



CreateNYC: Arts, Culture, and Community Resilience Focus Group Meeting Notes and Recommendations

Monday, March 27, 2017; 3:00-5:00pm

Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, 125 Maiden Lane, Second Floor, New York, NY 10038

Overview:

While artists and cultural organizations can themselves represent vulnerable populations, they have the capacity to – and have proven to be critical to – emergency response, recovery, and resiliency efforts, whether it be in times of natural disaster, financial crisis, or political unrest. The discussion will focus on the role artists and cultural organizations can play in support of, and in partnership with, their broader communities. This focus group is a continuation of on-going conversations around the role of artists and cultural workers in resiliency efforts across the City.

Discussion: experiences of partnership with the City, successes, challenges, supports, needs

Successes/Opportunities:

- During emergencies there is an immediate and voluminous desire to engage. Ultimately, artists, organizations, and others need access: access to networks (free wifi networks in Red Hook), to space at no or highly subsidized costs, information
- Build on the momentum of resiliency focus to incubate (formally recognize) Community Hubs (combine post-Sandy and NeON center models for sustained resiliency planning)
 - Key neighborhoods can be the primary sites for community resilience hubs designated as such by the City: Red Hook, Rockaways, Coney Island, Staten Island East Shore, Hunts Point
 - Sustain social cohesion consistently; prepared for emergency recovery plugged into CultureAID
 - Community groups, local actors seek assistance in formalizing the partners operating/managing these spaces – City to coordinate services, grants, permits, ownership within these Resilience Hubs for sharing information and access awareness
 - Permitting with Dept of Parks is a model for all other agencies
 - Hubs to have formal accreditation offering training, development and capacity resources, resiliency resource sharing and action point for local residents.
 - Database of Registered Artists with vetting process
 - Contact point, engagement with local Council Members, Library systems partnerships
- Reframing of resiliency – Community Resilience without resources is impossible. Poverty and perpetual lack of adequate resourcing of communities is a long-term disaster from which communities are rarely able to recover.
 - Establish the role of the arts in the perpetual state of crisis, not as reactionary to climate crises events.



- Defining the “soft resource” of arts and cultural fields. What process does the City undertake to help artists, community based organizations, and others’ work thrive in place?
- How can the City coordinate efforts to build/foster community resilience and social cohesion?
 - Propose: Block Parties for community engagement and asset mapping exercises
 - Think hyper-locally: geography is important, population is also important. What communities are more vulnerable or consistently under resourced?
 - Would have been useful post-Sandy, but generally a repository of information that’s maintained including things like artists, directors, etc. There’s a great need for an aggregator of resources.

Challenges/Needs:

- Lack of community spaces – really difficult to work through the capital process to acquire funds to do the work we need. City to identify space in outer boroughs and concentrate additional support in these areas/neighborhoods is needed.
- Better ensure that grant funds for resiliency projects are going to local stakeholders, artists, or cultural workers rather than outside consultants selected by the project team. Better ensure that all project teams responding to RFPs are aware of and proposing to work with artists acutely aware of the landscape and needs of a community, or one with an established history.
- Artists are perpetually under or not-at-all compensated for their community-based practice, especially in the context of emergency response/disaster recovery.
- Identify roll of the City in increasingly serving as a convening agent for organizations, artists, cultural workers, and space in which to do resiliency work.

Recommendations:

- Participants universally agreed that they would like the City to play the role of conveners, bringing people together.
- DCLA can help encourage/persuade foundations to direct more grant dollars to smaller, grassroots organizations who may or may not have the capacity to secure access alone.
- Streamline the various permitting processes - easier to navigate across agencies.
- Make sure that artists always get paid
- The City could help develop one place, a **hub**, with resources and information.
- Underutilized Partnerships and Spaces:
 - DCLA to facilitate more partnerships between artists, CBOs and DOE.
 - Children aren’t participating in everything that’s available to them in terms of cultural activity. How can the City help with that?
 - There should be more emphasis on community schools that serve whole families, not just the children.

- DCLA to facilitate better collaboration between artists, CBOs and other City Agencies.
 - Leverage already existing infrastructure: community rooms in NYCHA projects that aren't being used or have even been shut down.
 - DYCD is impossible to navigate. Organizations do not apply for contracts that could be very beneficial because it's not worth all the paperwork. DYCD does not prioritize quality of work or the artist; focus is on paperwork and bureaucracy.
- Relationship with Developers:
 - Private developers need to be connected to local organizations and individuals to be partners in improving neighborhoods.
 - Developers should be required to include community space in new buildings. Almost no one does this, and when they do, culture isn't prioritized as community space. Good services might be provided, but there's an opportunity for so much more.
- Incentivize arts/artists doing business from NYC (like tech industry).
 - There is established research that the presence of artists in neighborhoods drives up the value (social, economic, other)
- Short term vs. long term goals re: Resiliency Planning:
 - Need a better understanding of where money goes and how it can be distributed more equitable. There has to be a conversation about equitable funding and more equity across the board.
 - Resiliency isn't just about recovering from trauma, but also preventing it. And trauma isn't just natural disasters.
 - **Culture should always be included in every resiliency plan. Establish a baseline of indicator and success for thriving in place with regards to culture.**
 - What is the role of culture in sanctuary cities? As with Sandy, the arts can serve a real purpose in helping people.
 - SIAP report
 - Hawaii's model of cultural and social impact assessments