Call for Artists

Date issued: March 20, 2019
Application deadline: May 1, 2019
Application form: https://smartgrowthamerica.org/program/arts-culture/mndot-air/

Project Overview

Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT), in partnership with Transportation for America (T4America) and the State Smart Transportation Initiative (SSTI), seek an artist to serve as the inaugural MnDOT Community Vitality Fellow (CVF), an artist-in-residence (AIR) program managed by T4America. The MnDOT AIR will be tasked with advancing MnDOT’s helping MnDOT develop new ways of achieving agency strategic operating goals and improving project outcomes in both urban and rural settings across state of Minnesota.

The MnDOT artist in residence will span one year, and the AIR is required to reside in Minnesota for the duration of the year. The AIR will be based in MnDOT’s headquarters in St Paul, MN.

The AIR will gain a thorough understanding of the inner workings of a state department of transportation, while supporting MnDOT’s efforts to encourage local public-private partnerships that support the aesthetic, environmental, social and cultural values of communities within transportation projects. The project(s) executed by the AIR during the residency will be developed in close partnership with T4America, SSTI, and MnDOT. The MnDOT AIR will be tasked with exploring the following:

- Developing processes and procedures to further evaluate and integrate elements that elevate the unique character of each community within the transportation system.
- Bringing creative problem solving skills and strategic thinking to design challenges, while providing guidance on potential improvements to how MnDOT plans, builds, operates and maintains its infrastructure using community feedback.
- Piloting innovative public engagement strategies to further build customer trust as set forth in the MnDOT 2018-2022 Strategic Operating Plan by engaging a wide range of stakeholders, including elected officials, tribal governments, community organizations and transportation partners.

The MnDOT AIR follows a number of successful residencies in city agencies, the MnDOT AIR will be the second such program at a statewide agency after the launch of Washington State DOT’s AIR program earlier this year. The MnDOT AIR is generously funded by ArtPlace America and MnDOT.
MnDOT CVF Project Partners

**Minnesota Department of Transportation:** MnDOT plans, builds, operates and maintains a safe, accessible, efficient and reliable multimodal transportation system that connects people to destinations and markets throughout the state, regionally and around the world.

**Transportation for America:** T4America, a program of Smart Growth America, is an alliance of elected, business and civic leaders from communities across the country, united to ensure that states and the federal government step up to invest in smart, homegrown, locally-driven transportation solutions. These are the investments that hold the key to our future economic prosperity.

**The State Smart Transportation Initiative:** SSTI promotes transportation practices that advance environmental sustainability and equitable economic development, while maintaining high standards of governmental efficiency and transparency. SSTI, jointly operated by the University of Wisconsin and Smart Growth America, operates in three ways:

- As a community of practice, where participating agencies can learn together and share experiences as they implement innovative smart transportation policies.
- As a source of direct technical assistance to the agencies on transformative and replicable smart transportation reform efforts.
- As a resource to the wider transportation community, including local, state, and federal agencies, in their efforts to reorient practice to changing social and financial demands.

**ArtPlace America:** ArtPlace is a ten-year collaboration among a number of foundations, federal agencies, and financial institutions that works to position arts and culture as a core sector of comprehensive community planning and development in order to help strengthen the social, physical, and economic fabric of communities. ArtPlace focuses its work on creative placemaking, which describes projects in which art plays an intentional and integrated role in place-based community planning and development. This brings artists, arts organizations, and artistic activity into the suite of placemaking strategies pioneered by Jane Jacobs and her colleagues, who believed that community development must be locally informed, human-centric, and holistic.

### Program Background

The concept for the MnDOT AIR grew out of the recently published *Arts, Culture and Transportation: A Creative Placemaking Field Scan* [http://t4america.org/maps-tools/creative-placemaking-field-scan], produced by T4America with ArtPlace America. Released in 2017, the Field Scan explored how artists are contributing to transportation solutions, and identified state DOTs as a promising but as of yet untested venue for artistic intervention.
T4America believes that embedding artists within state DOTs will help to drive new and creative approaches that help achieve state DOTs’ ambitious goals. Dwindling funding hinders the accomplishment of these goals, forcing DOTs to find creative approaches to improve safety, reduce congestion, enhance economic opportunity, improve reliability, preserve their system assets, accelerate project delivery, and ultimately create healthier neighborhoods for communities to grow and thrive. Simultaneously, T4America believes that embedded artists will benefit from learning how to better engage with the complex processes and projects overseen by state DOTs and therefore producing better and more meaningful work.

MnDOT’s [Strategic Operating Plan](#) translates long-term policy plan objectives into actionable strategies for the next five years. The Strategic Operating Goals A) Customer Trust, B) Operational Excellence, and C) Workforce Excellence align the long-range vision with near-term actions and identify performance metrics to monitor progress. The Strategic Operating Plan will also guide resource decisions and better align efforts across the agency to achieve the vision and mission and make good on public promises for the future of the transportation system in Minnesota.

**AIR Purpose**

Recognized as a tool in pioneering innovative and creative solutions, AIRs have been piloted across the nation in governmental agencies, including Los Angeles and Seattle DOTs. AIRs have proven effective in rethinking design challenges, increasing community buy-in, fostering deeper community engagement, augmenting planning goals, building relationships with traditionally underserved constituents, and improving outdated processes in routine work.

**Structure of Residency**

The AIR will be embedded in MnDOT for a period of 12 months and will begin with rotations through several of MnDOT’s divisions. These rotations will focus on providing the AIR knowledge on the operations of MnDOT, staff and administration priorities, strategic and daily challenges, and division culture. The rotations will serve to help the AIR determine MnDOT staff’s motivations and objectives so that the AIR may propose projects that directly address these motivations and objectives while also supporting T4A’s objectives of improving community engagement, supporting alternatives to single occupancy vehicle transport, and driving transportation solutions that improve safety and equity. Rotations shall conclude after four months; the remaining eight months will be devoted to the AIR’s project(s) development and production. Working in close collaboration with T4America and MnDOT staff, the AIR may decide to focus on one MnDOT division or process, or on several divisions or processes.

The AIR will be a half-time contractor for Smart Growth America, and will report to SGA/T4America’s Director of Arts and Culture, as well as a steering committee consisting of staff from MnDOT, T4America, SSTI, and ArtPlace.
The AIR will update T4America and SSTI staff monthly through video conferences. These updates, as well as quarterly updates from MnDOT leadership, will serve as the basis for a final report and a set of best practices to share with other state DOTs.

After the completion of the residency, MnDOT leadership and the AIR will present a summary of the residency experience to the secretaries of the DOTs that participate in the SSTI community of practice to encourage adoption of this approach by additional state DOTs. The AIR and steering committee will share information on the residency through webinars and conference presentations in the months after its completion. The MnDOT will also have the opportunity to learn from and share experiences with the artist serving as Washington State DOT’s AIR.

**Residency Tasks**

The AIR is expected to:

- Participate in monthly check-in calls with T4America and MnDOT staff.
- Participate in quarterly in-person debrief meetings with T4America, SSTI, and MnDOT staff.
- Maintain a working presence in MnDOT by attending and participating in MnDOT and community meetings, and meeting regularly with relevant MnDOT staff.
- Track work hours and project expenses, and invoice T4America for payment in accordance with T4America’s procedures.
- Once a project(s) has been decided upon, develop a work plan and provide clear and consistent communication with project managers and staff, adhering to MnDOT’s protocols.
- Become familiar with relevant agency processes to ensure that proposed projects directly connect to the actual work of MnDOT.
- Document the AIR process through visual, written, video, or other forms of documentation with the goal of providing instructions to future AIRs.
- Participate in project evaluation and the dissemination of lessons learned during the residency.
- Be prepared to present lessons learned and work produced through the residency at conferences and convenings as requested by T4America.

**Selection Criteria**

The selected AIR will be someone who can use artistic interventions to help MnDOT achieve their articulated goals. The residency requires a willingness to be open to the inner workings of a state DOT, technical language, and DOT culture. Artists must be committed to collaboration, equitable approaches, and community engagement. The AIR must have a portfolio that demonstrates their ability to align creative practice with social and public need. Applications will be reviewed and evaluated on the following criteria:

- Artistic merit and professional qualifications demonstrated in a CV and dynamic portfolio of past work
● Experience working collaboratively with people representing a range of demographics and disciplines
● Ability to communicate effectively and synthesize complex concepts
● Exceptional cultural competency and demonstrated ability to constructively work with traditionally underserved communities
● Possession of a broad range of creative skills that are applicable to the development and execution of the residency, such as social practice, graphic design, fabrication, photography, writing, etc.
● Prior experience working in governmental agencies is not required but preferred.
● Basic knowledge of the diverse services provided by MnDOT and a sincere eagerness to learn more about the goals of MnDOT

Eligibility
This residency is open to artists 18 years of age or older who are residents of the state of Minnesota and are eligible to work in the U.S. for the length of the residency. The residency will not sponsor green cards, visas, or citizenship. Paperwork should be sorted out prior to residency start date, which is not flexible. The AIR must be able to work in at MnDOT headquarters in St Paul, MN for the duration of the residency. Artists working in any media are encouraged to apply, however, artists must have extensive experience with community engagement and collaboration as part of their practice. Artists at any career level may apply. The residency will include an ongoing public component including blogging and social media posts. T4America, MnDOT, SSTI, and ArtPlace retain the right to use documentation of AIR’s work, or the original work itself, in promotional materials. The AIR retains copyright to produced work.

Budget
The AIR will be provided a stipend of $40,000 for the year-long residency. An additional $25,000 will be designated towards project implementation. Additional funds will be available to cover travel across Minnesota and for occasional travel out of state.

Application Process
[to be made available as an online submission form]
Answer the following questions at this link: [LINK]

1. Why are you interested in the MnDOT artist in residence opportunity? What do you hope to achieve during the residency?
2. Describe your experience collaborating with professionals without artistic training, government agencies, and with diverse communities. How do you work to ensure that you are successful working across cultural differences?
3. What does equity mean to you? How does your artistic practice relate to this definition?
4. How have you used your artistic practice to identify and help address specific community development challenges?

5. How will you approach the rotation phase of the residency? What do you hope to learn?

6. What type of support do you think you will need ensure that your AIR experience is successful?

7. Two references who can address your strengths as a creative collaborator
   1. Reference 1
      1. Name:
      2. Title:
      3. Organization:
      4. Email Address:
      5. Phone Number:
      6. Relationship to applicant:

   2. Reference 2
      1. Name:
      2. Title:
      3. Organization:
      4. Email Address:
      5. Phone Number:
      6. Relationship to applicant:

8. Attach a PDF portfolio of relevant work samples.
   1. The portfolio should include a maximum of ten images. Links to video and/or audio files are permitted within the PDF.
   2. File size should not exceed 5MB.
   3. Each image should include a title including the artist’s name; title, date, and location of project; artist’s role in project and names of collaborators; budget; commissioning agency or client; project manager’s name if applicable.

9. Attach a CV in PDF format.

Tentative Schedule

- March 2019: Call for artists released
- May 1, 2019: Call for artists deadline
- May-June, 2019: Interviews & selection of artist
- July 29, 2019: Residency begins with orientation with T4America and SSTI staff, and continues with rotations through MnDOT’s divisions for four months.
- August 2019: Monthly video check-in with artist; rotations continue
- September 2019: Monthly video check-in with artist; rotations continue
- October 2019: Monthly video check-in with artist; rotations continue
- November 2019: Rotations conclude; In person check-in meeting with T4America, MnDOT

   leadership, and artist; artist begins brainstorming projects and presents preliminary ideas at meeting
● December 2019: Monthly video check-in with artist
● January 2019: Monthly video check-in with artist; public webinar with artist, T4America staff, and MnDOT staff
● February 2020: In person check-in meeting with T4America, MnDOT leadership, artist, and a small cohort of artists and administrators
● March 2020: Monthly video check-in with artist
● April 2019: Monthly video check-in with artist
● May 2019: Monthly video check-in with artist
● June 2019: Residency conclusion and final meeting with T4America, MnDOT leadership, and artist; second public webinar presentation

Questions?
Contact Ben Stone, Director of Arts & Culture at Transportation for America and Smart Growth America at bstone@smartgrowthamerica.org