

Reopening Arts Organizations in New Hampshire

Reopening arts organizations in New Hampshire will depend on several factors:

1. New Hampshire's progress using the [federal government's 3-phase criteria for reopening](#)
2. Type of venue/organization/event
3. Venue/organization/event's audience
4. Artists and staff the venue/organization/event employs and how they are usually deployed
5. Reopening guidance from professional associations
6. Financial viability and sustainability

Arts organizations are committed to following all [CDC](#) and [NH HHS](#) guidance on preventing and mitigating COVID-19, including social distancing, cleaning/sanitizing, self-care, etc.

1. Performance venues/theatres

While seemingly similar, theatres and other performance venues are often very different from each other.

- *Presenting theatres*, that operate year-round and book national and regional theatre and music tours months in advance. These theatres often serve community groups and schools. Examples: [Capitol Center for the Arts](#); [Colonial Theatre Keene](#); [Lebanon Opera House](#); [The Flying Monkey](#)
- *Producing theatres*, some that operate year-round and some with distinct seasons, often summer. Some theatres employ (and often house) one group of actors, technicians and stagehands for a season, while others bring in new casts for every show. Some rent space to external production companies, orchestras and other groups. Artists and staff can come from all over the country and often from overseas. Examples: [New London Barn Playhouse](#); [Peterborough Players](#); [Barnstormers Theatre](#)
- *Hybrid theatres*, that operate year-round and present a combination of repertory theatre, booked performances and other events. Examples: [The Palace Theatre](#); [Rochester Opera House](#); [Hatbox Theatre](#)
- *Outdoor venues* like [Prescott Park Arts Festival](#) and [Bank of NH Pavilion](#) (Meadowbrook) also book national/regional artists and shows.
- *Academic performance venues*, which serve college/university/school populations but also serve the community. Examples: [Dana Center at St. Anselm](#); [Redfern Arts Center at Keene State College](#); [Stockbridge Theatre at Pinkerton Academy](#)
- *Movie theatres*, both commercial chains and independent theatres like [Red River Theatres](#).

Social distancing protocols are a major concern of this group. The 6-foot rule generally means that only 1/3 of a theatre's seats could be sold for each performance, which is not a viable financial model. There are also concerns about artists (actors, musicians), who of necessity cannot observe social distancing when performing, and hygiene issues in bathrooms, lobbies and other spaces. Professional and community organizations that use performance venues (music, theatre, dance, other performance) share these concerns. Theatres and venues are also very concerned about legal liability issues surrounding possible exposure to COVID-19.

It is thought that outdoor venues and organizations that perform outdoors may be the first to explore reopening if they can successfully enforce social distancing and handle hygiene issues.

Performance venues in New Hampshire are in regular communication with each other and regional colleagues through [Arts Presenters of Northern New England](#) and nationally through the [Association of Performing Arts Professionals](#).

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2. Museums and galleries

NH has a wide variety of museums and galleries that exhibit art, artifacts and other items. Some museums also host performances and lectures.

- *Art museums and galleries* can be nonprofit or commercial, operate year-round and mount several exhibits each year. Some also host performances and lectures, and have interactive components that are routinely touched by patrons. Examples: [Currier Museum of Art](#); [AVA Gallery and Art Center](#); [Twiggs Gallery](#), [NH Art Association Gallery](#)
- *Academic art museums/galleries* serve their academic communities and the general public. They mount several exhibits each year and generally operate on the college/university/school schedule. Examples: [Museum of the White Mountains at Plymouth State](#); [Lamont Gallery at Phillips Exeter](#); [UNH Museum of Art](#); [Hood Museum of Art](#)
- *Outdoor sculpture parks* are the only visual art venues currently open. Examples: [Andres Institute of Art](#); [Meredith Sculpture Walk](#); [Nashua International Sculpture Symposium](#)
- *Historical museums/sites* operate year-round or seasonally, some with changing exhibitions. Examples: [Strawbery Banke](#); [Canterbury Shaker Village](#); [Millyard Museum](#)
- *Specialty museums* in New Hampshire include the [Mount Kearsarge Indian Museum](#), [Children's Museum of NH](#) and the [Aviation Museum of NH](#).

Social distancing and hygiene are concerns of this group. Like performance venues, social distancing protocols would limit the amount of people that could be in a museum or gallery at the same time, which for those entities that charge admission is not a sustainable model. Staff would also have to be deployed throughout the museum to enforce social distancing and perform regular sanitization, particularly of interactive components. There are also health concerns related to receiving and handling artwork and mounting exhibitions, and concerns about legal liability issues surrounding exposure to COVID-19.

Museums in New Hampshire are in regular contact with their regional and national colleagues through the [New England Museum Association](#), [American Alliance of Museums](#) and [Association of Art Museum Directors](#).

3. Educational arts organizations

New Hampshire has a wide range of educational arts organizations that serve children and adults, at-risk populations and the disabled. Many are nonprofit but there are a significant number of commercial entities. These organizations provide group classes, individual lessons, and often organize and sponsor performance ensembles. Many also host day camps during school and summer vacations.

- *Music schools* are often nonprofit and community based, but some are commercial and attached to retail music businesses. Examples: [Concord Community Music School](#); [Portsmouth Music and Arts Center](#); [Mountaintop Music Center](#); [Music & Arts](#)
- *Art centers* can be nonprofit or commercial, and provide group classes, open studios and sometimes private/shared studio spaces. Examples: [AVA Gallery and Art Center](#); [The Art Center](#); [Library Arts Center](#)
- *Dance studios* in NH are typically for-profit businesses that teach individual and group classes in a variety of dance forms to children and adults, like [Dimensions in Dance](#). Nonprofit organizations like [MoCo Arts](#) and [Sole City Dance](#) also direct ensembles and work with community and social service groups.
- *Theatre programs* for adults and children are often operated by brick and mortar theatres and venues, and include organizations like the [New Hampshire Theatre Project](#), [Andy's Summer Playhouse](#) and [The Palace Theatre](#).

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As with other arts organizations, issues of social distancing and hygiene are paramount when planning for some kind of physical reopening, and arts education organizations will be closely following recommendations for K-12 schools. Many of these organizations have successfully transitioned to on-line lessons, classes and ensembles and are re-thinking their business models for the next 12 – 18 months until a COVID-19 vaccine is available.

Educational arts organizations are in regular contact with their professional associations, which include the [National Guild for Community Arts Education](#) and others.

4. Festivals

New Hampshire is home to many festivals, like the [League of NH Craftsmen](#) Annual Fair, [NH Music Festival](#), [NH Film Festival](#) and the [New Hampshire Highland Games](#). Depending on timing and location (outdoors/indoors), these festivals may or may not take place this year, due to concerns about audience and artist safety, social distancing and hygiene.

As stated above, New Hampshire arts and cultural venues and organizations are committed to following all [CDC](#) and [NH HHS](#) guidance on preventing and mitigating COVID-19, but are asking the following questions regarding reopening:

1. When will it be safe to reopen and how will "safe" be defined, and by whom?
2. How does the decision to reopen get made and by whom? Federal, state, local government?
3. What restrictions will be placed on organizations as they reopen? (i.e., gathering size, PPE, etc.)
4. What concerns will audiences have?
5. What concerns will artists have?
6. Where can we turn for support and what kind of aid will be available during the transition?