Creative Aging Focus Group
March 02, 2017
Location: Department of Cultural Affairs

I.   **Introduction by DCLA and HSC**
- Introduced the Cultural Plan, planning process, and opportunities for engagement during phase two
- Presented main questions for discussion
    - What are the benefits of participation in Arts and Culture activities for older adults?
    - What are the barriers to participation for older adults in New York City?
    - What current programs, services, and access points exist to support engagement across the city?
    - What are programmatic and service gaps that could be filled with existing or newly dedicated resources?
- The CreateNYC team, with DCLA, has already helped organize over 180 focus groups and community meetings.
- The goal of the cultural plan is to create policy, program, and project recommendations over the short, medium, and long term.

II.   **Open Discussion about how arts and culture can better serve LGBTQ communities in NYC**
- Particular conversation in the interest of the cultural plan, not to repeat, but to acknowledge what great work is being done, struggles, success, etc.
- Set the landscape of Creative Aging in NYC – identify some of the holes that the Cultural Plan can address
    - Variety of programs at senior centers, also Community centers, libraries, parks – extremely successful in a variety of ways. New partnerships with Parks Dept. we struggle with new programs in unexpected ways because at Rec. Center (are more popular than even at the senior centers) but are more challenging to staff.
    - Programs at senior centers are so successful because people don't always want to be part of age segregated programs, prefer interactions across age groups
    - Professional development for librarians to work with seniors and in creative aging programs. These are popular spaces because they are age democratic and neutral.
    - BPL is great at doing partnerships in senior centers. Enormously knowledgeable and prepared. Training program for senior service organizations which are free – to introduce them to the field of Creative Aging. Funded through private foundations.
        - How do you support and fund these programs?
        - How do you find artists to do the work?

- DCLA can play a larger role in helping us connect private funding to this work, enhance this. Currently, the largest source of funding is through Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS).

- SUMMARY:
  - Professional Development for administrators, teaching artists, and organizations running these programs, etc.
  - Value of intergenerational spaces, programs
  - Evaluation? Challenges, Successes, Methods, and needs upon resources to communicate out – particularly the health field is looking for this.
    - What people ask for are the quantities, evidence-based research (Center for Creative Aging is trying to codify this data – NEED a research team NCCA site has a partial model nationally)
    - What people really respond to is the qualitative research, data

III. **STRATEGIES / RECOMMENDATIONS:** The research shows that older adults who practice or participate in arts and culture are happier, healthier, and have stronger social connections. Creative aging allows older adults to thrive.
  - Develop Older Adult or Creative Aging programs with input from users/participants to provide resources and programs for all consider the following needs:
    - A lot of intergenerational programs: Art Looking, Art Making, Film programs very popular
    - Economics (ALL programs free)
      - Also, economics for the administrators must be considered; the issue is money to be sustainable, no matter how much training we do, program administrators will leave or lack of resources will prevent continuation of the program operations
    - Social Isolation and social connectedness (time for chatting outside program)
    - Increasingly trying to do partnerships programs in all five boroughs
      - Senior Centers, Museums, Geriatric practices, bereavement programs, Housing Complexes
    - Many conversations around arts and aging, but often the programs are not considered arts and cultural.
      - Dancing, Cultural Exchanges, etc. are not categorized as arts and culture!

  - Do is a systems analysis:

- Parks, Libraries, Museums, Board of Ed, Senior Centers – all different, different sources of funding
- Pairing school and senior ctr. Is so cost effective because the cost is just program and artist and the benefits are social cohesion, strengths, etc.!
- Flushing Program – w/ DOE, embedded program in that school – NORC partnerships with schools, another site of diversity and system – we should understand how each of these systems are supported and sustained and think strategically about how to leverage these for increased sustainability, long term

o Older adults are the most under resourced resource in NYC – not all want to do work, but many do and they can be "Living Docents"
- Provide modest honoraria for artists embedded in your community and spread the word about the social economic programs
- Art Cart (legacy) intergenerational, pairs art students and older, visual artists as well as performance artists
- Better utilize the gallery spaces around the city for intergenerational art shows:
  - Create opportunities for gallery shows with intergenerational artists, working, curating, and exhibiting together – natural living docent philosophy formed

o Create a culture shift of embracing creative aging, and away from the youth centric model
- Look to Libraries as a model for demographic change and programs shifting to respond to different philosophy (ageism needs to be spoken about). One, Two decades ago, libraries were very unfriendly to youth and young children – have to be quite, now every library in the country has story hour! This is reflective of a paradigm shift in the library philosophy about inclusion and role of resource in public service.
- Most of older adult programs are shifted to social services realm, not arts space (like at risk, low income, prisoners).

o Invest is professional development across all industries involved in Creative Aging
- Immense interest across the city – in terms of sustainability, we need funding AND opportunities for professional development. Partnerships thrive on recognizing the labor intensive administration behind the programs and the orgs and individuals need support to sustain their professional practice
- If all money for creative aging is going to Senior centers, then those orgs need to be prepared for that – the organizational infrastructure needs to be supported,

have training and development to properly manage the expectations of service / scope.

- o Citywide Coordination with respect to Creative Aging discipline:
  - This needs to be part of the values of these orgs and agencies – how do facilitate this as experts working in Creative Aging.
  - Have a dedicated Arts Coordinator at DFTA and DCLA - Senior Centers can really set a foundation for sustainable and thriving programs and support of the administrative needs of keeping these kinds of programs running.
  - Increase funding for administrative support and capacity at DFTA, DCLA, Arts Councils to execute the SU-CASA initiative at the most curated level.

- o Entice private Philanthropy to support the field of Creative Aging
  - They need to be here sharing in the support and the work to keeping Creative Aging thriving. We have had to do a lot of remedial training about what are the arts, disciplines, opportunities – documenting this work to share out for increasing support – AD COUNCIL.
  - Re-evaluate the indicators and measures for the success

- o CreativeAgingNYC (Brand this across the city and across the intersectional spectrum of Older Adults in NYC)
  - **Create the department of Arts, Education, and Aging in NYC**
  - The Goals would need to be established – but we need to incorporate into advisory boards and fund some real research with Health, Education, Arts, Aging members.
  - Could this be an initiative that DCLA takes on and convenes coordinators in other agencies to establish SUSTAINABLE Program – include private sector? Include City Hall? Include private funders?
  - DOH / DFTA Age Friendly Initiative (59 released 8 years ago) – in this process, we are asking for more cultural programs, funding as we develop new initiatives under de Blasio administration.

IV. **Discussion and Recommendations -** What can the City, DCLA, and the larger cultural community do to support the field of Creative Aging:
- Sustainability is essential to doing the work well – more ideas about this, DCLA to continue to convene to foster these ideas developing.
- DCLA has a leadership role. We are asking for a PUBLIC COMMITMENT. Recognition in one place for arts and aging in critical to NYC. DCLA and DFTA are the agencies to do this.

- Columbia Center for the Aging doing a lot of research on this, use them!
- NYCMER, Arts Education consortiums – plug into these forums more and bring to these circles awareness, support, and acknowledgement of industry of CA.
- Requirement of City or State funding: dedicated portion to serving older adults (some of this is part of ADA requirements upgrades, do more)
- NYC Aging people interested in the arts are a commodity and bring money into the city. Private money, make relationships with orgs that charge fees and set a portion of that aside for those most in need. Public –Private partnership for sustainability and inclusive, equitable access.
- VA, Parks, DFTA, DCLA – convene an annual series of training for CA sector, essential to the sustainability of the field of administrators doing CA.
  - DCLA/DFTA Task Force. Parks Task Force. VA task force. Know how each of these systems operate, and then determine how to strategize these interworking and collaborative paths forward.
- Higher Education – more resources, BFA, MFA – can include arts admin programs in this? Internships, fellowships to get in-field training and pipeline of admin support to sustain this industry. (related to pay equity in the long term)
  - Keeping quality teaching artists in these programs and fairly, equitably compensated.
  - Money, experiential learning, time (to make the work happen) Artist and Administrator to plan the work together – plan and imagine the possibility and do sequential programming.
  - Seed, Pilot mentality – part of that is determining how to sustain this in the site beyond the bespoke process.
  - SU-CASA partnering with BIDs, Chambers of Commerce. Any successes you've seen here? How do we use these non-arts convening spaces in which to do some cultural programming.
- Invest in building connections and creating awareness