

**Submitted on-** 2/1/2017

**Name of Event** - A Community Conversation on Culture

**Date of Event** - 1/31/1976

**Location of Event** - BRIC Arts Media 647 Fulton Street 11217

**Borough** – Brooklyn

**Event Host/s or Sponsor/s** - on behalf of the Downtown Brooklyn Arts Alliance

**Event Contact/s** - Sharon Polli; Leslie Schultz; Emily Harney; Jessica Sucher; Brian Vines; Kuye Youngblood

**What type of engagement was this?** - Town Hall

**How many people attended the event? (Overall)** - 100-200

**Who were the attendees?** - NYC Residents, Parents / Guardians / Caregivers, Artists and culture bearers (e.g. visual artists, musicians, poets, dancers, performers, etc.), Creative workers and makers (e.g. crafts people, weavers, carpenters, jewelry designers, etc.), Arts Administrators, Educators / Teachers / Teaching Artists, Business Community (e.g. small business owners, merchants associations, BIDs, etc.)

**Please provide some demographic details about the attendees** - Participants from the Downtown Brooklyn Arts Alliance - including their staff, leadership and audiences; members of the CB2 Committee on Youth Culture and Education; local community members.

**What activities/ material from the CreateNYC Toolkit did you use to engage people?** - Infographic (Understand what NYC's cultural planning process is all about)

**Briefly describe any other activities, strategies or materials that you used to gather input** - We had a printed, short version of the digital survey for people to fill out; researchers were there to take notes that will be incorporated into the white paper we are presenting for the Cultural Plan; facilitated discussion about what community members from different sectors want and need from their local arts organizations.

**What issues did you touch upon in your discussions?**

Equity (The rights of all people everywhere to develop their practice and traditions), Access (Distribution of and participation in cultural activities throughout the city), Social & economic impact (The role of arts and culture in an equitable economy and healthy communities), Affordability (Live, work and presentation space for artists), Education (Increase arts education in public schools and ensure that curriculum is culturally relevant and diverse), Neighborhood character (Prevent displacement of culture and communities through planning and community development)

**From the issues above, what did the group prioritize? Please describe.**

Equity and social and economic impact were primary topics, considering the ways in which arts and culture are indicators and elements of a healthy community (specifically around small businesses). In terms of neighborhood character, much discussion of the responsibilities of large developments have towards their local neighbors, particularly as "culture" in downtown is such a selling point for new residencies. Other discussion about education, and how in schools that are struggling the arts are not considered central.

**From the issues above, what connections were made between issue areas, if any? Please describe.**

Many connections - including sharing the power for decision making (which relates to equity, affordability, social and economic impact); decentralizing the presentation of arts/culture; moving arts and culture outside of arts spaces; recognizing 'culture' as something produced by everyone, not only those who claim to be cultural producers or arts institutions.

### **Synthesis of Event**

This event was designed to hear how sectors of Downtown Brooklyn want to engage with their arts organizations, and what they need from arts and culture institutions in order to further their own missions. Much discussion about making art more central in our education system; seeing art and culture as a part of the neighborhood, not just the purview of arts institutions; decentralizing arts programming.

**From your overview, what were the key recommendations from your discussion that can inform the cultural plan? Please describe.**

These will come later, as we synthesize the input from this discussion with responses from the survey.

**Photos, videos or sound recordings from the event -**

<https://www.facebook.com/bricartsmedia/videos/1773929165966551/>

**Message to the CreateNYC team-** We distributed the info-graphic, but did not have people use any of the toolkit in other ways. This was a great discussion, and notes will come later as we review and synthesize the perspectives.

# **DOWNTOWN BROOKLYN ARTS ALLIANCE**

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## Downtown Brooklyn Arts Alliance Cultural Needs: Survey Findings + Recommendations

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**to:** Commissioner Tom Finkelppearl, New York City Department of Cultural Affairs,  
and the CreateNYC team

**from:** The Downtown Brooklyn Arts Alliance (DBAA)

**date:** March 22, 2017

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### **Project Context**

The Downtown Brooklyn Arts Alliance (DBAA) is a coalition of 39 Downtown Brooklyn arts and cultural organizations. With the support of a grant from the New York City Cultural Agenda Fund, administered by the New York Community Trust, and in an effort to ensure that the voice of its member organizations is represented in the forthcoming New York City Cultural Plan, DBAA undertook a surveying and community engagement effort aimed at gathering input from DBAA member organizations (inclusive of staff, leadership, and artists, as well as their students, participants, and audience) on their cultural needs. The following report summarizes the findings of those efforts and also provides specific cultural policy recommendations for Downtown Brooklyn that may be incorporated into the overarching Cultural Plan.

Special thanks to the research consultants for this project, Christina Kruse and Liam Sweeney.

## **Executive Summary: DBAA Cultural Needs Outreach and Recommendations**

The Downtown Brooklyn Arts Alliance (DBAA) is a coalition of 39 Downtown Brooklyn arts and cultural organizations, formed in 2011. With the support of a grant from the New York City Cultural Agenda Fund, administered by the New York Community Trust, and in an effort to ensure that the voice its member organizations is represented in the forthcoming New York City Cultural Plan, DBAA undertook a

MEMBERS 651 ARTS + A.R.T./NEW YORK-SOUTH OXFORD SPACE + ACTNOW FOUNDATION + ACTORS FUND/THE SCHERMERHORN + AMERICAN OPERA PROJECTS + BAM + BOMB MAGAZINE + BROOKLYN ARTS COUNCIL + BRIC + BROOKLYN BALLET + BROOKLYN HISTORICAL SOCIETY + BROOKLYN MUSIC SCHOOL + BROOKLYN NAVY YARD + BROOKLYN YOUTH CHORUS + CENTER FOR FICTION + THE CIVILIANS + DANCEWAVE + EMMANUEL BAPTIST CHURCH JAZZ VESPERS + ENCOMPASS NEW OPERA THEATRE + GALLIM DANCE + ISSUE PROJECT ROOM + IRONDALE ENSEMBLE PROJECT + LIU KUMBLE THEATER + MARK MORRIS DANCE GROUP + MOCADA + MODERN-DAY GRIOT THEATRE COMPANY + NEW YORK TRANSIT MUSEUM + NY WRITERS COALITION + ROULETTE + STORYCORPS + THEATRE FOR A NEW AUDIENCE + TRILOK FUSION ARTS + URBAN BUSH WOMEN + URBANGLASS + WHITE BIRD PRODUCTIONS

surveying and community engagement effort aimed at gathering input from DBAA member organizations on their cultural needs.

The survey began with four general questions that were answered by all survey participants. Survey respondents were then asked to identify themselves as either a DBAA member organization artist, staff member, leader, or audience member (only one option could be selected). They were then directed to a series of questions specific to that selection.

In total, the survey received 221 responses. A related town hall event called “A Community Conversation About Culture in Brooklyn” was attended by 60 participants and seen by more than 700 viewers via livestream. The survey and its results are described in more detail in the appendix attached here.

## **Policy Recommendations**

Through the process described in more detail below, the DBAA talked to a diverse cross-section of stakeholders, including artists, audiences, staff, and leadership.

Based on this research, DBAA uncovered a set of key values that underpin the goals we believe the cultural plan should achieve: Affordability, Diversity, and Accessibility.

These values, which are echoed in the Issue Areas mapped out in the CreateNYC roadmap, must be supported through meaningful relationships between arts organizations and the New Yorkers they serve.

To that end, DBAA has created a set of values-based recommendations that focus on maximizing the role the City of New York can play in ensuring arts organizations are equipped and incentivized to meet the cultural needs of a diverse cross-section of New Yorkers.

These recommendations aim to result in the following outcomes:

- To offer diverse, affordable programs;
- To support artists’ ability to live and create work;
- To ensure access and high-quality programming for non-traditional audiences; and
- To strengthen relationships between arts organizations and young people.

Finally, DBAA believes that the below recommendations are best implemented with a goal of enhancing equity and strengthening our field in order to fully achieve the stated ends that are the goal of the New York City Cultural Plan.

## Highest Priority Recommendations City of New York

### 1. THRIVING CULTURAL SECTOR

**Identified Need:** To enable cultural organizations to better fulfill their potential, retain staff, and meet audience and community needs and desires (such as increased accessibility and additional education programs), increased and sustained funding and reduction of operating costs is required.

Across the city, community-based arts organizations are vital to the fabric of New York City's cultural life in neighborhoods like Downtown Brooklyn. Too often, however, these organizations operate with modest resources and lack the capacity to identify much needed cost-efficiencies. The City of New York can play a lead role in investing in arts organizations while helping to cut operating costs across the sector.

As the Cultural Plan develops, this increased funding is particularly vital as arts organizations prepare to meet the need for expanded free and subsidized arts programming that is accessible to all New Yorkers.

**Recommendation:** Increase the pool of funding available for arts organizations. Distribute this funding with a goal of enhancing access and equity within the field. New York City has begun this process through a \$2 million fund provided by the Theater Subdistrict Council. We recommend continued efforts in this direction.

The intentional distribution of new funds is key to access and equity efforts. For example, a designated pool of funds can be made available specifically to community-based organizations to subsidize ticket programs for low-income New Yorkers.

New funding opportunities could also underwrite workforce diversification efforts. For example, a model program is the successful Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) program, which employed artists as temporary staff positions in arts organizations, building organizational capacity and creating employment opportunities.

**Recommendation:** New York City should develop programs to reduce general operating expenses, such as employee benefit plans and discounted utility packages that are leveraged by the city. Networks of cultural organizations that already receive funds from DCLA through Programs Group funding would make a natural coalition for such programs.

As one step in this effort, the City of New York can baseline the successful FY17 Utility Relief funding and leverage this initiative as a pilot, considering its expansion to reduce the utility costs of venues throughout the field.

## 2. AFFORDABILITY

**Identified Need:** More affordable living, working, and presenting space opportunities for small and emerging artists and arts organizations, and support for legacy artists in gentrifying communities.

**Recommendation:** New York City should create a city-wide plan for the 1,500 units of artist housing that Mayor de Blasio included in his Housing Plan, addressing obstacles to an artist-preference in affordable housing programs.

**Recommendation:** For all real estate developments, require exploratory conversations with local arts organizations to create either presenting or work space, with incentives if the developers do so beyond any base obligation to provide community space.

**Recommendation:** Invest in exchanges such as SpaceFinder NYC that share information about space availability that can be sorted geographically and by price.

## 3. DIVERSITY

**Identified Need:** Sustained diversity of programming.

**Recommendation:** Develop city-wide initiatives to encourage and support emerging curators, producers, and artists from traditionally under-represented cultures.

**Recommendation:** Invest in programs to help diversify the workforce of cultural organizations.

## 4. ACCESSIBILITY

**Identified Need:** Increased engagement of non-traditional audiences with cultural organizations.

**Recommendation:** Invest in and support the activation of non-traditional or public spaces with cultural programming through innovative partnerships between DCLA and other city agencies, such as the Department for the Aging, the Department of Small Businesses Services, and the Department of Probation.

**Recommendation:** Create a mechanism to formally match and fund arts organizations to partner with city-funded, community-based organizations with the goal that they develop co-created initiatives based on shared values and priorities.

## 5. MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIPS WITH ARTS ORGANIZATIONS

**Identified Need:** Deeper meaningful relationships between cultural organizations and audiences, particularly young people.

**Recommendation:** (Re)create programs where teens are paid a stipend to participate in classes at local arts venues, modeled on successful DYCD programs such as the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP).

**Recommendation:** In partnership with the Department of Education, formally match and fund arts organizations to work with neighborhood public school partners, with the goal that they develop meaningful co-created initiatives.

**Recommendation:** Facilitate ongoing engagement between public school student visitors to arts venues and those venues. For example, encourage the Department of Education to formalize and underwrite internship and work-study placement possibilities between neighborhood public schools and local arts organizations.

### **Additional Recommendations City of New York**

**Identified Need:** Closer alignment of small businesses and cultural organizations.

**Recommendation:** Pilot expanded co-marketing initiatives between Business Improvement District members and local venues via micro grants.

**Recommendation:** Create mechanisms for small businesses and community-based organizations to underwrite cultural programming in non-arts gathering spaces they oversee, in partnership with local arts organizations.

**Identified Need:** Better geographical distribution of upcoming cultural events.

**Recommendation:** Facilitate citywide partnerships with leading technology companies to create tech tools that will allow users to find (filter) cultural events by neighborhood and discipline. This might include a website or application or tools to enhance existing popular apps.

### **What DBAA Learned**

Through this process, the DBAA also learned vital information from its stakeholders and Downtown Brooklyn residents that will inform its programming, policy, and practice moving forward. We are pleased to share this learning with the City of New York, and look forward to updating the DCLA on our efforts to meet these needs moving forward.

**Identified Need:** Incorporate more community input into programming.

**Recommendation:** Through geographically focused organizations (or coalitions of arts organizations or arts councils like DBAA), engage in regular conversations between cultural organizations and community groups about programming designed to connect cultural organizations with the members of those community organizations. Continue ongoing dialogue about what is of interest. Share and distribute details from these conversations with our peers across the field more broadly.

**Recommendation:** Facilitate and incentivize meetups between curators, programmers, and audience members.

**Identified Need:** Family-minded and intergenerational programs and events.

**Recommendation:** Increase intergenerational and family-oriented programming in cultural venues and neighborhood social spaces, such as public parks, neighborhood libraries, or senior centers.

**Recommendation:** Support parents, grandparents, and caretakers who would like to attend adult offerings by providing options for childcare. This might include partnering with a company like Smartsitters to develop a babysitter package for one or two performances or offering educational programs during show times.

## **Appendix: Survey Findings**

The Downtown Brooklyn Arts Alliance Survey was designed to ask DBAA staff, leadership, artists, and audiences about their cultural needs. The survey began with four general questions that were answered by all survey participants. Survey respondents were then asked to identify themselves as either a DBAA member organization staff member, leader, artist, or audience member (only one option could be selected). They were then directed to a series of questions specific to that selection.

To distribute the survey, DBAA member organizations were provided with instructions outlining when the survey and survey reminders should be sent. Each organization was then responsible for emailing an online survey link to their staff, artist, and audience distribution lists. Member organizations were also provided with the option of distributing truncated paper surveys at events, which included the four questions common to all constituents. In total, the survey received 201 online responses (167 of which were classified as 'complete') and 20 paper responses, for a total of 221 responses. A breakdown of electronic survey responses, by zip code, is included below in Table 1 (the paper surveys did not ask about respondent zip codes). Zip codes that have the same number of responses have been grouped together.

Table 1: Survey Responses per Zip Code

Survey Responses per Zip Code		
Zip Code	Responses/Zip	Associated Neighborhoods
11238	21	Prospect Heights
11201	20	Boerum Hill, Brooklyn Heights, Cobble Hill, Downtown, DUMBO, Fulton Ferry, Vinegar Hill
11215	19	Park Slope
11217	13	Boerum Hill, Park Slope, Prospect Heights, Prospect Park South
11216	10	Bedford Stuyvesant, Stuyvesant Heights
11205	8	Clinton Hill, Fort Greene, Navy Yard
11226, 11233	7	Albemarle-Kenmore Terrace, Beverley Square, Ditmas Park, Flatbush, Broadway Junction, Ocean Hill, Weeksville
11213, 11218, 11237	6	Crown Heights, Caton Park, Kensington, Windsor Terrace, Ridgewood
11210, 11225	5	Farragut, Midwood Park, South Side, Crown Heights, Prospect Lefferts Gardens
11206, 11209, 11221, 11231	3	Williamsburg, Bay Ridge, Fort Hamilton, Bushwick, Carroll Gardens, Gowanus, Red Hook
10003, 11203, 11222, 11234	2	Greenwich Village, East Flatbush, Rugby, Wingate, Greenpoint, Manhattan Beach, Marine Park, Mill Basin, Mill Island
07423, 10001, 10009, 10014, 10023, 10032, 10033, 10457, 11101, 11207, 11211, 11214, 11228, 11229, 11230, 11232, 11236, 11385, 11435, 11570	1	Ho-Ho-Kus, Chelsea, Stuyvesant Town, West Village, Upper West Side, Washington Heights, West Bronx, Long Island City, City Line, East New York, Highland Park, North Side, Williamsburg, Bath Beach, Bensonhurst, Dyker Heights, Gerritsen Beach, Madison, Fiske Terrace, Georgetown, Manhattan Terrace, Midwood, Ocean Parkway, Greenwood Heights, Canarsie, Flatlands, New Lots, Paerdegat Basin, Remsen Village, Ridgewood, Jamaica, Rockville Centre

### Survey Results

In this section we explore the results of the survey. We aim to illustrate these results by measuring common themes that emerged among the responses, as well as highlighting individual responses that were reflective of the broader respondent population or that indicated deep engagement with the survey questions.

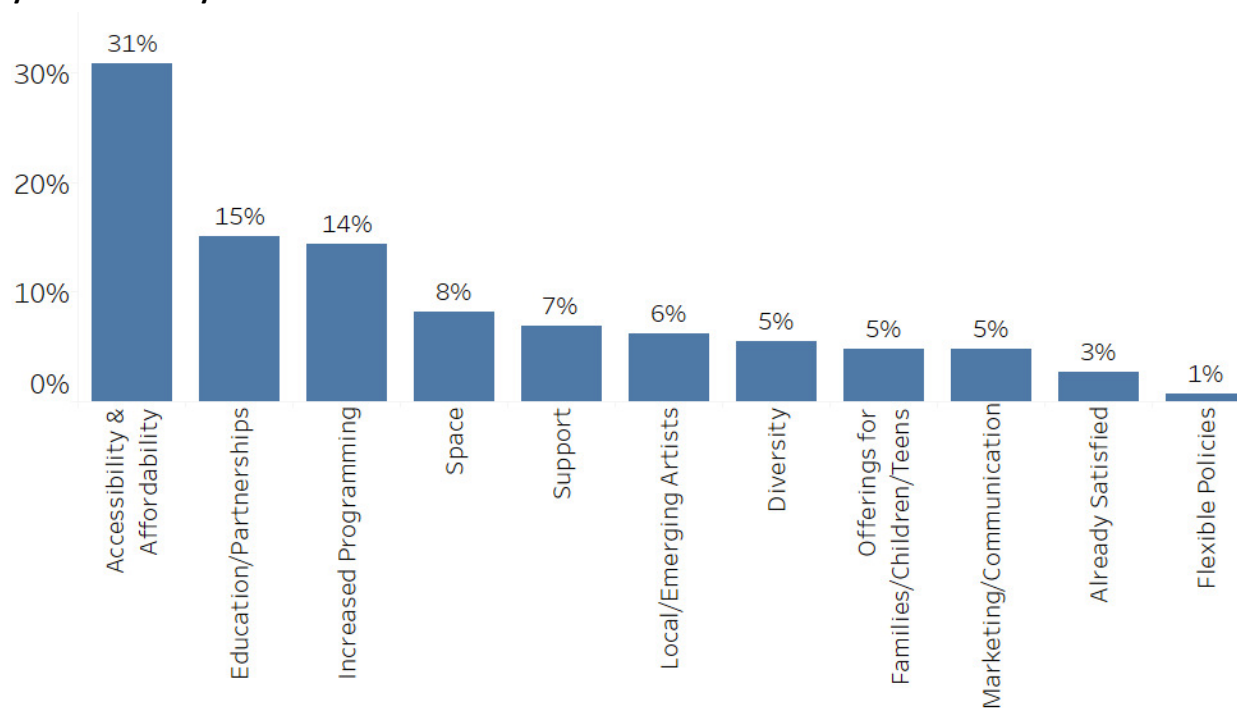
In addition to demographic questions, we asked four questions of all respondents, as follows:

- How would you like to see cultural organizations in New York City improve their offerings in your community?
- What do you feel is missing from the cultural landscape in New York City?
- What makes New York City a great place for culture?
- What would make art and culture in New York City more inclusive and equitable, or otherwise improve it?

Respondents were given the opportunity to answer these questions in up to 300 characters. These answers were categorized according to common themes and quantified in order to identify the most frequent types of responses.

We asked these questions to give everyone connected to the Downtown Brooklyn Arts Alliance a chance to participate in the New York City Cultural Plan and to have their voices heard by those crafting it. What we heard will come as no surprise to most New Yorkers: it is the diversity of the city and the variety of the programs offered that are highly valued among our respondents (though respondents recognized more of both would be better); however, affordability and accessibility are barriers to cultural engagement. Figure 1 shows a number of common suggestions as to how New York City could improve cultural offerings.

**Figure 1: How would you like to see cultural organizations in New York City improve their offerings in your community?**



As Figure 1 shows, Accessibility and Affordability emerged as the primary theme for this question. One respondent encouraged cultural organizations to partner to address this: “Come together to fight the market forces that make NYC unaffordable.”

Some responses suggested an interest in making cultural spaces inter-generational spaces. Whether by granting childcare with hands-on arts activities for children alongside adult programs or increasing educational offerings for seniors, respondents suggested that there is wisdom in fostering spaces that are accessible to all ages. One aspect of this is practical: childcare may allow for deeper and more frequent cultural engagement. Multi-generational spaces, however, also benefit from a spirit of inclusion.

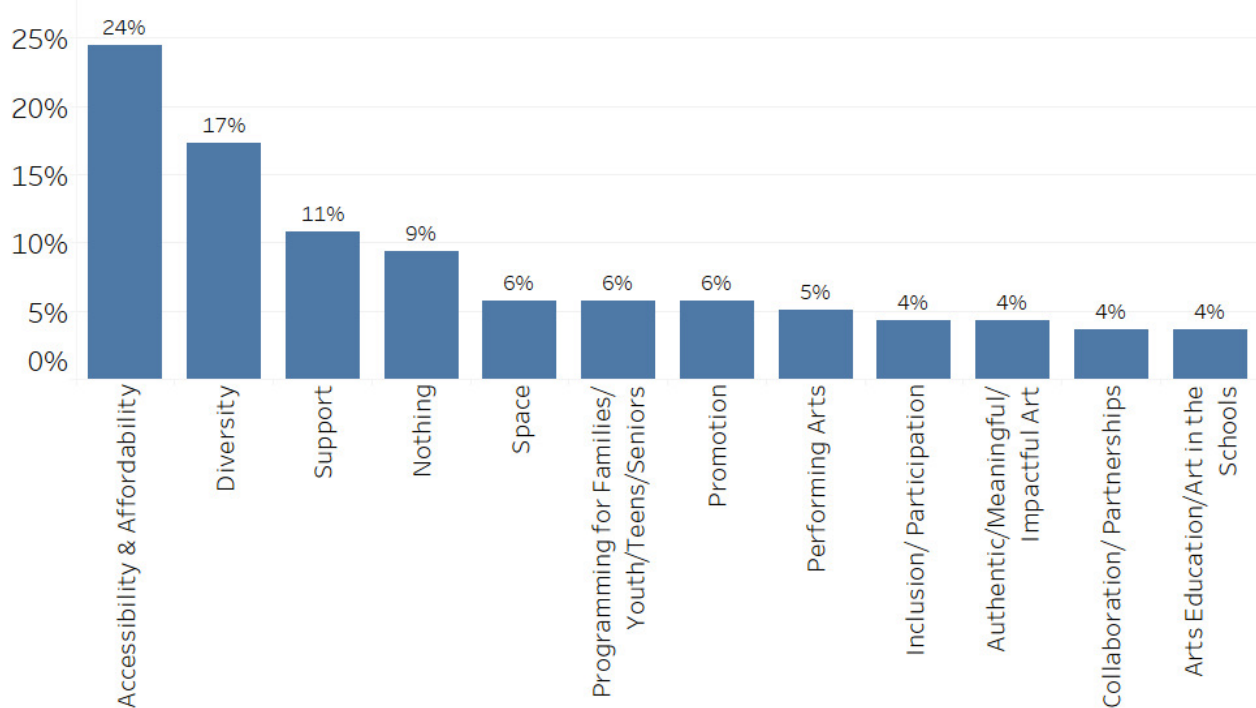
“I wish there were more intergenerational cultural events. The focus tends to be kids or adults, rarely both.”

“More decidedly inter-generational programming would really enrich the Brooklyn arts landscape in particular.”

Much of what is behind comments related to accessibility has to do with an interest in distributing cultural offerings throughout Brooklyn. The borough is 71 square miles and composed of over 2.5 million people. And, while respondents recognized that it is home to many of New York City’s cultural gems, there was also an acknowledgement that these gems are concentrated in the cultural district, and that effective community engagement means going into the community, rather than waiting for them to come to you. As one respondent put it: “I would like them to take southern Brooklyn seriously.” Another said, “More offerings in neighborhoods farther from Downtown - so support for smaller dance studios, performing spaces, music venues in south and central Brooklyn for busy working families.”

Figures 2 and 3 tell an interesting story about diversity in the cultural sector. When asked what was missing from the cultural landscape, many respondents volunteered diversity as an answer. Endearingly, a fair number expressed utter contentment, claiming that nothing was lacking. A plurality identified cheap programming and easy access as characteristics that could stand to increase.

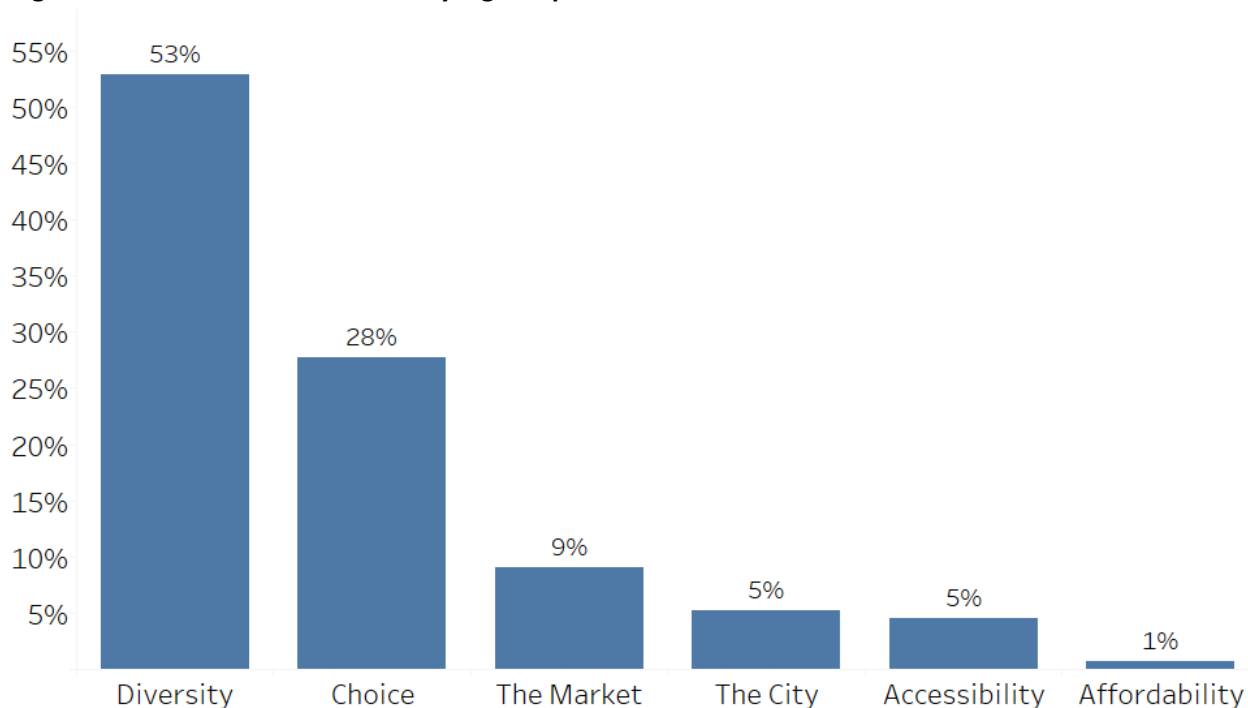
**Figure 2: What do you feel is missing from the cultural landscape in New York City?**



While New York City is home to many of the premier cultural institutions in the world, some respondents spoke to the difficulty for city residents to fit these experiences into their routines:

“One of the paradoxes of living in a culturally rich city like NYC is that lifelong art and performance for adults can be hard given pressures to make rent, raise kids, etc. Other cities have more venues for...community dance ensembles, art shows, etc.”

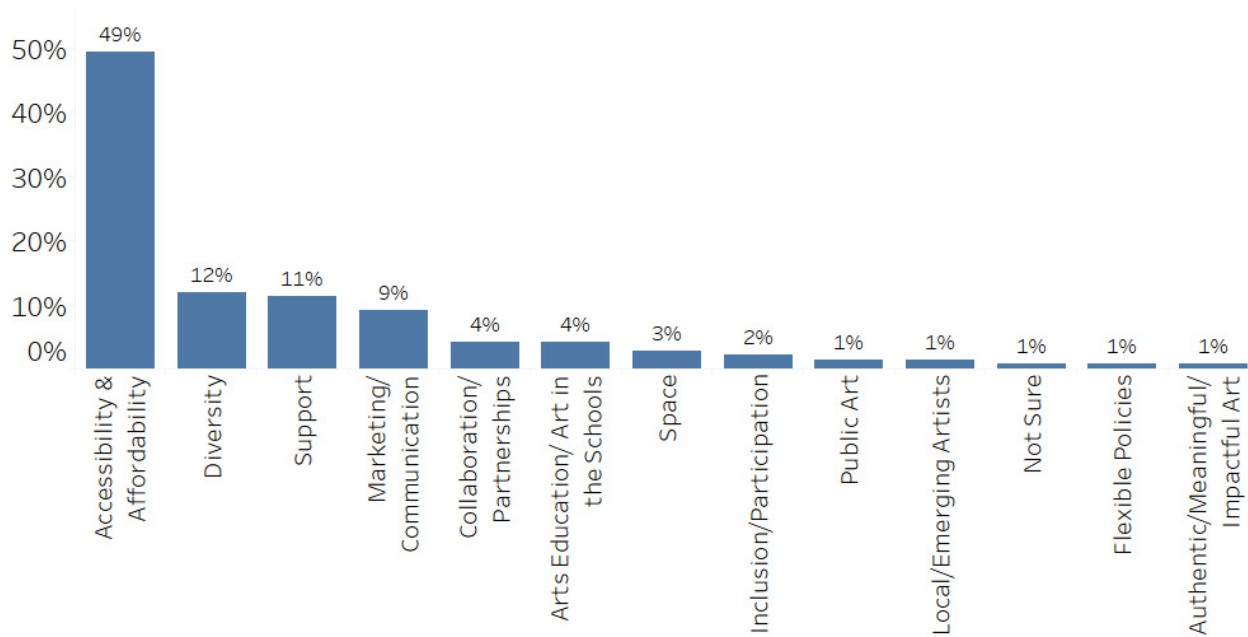
**Figure 3: What makes New York City a great place for culture?**



As Figure 3 shows, survey respondents most frequently identified diversity as the most attractive thing about cultural offerings in New York City, followed by the related category: variety in programming, which we have shortened to “Choice.” One respondent said: “Its diversity! Our willingness to speak up and speak out. Our yearning for new experiences.” Another respondent praised: “The diverse communities of unique cultural heritage, a large population of artists and climate of creativity, a greater sense of valuing the importance of culture in our communities, and availability of funding in support of cultural spaces and programs.” In relation to Figure 2, this shows that respondents love the diversity that already exists in New York, but want more of it in the cultural sector.

Figure 4 echoes the broader findings of Figures 1 and 2, suggesting that barriers to inclusivity and equity are often financial, whether that is related to location and real estate or ticket prices.

**Figure 4: What would make art and culture in New York City more inclusive and equitable, or otherwise improve it?**



Nevertheless, respondents provided a number of suggestions about how inclusivity and equity could be improved:

“The financial cost could have more perks: better rates for seniors/disabled; more free times and special rates for New York City residents.”

“This is such a big question. And tricky for some folks. But, better access to information is one. A wider variety of formats and offerings (drop-in, weekly, bi-weekly, pay what you can, etc.) to meet the needs of all New Yorkers and families. More culture in public places.”

“Subsidized and SAFE housing for artists, lobbying the city for tax subsidies, and a commitment from [nonprofit] arts orgs to not only provide monetary compensation for artist labor but to offer support for an artist's well-being beyond the period of their labor.”

“Have all the culture come together on a cook-off at least 2 times a year!!”

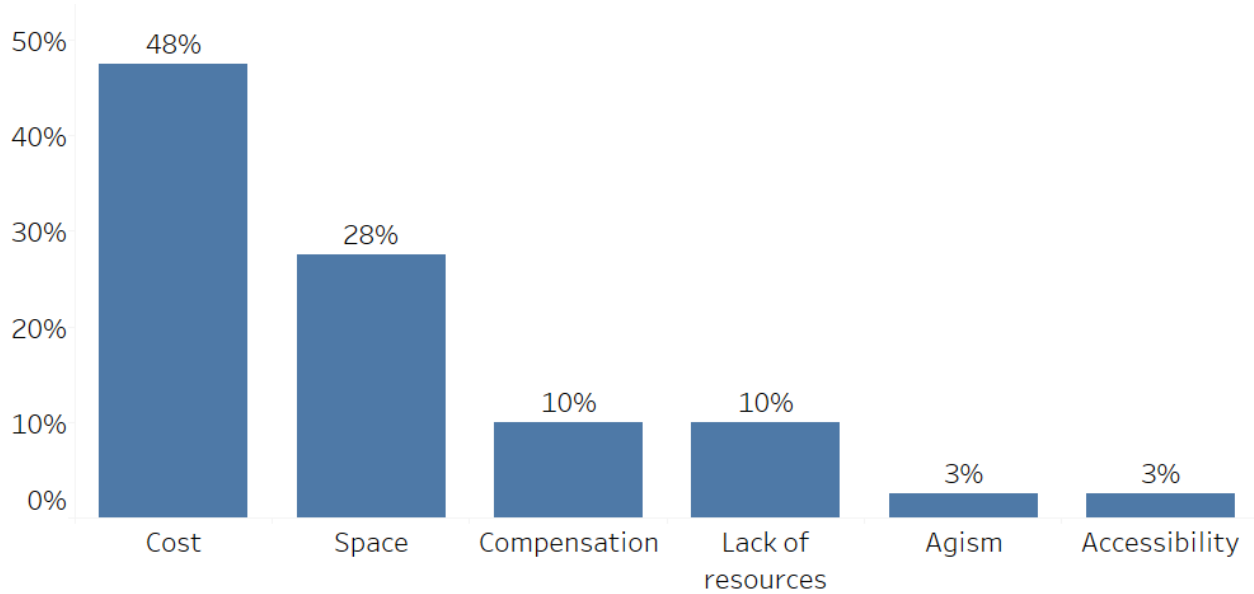
“Funding for exhibitions/workshops/programs that can be moveable or site-specific.”

## Artists

As Figure 5 indicates, the cost of living in New York is the most commonly mentioned challenge among artists, alongside the shortage of space. One respondent put it bluntly: “The high cost of space makes it

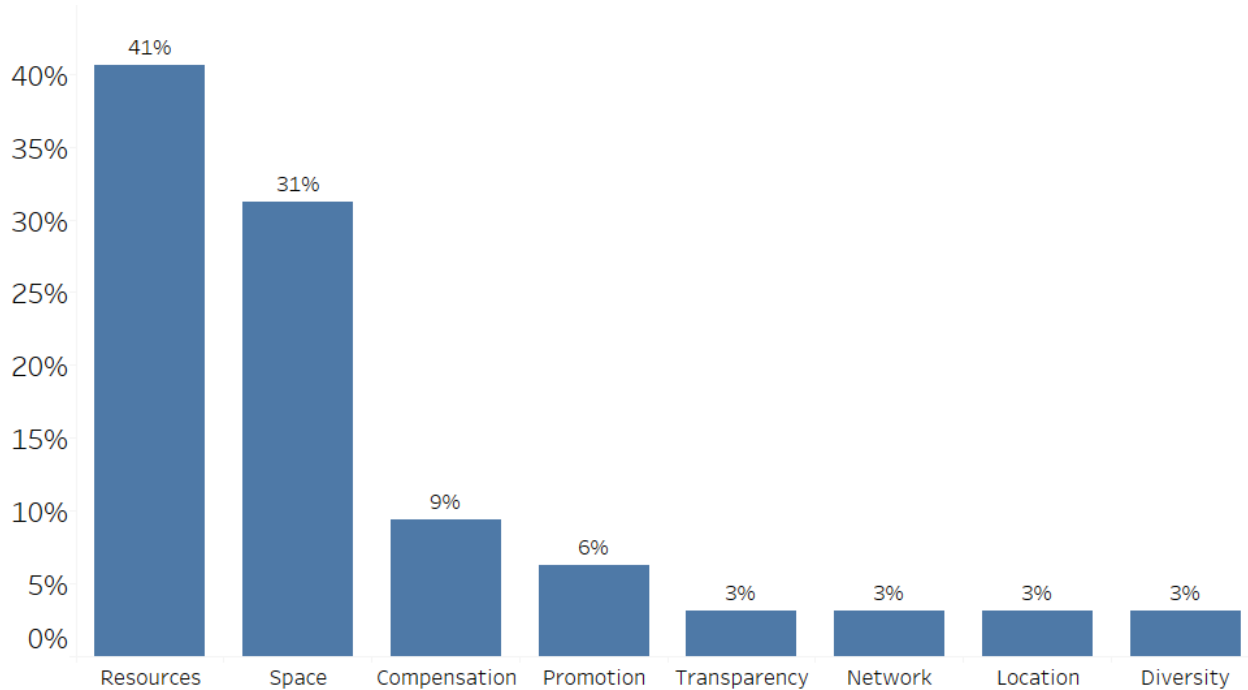
almost impossible to create serious art here.” Another respondent shared a compromise they’ve had to make to pursue their art: “[The challenge is] affording a studio space. I have created a workspace in my room, in an apartment that I share with 3 other people.”

**Figure 5: What makes it challenging to make art in New York City?**



When asked how New York City arts and cultural organizations could provide more or better support to artists, most said by improving access to resources and space, as seen in Figure 6. One respondent suggested that the city, “Offer small grants of encouragement, more mentorship for emerging artists, affordable studio space,” expressing the value of distributing resources to artists who are struggling to maintain their practice. These small victories can help encourage deeper commitments in the arts. Another respondent offered that it would help to have, “More work space residencies; more connections to the community within these workspace residencies.” Offering space to pursue one’s artistic practice is validating and also offers the opportunity to foster community engagement between cultural organizations and Brooklyn neighborhoods.

**Figure 6: How could New York City arts and cultural organizations provide more or better support to artists?**



We also asked artists for specific, actionable steps they would recommend for a New York City Cultural Plan. They had some ideas:

“Give tax breaks to new gallerists and artists to encourage them to take a risk on opening more small galleries and art collectives.”

“Equitable arts education in ALL public schools, which means full funding for arts teachers, arts resources and arts spaces in EVERY public school.”

“Specifically, the construction of more buildings like Manhattan Plaza, The Schermerhorn, and new artist spaces in general.”

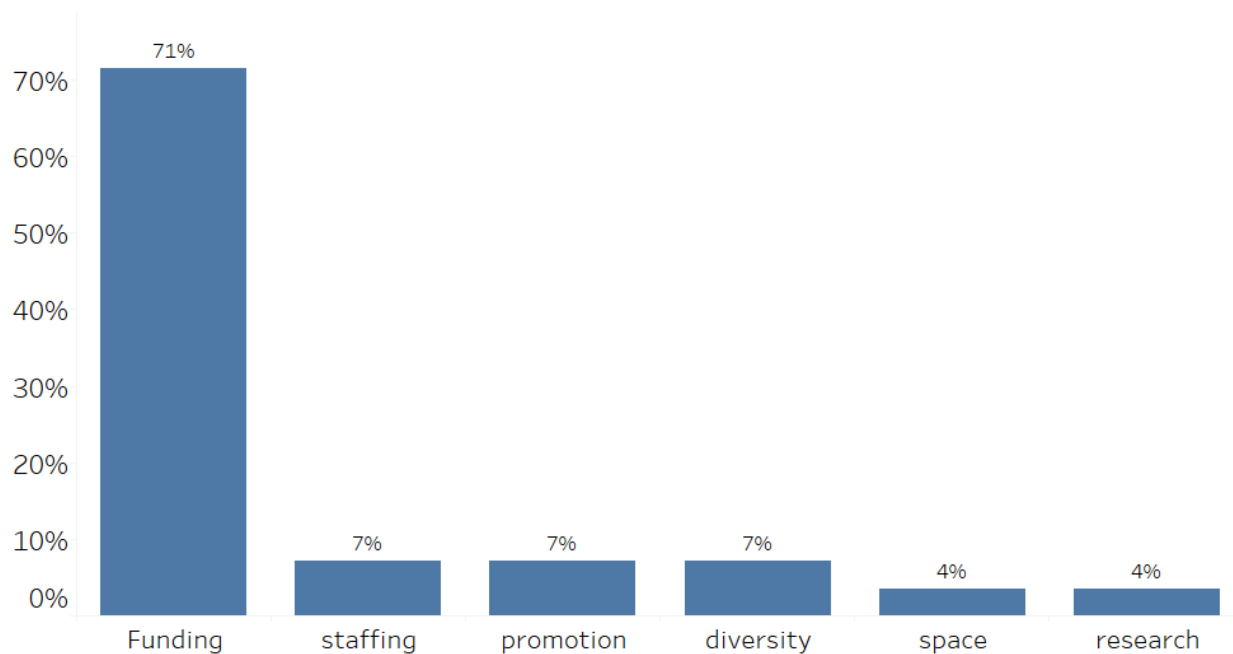
“The NYC Cultural Plan must address the long-term sustainability of making art and affording to LIVE (rent, food, transportation, etc.) in NYC. Particularly for artists who do not live primarily off of their work.”

These artists call for deeper commitments from the city in the form of tax incentives, greater support for art in public education, more thoughtful real estate development, and actions to address cost of living.

## Staff

Perhaps unsurprisingly, DBAA employee responses echoed many of the Artists' perspectives. In Figure 7, we see an overwhelming call for an increase in funding when asked, "What recommendations do you have to improve working conditions for Downtown Brooklyn's nonprofit arts organizations?"

**Figure 7: What recommendations do you have to improve working conditions for Downtown Brooklyn's nonprofit arts organizations?**



One respondent called for: "Higher salaries, better benefits, flextime. Shared services are easier for the city to put in place, but not vital to people's daily needs from their work lives - people, who give so much sweat need the respect and reality of getting paid a living wage and having reasonable benefits."

Another respondent offered a similar suggestion: "Technical advice and networks are not the problem. Staffing depth and support for basic services is desperately needed. Also attracting and retaining the best available people through rewarding work and professional wages."

These responses seem to indicate that arts and culture staff are aware of common efforts from the city to encourage the cultural sector, but that problems related to resources and space will persist unless they are addressed directly.

They also had some kind words. When arts and culture employees were asked what they loved about their job, they had enthusiastic and thoughtful responses: "Using culture as a spark or anchor to

community dialogue about justice and equity issues; sharing responsibilities with the public schools to educate NYC kids.”

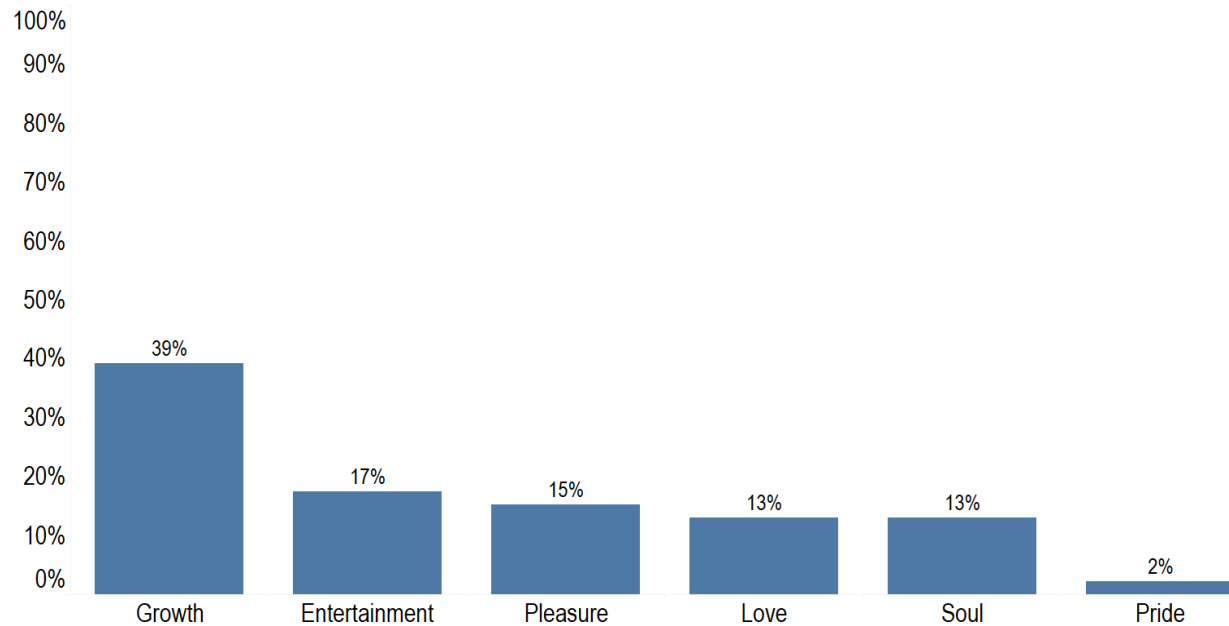
Another respondent appreciated, “That we get to see the impact of our work every day, and it's clear that we're working in keeping with our mission and supporting the communities we set out to support.”

## Audience Members

We received responses from 60 audience members answering questions about what brings them to cultural events and what they would like to see further investments in. Most audience respondents said they go to fewer than five cultural events per month and average about two per month in Downtown Brooklyn. We asked audience members why they like to attend cultural events, allowing them to respond however they liked in up to 300 characters. Many of these free text responses were uplifting, such as: “Oh my, why not? to become more human(e).” Another respondent described the value of culture this way: “To lift my soul, feel, feel connected to others of all sorts,” and another respondent reiterated this perspective: “To nourish my soul and expand my world.” Another respondent spoke to the ability for cultural events to expand their perspective: “The best are those that shake up my view of the world.”

We coded these responses, grouping them into common categories as seen in Figure 8. Most respondents see culture as a method for personal growth.

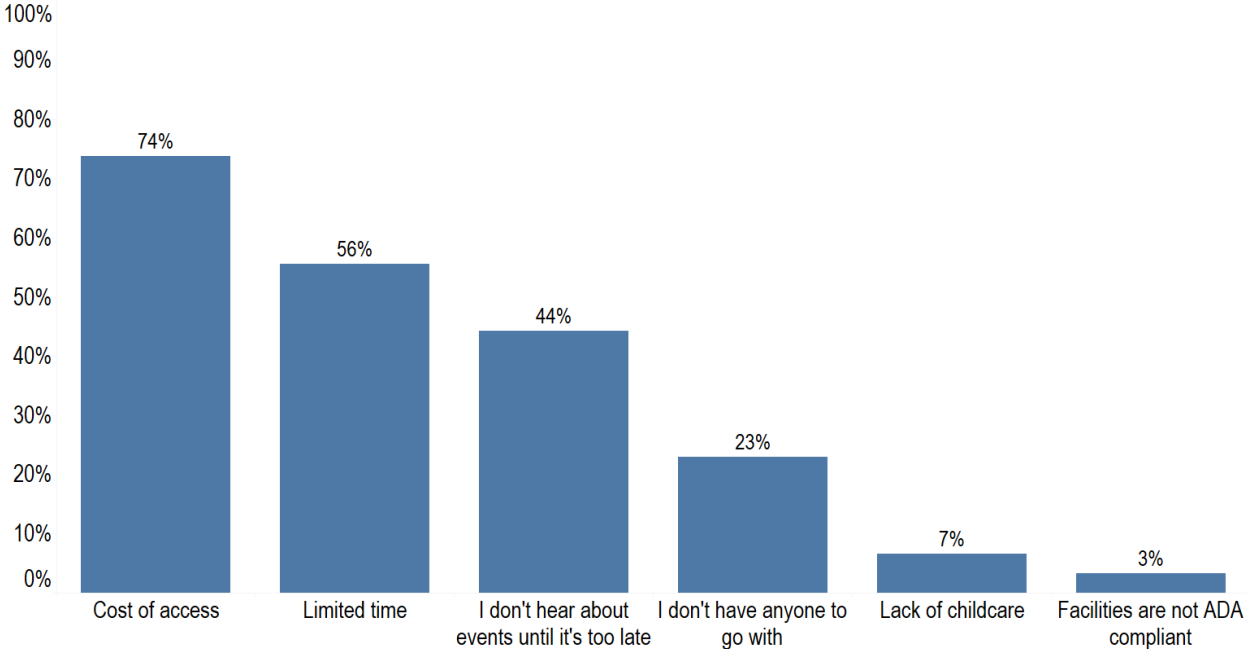
**Figure 8: Why do you attend cultural events?**



We asked audience members what limits them from attending cultural events, offering a number of categories from which they could select as many as they liked. As shown in Figure 9, three quarters of respondents selected cost of access, and over half said they had limited time to engage with cultural

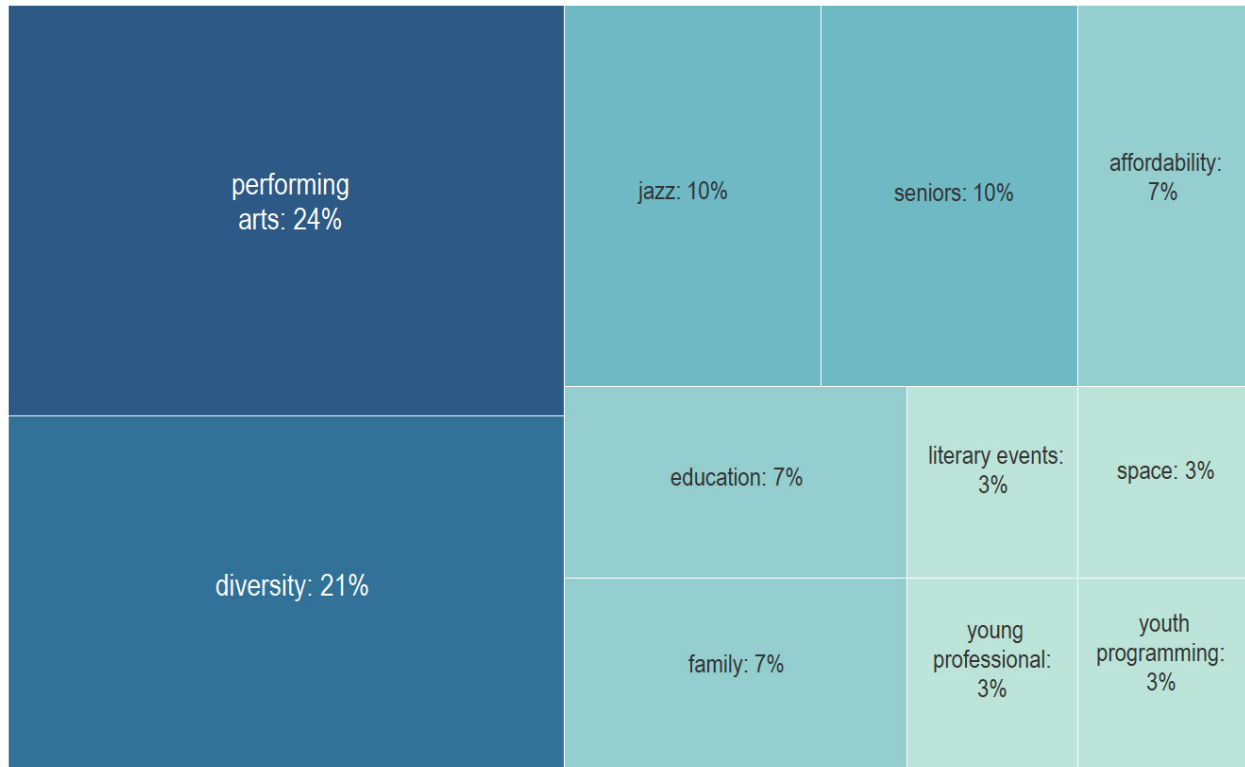
events. Forty-four percent (44%) said they do not hear about the event until it is too late, indicating that there is some work cultural organizations can do to more effectively promote their programs.

**Figure 9: What limits you? Multiple select, pre-determined categories.**



We also asked audience members what they would like to see more of in the cultural sector. This question was free text (Figure 10), and we grouped the answers into categories after analyzing the responses, measuring the percentages of each group. About a quarter of respondents said they would like an increase in some form of performing arts. Over 20% said they wanted more diversity in the arts, primarily among artists and exhibits.

**Figure 10: What would you like to see more of in the cultural sector?**



One audience member offered a variety of suggestions addressing children and the public: “I would like much more exposure to jazz for kids. More family shows. More exposure to culture history of Brooklyn. More offerings of gardening as a form of art, especially in the urban landscape. More ways to include public art into neighborhoods.” Another respondent echoed this desire for variety in cultural offerings, relating it to the way neighborhoods have been changing: “With the gentrification of Brooklyn, it would be beneficial for a greater variety of all types of shows to increase.”

We also asked audience members if they had specific suggestions for how the cultural plan could achieve some of these aspirations. Here are a selection of their responses:

“Create an all-inclusive volunteer run art house or cafe.”

“A cultural go pass plan: allowing individuals to design their own 3 or 4 event package.”

“Distribute information at public schools, senior centers and city hospitals as a way to start sharing information.”

“Value the arts enough to subsidize more. Create ladders of opportunities for employment in the arts. Hold artists in high esteem and financially well compensated. Teach in school that becoming an artist is valuable to society and put money where value is.”

“Host events everywhere, not just the nicer, more expensive neighborhoods.”

“Just as the city posts the alternate side parking rules, it can and should post information about the city wide events for the year. If it's too massive have a plan to find out from the borough president's office.”

## Leaders

Twenty-two organizational leaders (board members, directors, presidents, or equivalent) completed the survey, offering their perspective on the cultural plan and potential areas for improvement and investment in the sector. We asked them, “What recommendations do you have to make the arts more inclusive and equitable in New York City?” One leader called for an increase in civic engagement: “People need to get more involved to fundraise and to communicate with their with local government officials more effectively and urgently.” Another respondent called for “more diverse curators, programmers etc.” One participant made a suggestion specifically to the Department of Cultural Affairs: “DCA needs a 5-borough orientation, and should focus on encouraging the major cultural institutions to broaden their reach, in terms of artists and audience.”

When asked what the primary barriers are to making culture accessible to all, one respondent said the following: “Information: Access to programs that are already available due to lack of computer-knowledge of where to look,” while another said, “inertia, and the natural tendency to reward winners (great Manhattan cultural institutions get disproportionately more than good outer-borough ones).”

When asked what their vision was for Downtown Brooklyn in 15 years, their response was:

- a) Distributed – “Cultural offerings no more than 3 blocks from every resident and 2 blocks from every train station.”
- b) Diverse – “Diverse, multi-disciplinary programs and varying sizes of institutions.”
- c) Central – “A hub for the world's most innovative, successful, and creative minds to gather and share.”

Challenges to that vision were seen as largely related to cost of living and development, or as three respondents put it: “Gentrification,” “The expense of living in the city,” and “Economics.”

## Community Conversation

On January 31, 2017, the Downtown Brooklyn Arts Alliance held a town hall event at BRIC Arts called, “A Community Conversation About Culture in Brooklyn.” The event was moderated by Brian Vines, a Senior Correspondent at BRIC TV, and featured five panelists: Deborah Schwartz, Brooklyn Historical Society; Miguel Luciano, Visual Artist; Chitra Aiyer, Sadie Nash Leadership Project; Meredith Phillips Almeida, Myrtle Avenue Brooklyn Partnership; and Carlos Rentas, Digital Arts + Cinema Technology High School. Livestreamed and seen by more than 700 viewers, the ensuing conversation (which can be viewed at <http://bit.ly/2o5MaN9>) built upon a number of themes that emerged out of the survey results. In particular, some of the following ideas and insights were addressed:

- The suggestion that small businesses and cultural entities/organizations should partner as allies in marketing, community preservation, and the like.
- The need to encourage cultural entities not to become complacent with community engagement. Tours and free tickets to shows are only a starting point; to really engage, organizations need to build relationships with parents and provide opportunities for youth and teens to get involved (have local hiring requirements for young people, for example).
- The importance of decentralized programming and “meeting people where they are.” For example, bringing programming into nursing homes and senior centers, neighborhood libraries, and other social spaces. The success of The Laundromat Project and Theatre of the Oppressed NYC were cited as examples.
- The importance of providing support to ‘legacy’ artists and organizations in communities (those that have been there long-term versus those that are just moving in).
- The need for organizations to make space (both physically and organizationally) for young and emerging artists to get involved.
- The need to encourage the development of policies that help organizations build depth, in addition to breadth, in their audiences.