Excellence in the Arts : Entry # 500

Are you a 501(c)3 organization in good standing with the IRS?

Yes

According to your 501(c)3 letter, in what town is your official office located?

Hartford

Where will your project be performed or exhibited?

Hartford

Will this activity occur after November 1, 2025?

Yes

Are you a recent grantee?

Yes

Enter your Report Code

GRF-T3-2025

Organization Name

First Night Hartford, Inc.

Organization's IRS Tax ID #

222970922

Principal Contact Name

Jeffrey Devereux

Title

Executive Director

Email

firstnight.hartford@gmail.com

Phone

(860) 251-9651

Address

1429 Park St, Suite 114 Suite 114 Suite 114
Hartford, Connecticut 06106
United States
Map It

Website

https://firstnighthartford.org

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Amount requested this application

$10,000.00

What is the organization’s mission/vision statement?

First Night Hartford, Inc., produces two beloved annual community celebrations in Bushnell Park with art, music, food & fireworks--First Night Hartford (New Year's Eve tradition) & Hartford Bonanza (Independence Day Weekend festival)--that showcase our capital city's arts and cultural ecosystem and promote civic joy, social cohesion, and community pride.

Provide a brief history of your organization and its activities.

First Night Hartford, Inc., is a community-centric nonprofit arts institution that was founded 37 years ago as an affiliate of the national First Night project founded in Boston. Long independent now from other cities' First Night celebrations, we have recently added a second flagship annual festival, Hartford Bonanza, launched in 2021 as our capital city's Independence Day Weekend celebration--a Hartford-focused summer party highighting our creative community through music, art, civics, history, food, small businesses, and vintage fashion. Both festivals aim to highlight the vibrant arts & culture scene of Hartford through programming that promotes local artistic talent and provides inclusive opportunities for residents to engage with civic and volunteer opportunities in a welcoming, joyful, and culturally diverse setting. Traditionally, our main stage program concludes with a jazz-style improvisational Bonanza Jam that provides a live soundtrack for the launch of our beloved □reworks display over the Capitol Building at 10 pm. First Night Hartford is a multicultural, artistically unique, family-friendly New Year’s Eve experience with a full roster of professional musicians, artists, performance groups and visual art exhibitions on our Bushnell Park main stage and in partner venues around Downtown Hartford. Beginning last year with FNH 2025, we have launched a robust partnership with Night Fall collaborating artists to create a thematically linked set of art-making activities for all ages across multiple venues culminating in a people's procession to the 6 pm New Year's Eve fireworks in Bushnell Park.

Describe the demographics of your audience/people served by your activities.

FNH is a New Year's Eve celebration for everyone. There are no barriers to entry for our free main stage performances & fireworks in Bushnell Park, and activities in our indoor partner venues are accessibly priced at $15 for adults and $5 for kids for an all-access button. Because of this commitment to accessibility and programming that reflects our communities' diverse winter family traditions, the demographics of our audiences roughly reflect the demographics of the City of Hartford.

Describe your organization's governance.

FNH is produced in partnership with Breakfast Lunch & Dinner, a respected creative venture building studio who provide seasonal contract staff including year-round executive support to this organization. Event planning includes two large-scale events sharing an operating budget. We set goals, raise funds, establish strategic partnerships, develop marketing, hire artists & balance scope, cost, quality & resources. The Board, led by a dynamic president, meets monthly in partnership with the ED.

Please describe the diversity of your board by gender and ethnicity/race. Use percentages.

Percentage of people on Board who have [disclosed] disabilities: 0
Percentage of BIPOC people on Board: 78
Percentage of people on Board who identify as women: 44
Percentage of people on Board who disclosed they identify as trans or non-binary: 0

What percentage of your board makes personal financial contributions to your organization?

11%
FNH Inc. does not have a philanthropic requirement for board members. Of the nine board members, one made a donation of

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cash and most of the others donated time as volunteers. This year we introduced a development-led checklist of opportunities for board members to activate their time and talents to help connect the organization with necessary resources. We are building a new culture of support and accountability that will lead to direct gifts, help with solicitations, and sponsorship leads.

Project Name

First Night Hartford 2026 - Artistic Colllaborations

Is this project related to the Visual Arts?

Yes

Will the artists associated with this project be financially compensated?

Yes

Project Description

This project, specifically focused on renewing two collaborations for FNH 2026, will fund Night Fall's contribution to the all-ages art-making activities in five partner venues during the 2-6 pm slot along with a contemporary public art installation in a vacant storefront centrally located on Trumbull Street.
Available with all-access event buttons, activities are organized around a cohesive creative theme--Build Your Own Noisemakers--and include all materials, including recycled & found materials. Lead Artist Jason Ramos returns to project-lead, hire other Night Fall teaching artists, and teach a movement class that will culminate in the festive Fist Night Hartford + Night Fall People's Procession to the 6 pm New Year's Eve (Early) Fireworks with a meeting place at the Bushnell Park Carousel. Mercury's art installation in an empty storefront will invite the public to reflect on their lived experiences and the ideals of the Declaration of Independence as we prepare for America 250.

Total estimated project budget

$10,000.00

Project start/opening

10/01/2025

Project end/closing

01/15/2026

Project venue

TheaterWorks Hartford, Emrey's Sweets, Hartford Public Library, Carousel, Trumbull Street storefront

Project town

Hartford, CT

Admission fees, attendance, and activity details

FNH is free, and all are welcome to robust activities in Bushnell Park, including the movement class & procession named in this project. FNH indoor venues, including hosts for all-ages art-making, require all-access buttons ($15 adults; $5 kids). We expect to invite the public to the storefront exhibiting Mercury's interactive art installation for free during the day; the same all-access event buttons will be requested at the door during the hours there is also musical programming in the space.

How do you intend to promote/market this project?

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FNH has a robust audience for our website, email, and social media marketing, and we expect to renew our media partnerships with Hartford Courant, Cafeteria Media, Kidtivity.com, and others. All elements of this project, Night Fall in particular, include partners and collaborators who share our commitment to reaching a wide and diverse audience around the Hartford region with beautifully designed, collaborative, coordinated marketing efforts.

How is your organization going to use Roberts funding?

For this year's First Night Hartford festival, if awarded this funding will go directly to paying lead artists and other artists and providing the high-quality materials, space, insurance, and other resources that will make our collective work successful.

How will Roberts support be recognized?

This level of support includes all-access buttons, logo recognition on our websites, printed materials, and select email blasts along with shout outs from our main stage and in relevent indoor venues. We would be happy to customize an activation or event presence at First Night should that opportunity interest you. We name all sponsors in one or more pre-event press releases and, if there is any press conference opportunity, the Roberts Foundation would be names as a supporter in our remarks.

What is your organization’s definition of artistic excellence?

First Night Hartford, Inc., defines artistic excellence as work that is innovative, diverse, and high in quality. We believe that exceptional work pushes boundaries, creates dialogue, and is often the result of creative collaboration. From emerging to established, our programming brings together Hartford’s exceptional talent. We also believe it is part of our mission and purpose to invest into the region's arts community so that Hartford can continue its legacy of being a place for artists to grow, connect, and call home.

How does this project align with that definition, and how does it advance your mission?

This project continues and expands our thrilling collaborations with the Night Fall Artistic Collaboration and with multidisciplinary visual artist Mercury. Beyond the musical performances we are known for presenting, this project brings artistic expertise to our interactive family programming through cohesive craft themes developed with and led by Night Fall teaching artists and showcases FNH's visual arts footprint through Mercury's visionary public art, which allows our organization to continue to expand our collective imagination about what community celebrations can look like.

How will your audience and the community benefit from this project?

These projects in particular highlight our Hartford region's diverse and unique artist talents and assets in settings that are welcoming, accessible, and joyful for all participants. Creating opportunities for some of our region's most talented professional artists to co-create our programming is a hallmark of our artistic process and benefits our cultural ecosystem and our neighbors who are invited in through this art.

How will this project be evaluated?

First Night Hartford’s main metrics of success include both qualitative and quantitative data from our post-event surveys, social media interactions and data, in-person feedback, volunteer feedback, and audience numbers collected in partnership with MetroHartford Alliance. Through an intentional data collection form filled out by staff and volunteers at each venue, we will understand how many participants chose to attend which of the activities in this project and, we hope, their ages and zip codes.

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Cover letter

- First-Night-Hartford-Cover-Letter-2025-Application.pdf

Board list

- FNH_Board_2025-rev.-July-2025.pdf

IRS 501(c)3 determination letter

- First-Night-Hartford-501c3-Designation-letter.pdf

Financial statement

- f990ezdone.pdf

Last year operational budget

- FNH-PRIOR-FY-BUDGET-V-ACTUALS-Sheet1.pdf

Current year operational budget

- FNH-OPERATING-BUDGET-2025-26-template-with-actuals-Sheet1.pdf

Balance sheet

- Financial-Statement-for-FNH-2024-2025.xlsx-Balance-Sheet.pdf

Project budget

- Roberts_FNH26_Collaborations_Project_Budget.xlsx-Sheet1.pdf

Does your organization produce an annual report?

No

Has your organization adopted a strategic plan?

No

Does your organization have a formal policy or organizational commitment to ensure that visual artists are financially compensated?

Yes

Visual Artist Compensation Policy

- Visual-Artist-Compensation-Policy-1.pdf

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Grant Report

- First-Night-Hartford-Inc.-Grantee-Reporting-Form-.pdf

Have you contacted the Executive Director by email or phone to discuss this proposal?

Yes

Is your cover letter signed by your senior executive? on your letterhead? with your official office address?

Yes