



COMMUNITY  
FOUNDATION  
OF WESTERN MASSACHUSETTS

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**ValleyCreates awards \$80,250 to 9 local organizations  
Partnership grants slated to ignite collaborative planning for arts community**

SPRINGFIELD, MA – The Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts (CFWM) is pleased to announce its ValleyCreates Planning Grantees. This year, these competitive grants were awarded to partnerships of three or more organizations who envision advancing meaningful and impactful change in the Valley through the arts.

“These planning grants are vital to jump-starting collaboration and ideas into implementation,” says Nicole Bourdon, ValleyCreate’s Program Officer. “Organizations are so rarely given this kind of funding, which allows them to come together to brainstorm and dream big—and then progress right to concrete planning, researching, and convening. We’re very excited to partner with these organizations and to see how their visions develop.” After this five-month planning period, the ValleyCreates Planning Grantees will then be positioned to request additional funding for enactment through a second competitive application process.

This year’s ValleyCreates Planning Grant process marked a new way for organizations to submit their applications—with a video application. A first for CFWM, applicants’ feedback from this experience will help guide and inform efforts being made by the Programs Department to create a more accessible grant application process. “We want to improve the grant application experience by breaking down any barriers or impediments to available opportunities—especially for smaller organizations,” says Jim Ayres, Vice President for Programs and Strategy.”

Each funded collaboration is led by a lead agency who receives the grant award and disperses the award among the partners. The lead agencies and their projects are as follows:

Holyoke Media: *Our Grandmothers Multimedia and Multicultural Traveling Exhibit*

Eggtooth Productions: *A Small Tale of Collaboration*

Blues to Green: *Charles Neville Legacy Project*

Piti Theatre Company: *Valley Arts Mentors*

The Shea Theater Arts Center: *Watermill Festival*

Greene Room Productions: *Performance Art Resource Collective (PARC)*

The Center for Design Engagement: *The Dignity Fence*

Ko Theater Works, Inc: *Ensemble: Sharing Collaborative Creative Practice in Community*

The Art Garden Inc: *Collaborative Community Art Response Team*

### **Background**

In January 2018, CFWM received funding from the Barr Foundation to support the arts and creativity sector in the Valley as part of Barr's statewide [Creative Commonwealth initiative](#). The Creative Commonwealth is rooted in the belief that investments in arts and creativity build thriving communities! It aims to promote the vital leadership role community foundations can play to advance the arts. As part of this statewide initiative, CFWM is seeking to build authentic bridges to communities in our Valley, especially those communities and residents that may not have traditionally been served by our funding or programming.

### **About the Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts**

Founded in 1990, the Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts administers a charitable endowment consisting of over 600 separately identified funds (\$173 million) serving the three counties bordering the Connecticut River in Western Massachusetts (Hampden, Hampshire, and Franklin counties). For more information about the reach and impact of the Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts, visit <http://communityfoundation.org>.