue collared shirt

Link to [Santa Rose Wildfires Documentary](#) mentioned in the video

Sean shares insights on the intersection of arts, culture, and emergency management. He discusses his professional journey, the importance of preparedness and recovery strategies, and the role arts organizations play in building community resilience. He emphasizes collaboration, communication, and equity in disaster response, drawing from experiences with natural disasters, cybersecurity threats, and misinformation challenges.



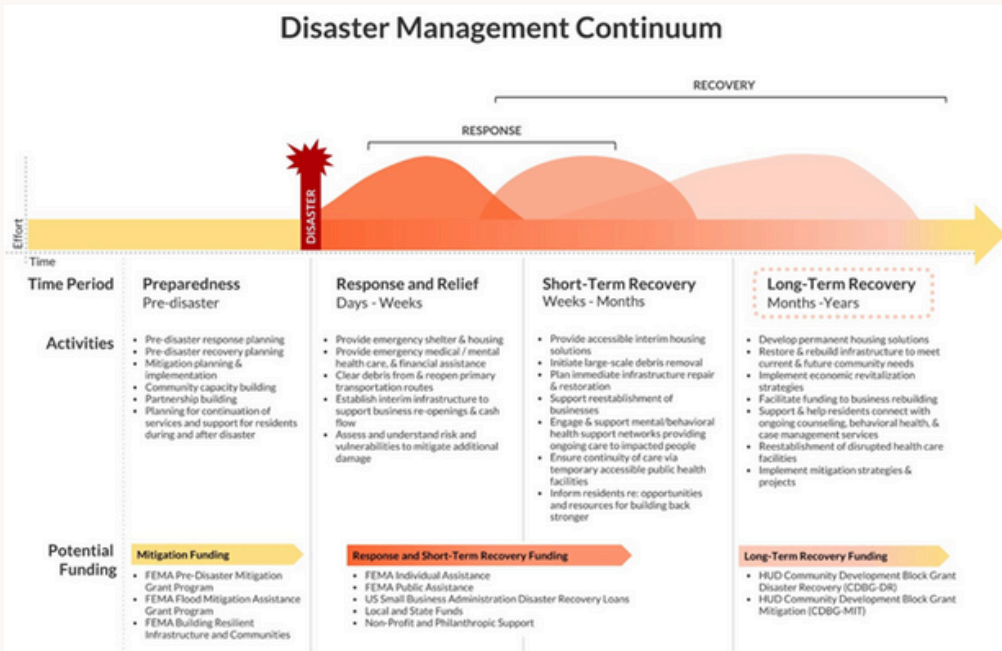


Image Description: A diagram that illustrates the Disaster Management Continuum, moving through Preparedness (pre-disaster), Response, Short-Term Recovery, and Long-Term Recovery. It highlights key activities, such as emergency relief, infrastructure repair, and community rebuilding, alongside funding sources like FEMA and HUD grants. Effort peaks during the response phase and tapers off during recovery. Visual curves represent the intensity of effort across phases.

[Link to full image](#)

The National Coalition for Arts Preparedness and Emergency Response, also known as NCAPER, is a coalition formed in 2006 in response to the significant losses and devastation artists and creative economies suffered in the wake of 21st-century disasters. Americans for the Arts was part of NCAPER's coming to be and continues to be part of the steering committee. Part of NCAPER's work is coordinating resources and efforts including post-disaster community calls.

In 2023, NCAPER supported the arts community after the Lahaina wildfires through 17 facilitated calls, spotlighting the resilience of Hawaii's artists. Initiatives included expedited grants, workshops for artists, Indigenous cultural events, and art-based therapy for displaced residents. Organizations like Maui Performing Arts Academy (MAPA) and Maui Arts and Cultural Center (MACC) provided vital arts programming to foster healing and economic recovery, while long-term efforts aim to diversify Maui's economy and strengthen the arts sector. MAPA also resumed plans for a new theater to support local creatives and resilience. Find the full blog [here!](#)

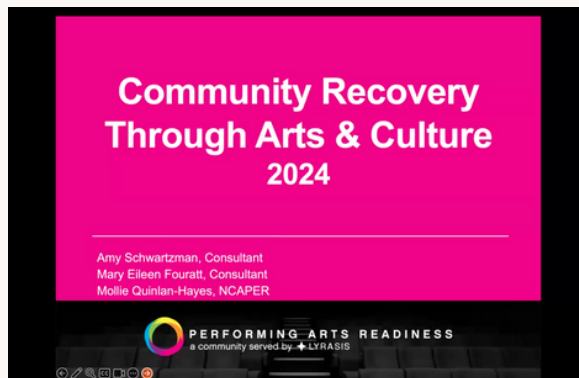


Image Description: Thumbnail from Community Recovery Through Arts & Culture Webinar with the title on a dark pink background

Performing Arts Readiness (PAR), hosted a webinar, "Community Recovery Through Arts and Culture" that expands on the blog.



Image Description: NCAPER resources page screenshot with words over an image of a hurricane from an aerial view

NCAPER hosts a plethora of tools and resources on their site. Take time to look and start planning today!

FEMA and NEA Webinar on Disaster Resources for Artists and Art & Cultural Institutions

FEMA and the National Endowment for the Arts hosted a webinar that highlights government and non-government resources that help promote collaborations between emergency management professionals, artists, and arts & cultural institutions in disaster mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery. The webinar includes presentations from the National Coalition for Arts' Preparedness and Emergency Response (NCAPER), Craft Emergency Relief Fund (CERF+), the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Kentucky Arts in Disaster: An Impact Report



This report is a collection of stories and data from Kentucky artists, craftspeople, artisans, arts managers, teaching artists, arts community leaders, arts board volunteers, arts funders, and governmental agency representatives—all affected by the compounding events of natural disasters in Kentucky in 2021 and 2022. Their experiences were collected between January 2023 through January 2024 and resulted in the findings and recommendations in this report.

Study Looks at What Causes Flash Floods in the Appalachian Mountains

This article explores the causes of flash floods in the Appalachian Mountains, emphasizing the interplay of natural and human-made factors. Researchers highlight that the region's steep terrain, coupled with heavy rainfall events, contributes to rapid water accumulation. Additionally, deforestation, urban development, and inadequate land-use planning exacerbate flood risks by reducing natural water absorption and increasing runoff.



Problem Solving Through Arts And Cultural Strategies

The International City/County Management Association's (ICMA) guide on creative placemaking highlights how local governments can address community challenges using arts and cultural strategies. It focuses on integrating public art, wayfinding, and cultural programming to enhance community identity, foster economic development, and improve public spaces. The report provides case studies, practical tools, and actionable steps for municipal leaders to implement these strategies effectively. It emphasizes collaboration with artists and community members to create inclusive and sustainable initiatives that reflect local character.

Americans for the Arts Disaster Preparedness and Response Page

Our research page covers a wide variety of organizations and resources to support preparedness and response. This includes thinking about the role of arts and culture in supporting the physical, mental, and emotional health of survivors and workers. In addition to the federal resources listed on the page, organizations like Artwork Archive and National Organization on Arts and Health provide deeper content.

- [A Win-Win for Everyone: Arts Advocacy as an Investment in Community Health](#) virtual plenary from NOAHCON 2024.
- [Healing Through Art: Bridging Hospitals, Nonprofits and Artists](#) from Artwork Archive



Artists in Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia—If recent storms like Hurricane Helene or Milton have impacted you, South Arts is here to offer support. In partnership with South Arts, the Southern Arts Relief & Recovery Fund provides financial assistance to artists in need. Grants start at \$500, with additional funding possible. Get the support you need today!

Artists in NC—apply now for support through Arts AVL at artsavl.org/relief



Image Description: A dark red background with curved gold accents, overlaid by white text that reads: "Financial Support for Artists impacted by storms."

[AFTACON](#)

Join us for AFTACON 2025 in Cincinnati, OH! AFTACON is two and a half days of jam-packed peer-driven content crafted by and for the local arts ecosystem. We've even designed opportunities for you to get out and enjoy the arts and culture scene in Cincy!

Member rates and registration support are available, email convention@artsusa.org with any and all questions.

[Request for Breakout Session Proposals OPEN!](#)

Join AFTACON as a presenter! We are thrilled to open our call for AFTACON 2025 breakout session proposals. As part of AFTA's Strategic Realignment Process, we identified four pathways of our work: the Cultural, Economic, Educational, and Social powers of the arts. We are seeking proposals using those pathways, also known as tracks, to view the work being done across your local arts ecosystem. We are also adding a fifth pathway—the Future of the arts for AFTACON!

[Pre-CON Opportunities](#)

[Art in the Public Realm](#)

[Assembly on Arts and Culture Policy](#)

[Arts and Health: Exploring the Possibility of What If](#)

[Community Engagement](#)

[REACH OUT FOR A CHAT](#)

[Let's chat!](#)

[GET TO KNOW US BETTER](#)

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