

Disability/Arts/NYC Task Force (DANT)
Recommendations for CreateNYC | April 6th, 2017

The Disability/Arts/NYC Task Force (DANT) is a collective of artists, activists and academics assembled to craft a meaningful disability/arts platform for NYC, and to strengthen the coalition of disabled artists and allies who reside and work here.

Note: The following recommendations are preliminary. We are submitting them for review by the DCLA and the contractors who are crafting the Cultural Plan, but we will submit a more detailed White Paper on Disability Equity in Cultural Planning in the coming weeks.

1. Address absence of data about disability in previous data collection, notably the Ithaka S+R workforce report, by:
 - a. Developing a timeline for collecting new demographic data about disability in NYC's arts and culture using reliable demographic measures such as those provided by DataArts.
 - b. Developing procedures to account for and compensate for the absence of usable data in previous studies.
 - c. Making clear how demographic data informs funding decisions. Although Commissioner Finkelppearl said at the 3/31 Disability and the Arts Office Hours event that funding decisions were not based on these findings, the report indicates otherwise: "This data offers a starting point for us to take serious action to address areas for improvement. These next steps mark the beginning of our continued efforts to implement programs that increase diversity." (<http://www1.nyc.gov/site/diversity/index.page#what>)
2. Specify in all DCLA communications, including requests for proposals, that terms like "diversity" and "underrepresented groups" includes disability, and demonstrate in various ways within those communications that the DCLA values proposals that incorporate meaningful and clearly articulated plans for disabled people as both consumers of and makers of art.
3. Establish a Disability Arts Advisory Council to oversee the meaningful implementation of equity and inclusion throughout the Plan's components.
4. Establish a Cultural Access Fund as a stand-alone fund for all DCLA-funded endeavors. Develop a plan by which grant recipients and other city-funded endeavors can apply for access-related expenses, such as ASL interpretation, CART transcription, audio description, and more. Instead of shouldering the costs of access themselves or needing to set aside part of their grant money for these costs, organizations would be able to rely on city funds to make their work

accessible to all bodies and minds, which would incentivize inclusion and offload access expenses from those who want to meaningfully include disabled people in their work. This fund would cover projects that work toward access and equity for disabled audience members, as well as those that are designed to support artists and artistry.

5. Formulate training programs for all of NYC's arts and culture organizations to gain fundamental competency in disability equity and inclusion. This program should emphasize the artful nature of disability equity, stressing that access is relational and interrogative, and not simply a matter of legal and regulatory compliance. As a middle-term goal for the Cultural Plan, any organization that does not demonstrate competency in disability equity after 5 years should become ineligible for city funding.
6. Develop a plan for accessible public arts education so that students and teachers come to understand disability as a meaningful aspect of artistry, not something to be corrected.
7. Develop guidelines for incorporating people with disability expertise on review panels and on other committees and advisory councils/commissions charged with decision-making about the allocation of funds or the promotion of particular endeavors. Require that RFPs spell out guidelines that include criteria for equitable inclusion and support of disabled artists, and that applications are judged, in part, by the degree to which they uphold the ideals of inclusion and equity.
8. All disability-focused mandates within the Cultural Plan should focus on artists as much as audiences.

Beyond these recommendations, and those we will put forth in the White Paper, we wish to underscore the urgency we feel about our constituent group's vulnerabilities with respect to a plan that purports to serve all New Yorkers.

DANT recommends that the Cultural Plan should reflect a broad and comprehensive view of the issues facing disabled artists who work in NYC, and those facing people who aspire to careers in the arts. The plan should articulate ways to account for and redress the historic and persistent patterns of discrimination in the preparation of artists, from kindergarten through conservatory training, and the lack of recognition of the work of disabled artists across all genres.