

Submitted on- 1/24/2017

Name of Event - Artist Focus Group

Date of Event - 11/29/2016

Location of Event - Queens

Borough – Queens

Event Host/s or Sponsor/s - Jamaica Center for Arts and Learning

Event Contact/s - Rosemary Reyes (rreyes@gjdc.org), Rejinn L (rejinleys@gmail.com)

What type of engagement was this? - Convening/ Conference

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, City of New York Employees, Educators / Teachers / Teaching Artists, Social Entrepreneurs

Please provide some demographic details about the attendees - Attendees of this focus group were between the ages of 18 and 65. The majority of participants presented as female. Race, ethnicity and income were all variable. All of the attendees in this focus group were involved in arts and culture in one medium or another. Many had background experience in arts administration.

What activities/ material from the CreateNYC Toolkit did you use to engage people? - None: focus group questions drafted by Jamaica Is... (Building Community Capacity Group)

Briefly describe any other activities, strategies or materials that you used to gather input.

Participants of this focus group were prompted to their responses by a moderator whom posed questions that aimed to reveal thoughts, attitudes and experiences pertaining to arts and culture in South East Queens. These responses were audio recorded via iPhone and are further corroborated by notes taken by the facilitators of this event. Questions were crafted by the moderator prior to the focus group and were presented to attendees in order of increasing complexity. All attendees were given an equal opportunity to respond to a particular question, as well as the opportunity to further iterate or expound upon the responses of other participants.

What issues did you touch upon in your discussions?

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), Art in Public Space (How public art and artists are selected), Citywide coordination (Arts and culture across City agencies), Neighborhood character (Prevent displacement of culture and communities through planning and community development)

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

From the issues above, this focus group prioritized access as the most pressing issue. The primary focus in this discussion revealed that participants had difficulty connecting to their peers for networking, resource sharing and further development. As a continuation of this, the idea of the public not having access to the work produced by those in the arts and culture sector was discussed, especially as it pertains to South-East Queens (SEQ). Participants felt that opportunities to pursue their craft were more likely to exist outside of SEQ in places such as Harlem or Brooklyn. This focus group also emphasized the need to teach and build interest in arts and culture on an inter-generational basis.

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

Several connections were made between the issues listed above. The first of these connections revealed that participants married public engagement with issues of access and education. One participant claimed that, “there isn’t an audience being trained for an appreciation of art.” Youth in elementary and high school are They are not taught the value of arts and culture, and therefore do not seek it out in the world.

Synthesis of Event

This event, pooled from the demographic of Jamaica, Queens, artists and other content creators to participate in a focus group to discuss thoughts, concerns, and attitudes concerning the arts and cultural sector of the area. Participants were asked a series of questions to elucidate their level of engagement, that of their audiences, and best practices to create a cohesive understanding of arts and culture on local level.

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

1) Engagement: Stakeholders in this focus group discussed the difficulty with which they contended in engaging participants for the consumption of their art. Part of this problem is tied to the location in which stakeholders are working. Jamaica, Queens does not have the veneer of arts and culture that more cosmopolitan areas of NYC seem to display. The general narrative is that “there is nothing to do in Queens.” In regard to this, stakeholders presented the following solutions to create a more cohesive and robust arts and culture sector: a) In order to successfully engage pedestrians, participants want the Downtown Jamaica area to have art that is an integral part of the experience. For example, participants suggest that libraries in the area have open wall or pedestals displaying a particular artists ‘work. By casually inserting art into people’s daily lives, pedestrians might be more like to engage with arts and culture in the future. In this, the idea of having more public art on sidewalk and subway stations was stressed. b) Art is not being given enough of a priority in schools or at home. As aptly put by one participant “if a child grows up reading, writing and painting, when they go to schools they demand it from their teachers, and we need to demand it from the schools.” Artists felt that the root to audience engagement is making sure to cultivate the next generation of artists and consumers of art.

2) Resources: Stakeholders in this focus group were very aware of the resources necessary to produce their work. a) Under resources, artists felt that there should be further opportunities for professional development. Artists want instruction, in overall, learning to be better entrepreneurs. This entails knowing the best ways to sell their art, having finding funding initiatives and saving for retirement. Overall, there is an unaddressed need for financial literacy. b) Abandoned or underutilized spaces in Jamaica could serve as rent controlled homes, work studios, and presentation spaces for artists. To further emphasize this,

there are no artist supply stores in SEQ. Horror stories are abundant in having to go to Michaels, and still being unable to purchase the correct tape for a give project.

3) Networking: Stakeholders in SEQ feel like the cultural institutions in the area operate in a vacuum. In response to this they feel that the creation of a coalition, comprised of organizations and individual artists, would better create the networking events that would result in meaningful connections and art. a) Participants of this focus group felt that there isn't enough inclusivity in the Jamaica area. A catalogue of artists and other content creators could provide the talent and experience necessary to produce events in Queens. Writers, curators, and administrators who otherwise would travel into Manhattan to work might be interested in creating events locally. b) Aside from other space needs, this group thought that artists in Queens would highly benefit from the creation of a definite meeting space. Such a space would serve as a vehicle for "casual connectivity." In lieu of this, a way to stay in touch, such as setting up a message board is also of interest.

Please share quotes and stories that help illustrate key points from your discussion.

1) I haven't shown in Queens, but it's interesting that I've learned about the opportunities from colleagues who do not live in Queens.

2) I find it difficult to get here because of parking; if you're parking other places you have a long walk. I was born here in the Jamaica, but I can count the number of times I've been here. I know people who have had shows here but every time I try to get here it's very difficult to get here or I'll get here right after the shows ends.

3) Wellness tea. In order for me to really dialogue with the community, I had to provide a service to the community. They come in and speak with me thinking that I own a tea shop. Then I explain that I'm an actually an artists and this begins a dialogue [between the two of us.]

4) Flyers and Facebook, but we just had a reception and artists were there but not that many people came out. I find it really difficult to get people to come out to an art show; it's like pulling teeth.

5) Their photo. Last year I set up shop in the food court, I had a residency to create in project freedom and asked people after they were eating to be photographed and asked about what freedom means to them. Finding a space where people are comfortable and ready to be photographed

6) My whole world up until this point is main stream art galleries in Manhattan, I would love for all of those things to be here [Jamaica] I connect with children so that's been my connection to Queens and I'd like to expand it. • We need to identify what's the thing in Jamaica, what's the heart in Queens, obviously it's hard to bring people in, how do we get out. What's working in other places won't necessarily work here.

7) I attend events like this and put myself out there to meet folks, I communicate and join groups. There are a slew of us that are around but there are some people you just can't reach. I did a focus group that was amazing, but it was like crickets, and was like "how many times are we going to have the same conversation over and over?" I can connect with artist outside of queens like this *snaps*.

8) It'd be nice to randomly run into artists here in Jamaica but it rarely happens if I want to go and have a cup of coffee or good tea, there are only two places. Where else can we do that, we can meet at the food court in the hustle and bustle or meet in McDonalds or go to the Bengali spot. They meet there. They have their session there; they're a power house. We don't have that; we'd have to stand in the rain on a corner. A place to spend some time, and causally meet. I'm missing a spot where we can casually run into each other while we do work. In other places, Harlem , Brooklyn those spaces are everywhere

9) The arts are not really in the schools. We're not training an audience. We're blaming them but they shouldn't be blamed because you need to be exposed and trained. I'm thinking elementary through high school.

10) The resources for all the materials that an artist's needs are missing. I waste my time going to Michaels hoping to even [find] the right kind of tape that you can't find. Most of the time I just go to Brooklyn, I don't know if we're going to get a Blick.

11) What's missing is seeing art on the street, I walk around and I see nothing that makes me even think of art. I think if you bombard people of color, like advertising, then eventually you're going to want a cheeseburger. We need more public art.

Submitted on- 1/24/2017

Name of Event - Business Focus Group

Date of Event - 12/2/2016

Location of Event - 90-40 160th St, Jamaica, NY 11432

Borough – Queens

Event Host/s or Sponsor/s - The Harvest Room

Event Contact/s - Rosemary Reyes (rreyes@gjdc.org)

What type of engagement was this? - Focus Group/ Discussion

How many people attended the event? (Overall) - 1- 15

Who were the attendees? - NYC Residents, Seniors, 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, Business Community (e.g. small business owners, merchants associations, BIDs, etc.), Social Entrepreneurs, IT Specialists, Real Estate Attorneys, Health Care Workers

Please provide some demographic details about the attendees - Attendees of this focus group were between the ages of 21 and 80 years old. The gender of the participants were skewed, with more woman being present than men. The participants mainly appeared African-American and were of variable socio-economic backgrounds. All of the participants were individuals whose business practices were intimately intertwined with the physical location of SEQ.

What activities/ material from the CreateNYC Toolkit did you use to engage people? - None: focus group questions drafted by Jamaica Is... (Building Community Capacity Group)

Briefly describe any other activities, strategies or materials that you used to gather input.

Participants of this focus group were prompted to their responses by a moderator whom posed questions that aimed to reveal thoughts, attitudes and experiences pertaining to arts and culture in South East Queens, SEQ. These responses were audio recorded via iPhone and are further corroborated by notes taken by the facilitators of this event. Questions were crafted by statistical analysis intern of the "Jamaica is..." project, Bartek Jimenez, prior to the focus group. These questions were further reviewed and refined by the project manager of the Jamaica Is... project and were presented to attendees in order of increasing complexity. All attendees were given an equal opportunity to respond to a particular prompt, as well as the opportunity to further iterate or expound upon the responses of other participants. After a brief introduction to the project's purpose and goals, participants were asked to fill out a community survey to produce quantitative data.

What issues did you touch upon in your discussions?

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), Art in Public Space (How public art and artists are selected), Citywide coordination (Arts and culture across City agencies), Neighborhood character (Prevent displacement of culture and communities through planning and community development)

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

The most pressing issue developed by this group in discussion was the lack of communication between business owners and other stakeholders in the South East Queens area. The visual equivalent of SEQ has been established as a tumble weed rolling across a field. Therefore, business owners have felt that their ability to effectively promote and provide their services has been compromised.

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

The business owners primarily remained within topic.

Synthesis of Event

This event introduced local business owners to the purview of the Jamaica Is... project as a manner of networking and served as a means of sampling the local climate.

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

1) Communications between businesses (small businesses, non-profit organizations, artists and other prominent figures in the local community) need to be improved. This improvement could take place in following ways: a) Having meet-ups at local institutions would provide stakeholders with the opportunity to network with one another on a regular basis. b) The creation of an annual repository compiling all businesses in the Jamaica area and the services they offer would be of immeasurable benefit to all those involved. This repository could possibly also include the dates, times and location of the coming year's events. The result of this effort would result in bolstered attendance, increased cooperation and coordination between stakeholders. c) The need to create and maintained marketing efforts across all platforms to interact with every demographic in the Jamaica area is paramount. The broad consensus is that outreach efforts need to be done in as many forms as possible (digital, print, word of mouth).

2) The cultivation of youth in the form of the creation of financial literacy workshops, opportunities to engage in the trades of established businesses (incubation) and programs the support engagement in arts and culture. a) The Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) should be better utilized to further galvanize youth to work with local businesses. If this is not possible, than the SYEP can be used to template an organization or body to achieve this aim. b) Encouraging schools to work with stakeholders and find a common ground with which to more include arts and culture win the formal curriculum. If not, discussion ways to expose youth to arts and culture via workshops, fairs, and after school programs. 3) The need for space affects the manner in which stakeholders operate and conduct their businesses. In an effort to better assess the resources that exist within the community, it is imperative that organizations be willing to work together for mutual benefit. a) Creating relationships between stakeholders in an effort to establish an informal or formal barter system. This barter system would allow organizations to patronize one another through the use of borrowed space and extended outreach efforts, in addition to the fortification of financial interactions. b) Tapping into the business practices, real estate holdings, talent, and membership of the faith organizations in the Jamaica area. Ordinarily, "these organizations operate in

a vacuum” many might be willing to align with an arts and culture initiative as it will allow them access to a wider audience and a greater cultural footprint within the community.

Please share quotes and stories that help illustrate key points from your discussion.

1) How are we utilizing the summer youth program to employ more youth during the summer months when they are idle. They are already tech savvy that would allow us to better bring the print age into the digital age. It should be an issue that there are more students than opportunities than more opportunities than students.

2) What I have found is that, in engaging folks from a variety of churches is that yes it's a resource but it's also an impediment because they tend to be so self-contained. They have vibrant ministries, it can be a completely different world, but it's all self-contained in the membership of that church. By and large, if you're not a member of the immediate community you're not really tapping into the things the church is doing. As average residents, it kind of two different worlds. Inside the churches they're already planning their own things. How do we bring more of what the church already has into the regular community?

3) I wanted to do something in Downtown Jamaica, because it's easy to travel here. It's a lot to ask someone to do, in order to patronize certain spaces outside of the Downtown Jamaica area. The ones who drive have the easiest time getting to certain spaces, and those who rely on public transportation simply don't come. I am also not in a financial position to do certain things, however (in relation to bartering), they don't see the intangibles (such as bringing multiple guests to an event or other types of outreach) as any form of currency.

4) I approached JCAL, and they wanted to charge me \$400 dollars. I just wanted to have an event where people can come explore the art form, but they charge so much. There are spaces that are more affordable but they aren't on rotation. [A business will acquire an affordable location and will just "sit on it."] I just want 2-3 hours on Thursday night, [for] about 20 people. There are ways for all parties to win, if we all sat down and talked together. But they come with their hard dollar and that's it.

5) Social broker. I'm very big on community and connecting people. I'm a young millennial, I matriculated in health care. There wasn't a lot of sisterhood in the health community and I couldn't find a mentor. Power social events. I like to have generational conversations between young professionals and already established folks. A lot of businesses do not support entrepreneurs within their field. Businesses should be required to incubate businesses within them. Little things help as far as financial literacy. There are a lot of resources that don't come to Queens. It's about whom in the community is going to give us the time of day and the space to make things happen. I also think that there are a lot of influencers [in] Queens; we're not using our Queens influencers enough. I've been going around at different events to activate teens, you have to use what they like and put it in front of them. We can't keep everything online because we are so inter-generational. We have to pull them (seniors/ retirees) out of their homes; they love to share especially in their eldership.

6) Informing people about information, resources, other business owners and opportunities. That's where we're disconnecting. If we could fix something it would start there. In my work and business I feel that I contribute hugely to the culture in my environment. Usually I do free programming for youth, I feel like the best things in life are free but they're also the best kept secrets. If you're doing an event but you're cap is 20 [; you can't accommodate everyone]. It very true that we're not educated early enough. There should be an initiative to teach kids about how to save and [not spend money on things that they don't need].

7) Hard way of how to handle finances on [our] own. I wasn't taught in school how to own a business. I'm the only one in my family that owns a business. Even to go outside to find help, you have to pay for those services. If I'm already struggling and I have to pay; I figure I have to learn on my own and figure out later

on if I'm doing it right. It starts with your family, now we have to teach our kids but it didn't start with the elders. How do you support the business in your community if you don't have the funds and you have to grow on your own?

8) I try to donate my time to the schools my children attend or work with businesses in the area. A lot of times I find, when I approach other parents or anyone in the community, when I try to sell my services I get that I am too expensive or they don't see the a value [in what I am doing]. In flushing they put value they on entertaining or education, or providing an out of the box entertainment for their children. I would love to work here, or base my business here. Unfortunately I have to travel to support myself and my family. I have to give deep discounts, because I want to be at the event so that my children can experience tribal face painting. I would love to provide that service, but they don't see the value in art. The amount of time and effort in order to pay for my house in this community, I have to go outside of my community. Outside of this community they offer so many workshops. Financial literacy is something that is taught in schools, but (in reference to someone else) if you wanted to provide something like that on a regular basis, the school doesn't have the money. I have to go where people are willing to pay for my services

Submitted on- 1/24/2017

Name of Event - Youth Focus Group

Date of Event - 12/5/2016

Location of Event - 8964 163rd St, Jamaica, NY 11432

Borough – Queens

Event Host/s or Sponsor/s - Community Mediation Services

Event Contact/s - Rosemary Reyes (rreyes@gjdc.org), Allan Edmond
Allan.Edmond73@gmail.cuny.edu)

What type of engagement was this? - Town Hall

How many people attended the event? (Overall) - 1- 15

Who were the attendees? - NYC Residents, Foreign-born / Immigrant Community, Youth (Under 18 yrs), Students

Please provide some demographic details about the attendees - Attendees of this focus group were all of high school age, between 14 years old and 18 years old. The participants of this focus group presented themselves as along the binary of gender expression. Three of the participants presented as female, the other three participants presented as male. Race, ethnicity and income were all variable. All of the attendees in this focus group were attended the same high school. Many had background experience in arts through school activities or through a parent who supported an interested in an arts sub-field such as literary works or photography.

What activities/ material from the CreateNYC Toolkit did you use to engage people? - None, Focus Group Questions

Briefly describe any other activities, strategies or materials that you used to gather input.

Participants of this focus group were prompted to their responses by a moderator whom posed questions that aimed to reveal thoughts, attitudes and experiences pertaining to arts and culture in South East Queens, SEQ. These responses were audio recorded via iPhone and are further corroborated by notes taken by the facilitators of this event. Questions were crafted by the facilitator of this event, prior to the focus group, and were presented to attendees in order of increasing complexity. Additional questions were extemporized during the course of the focus group in an effort to develop a fuller understanding of participant's thoughts, feelings and background. All attendees were given an equal opportunity to respond to a particular prompt, as well as the opportunity to further iterate or expound upon the responses of other participants. After a brief introduction to the project's purpose and goals, participants were asked to fill out a community survey to produce quantitative data. All participants with email access were the recipient of a follow up email designed to link them together.

What issues did you touch upon in your discussions?

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), Education

(Increase arts education in public schools and ensure that curriculum is culturally relevant and diverse), Art in Public Space (How public art and artists are selected), Neighborhood character (Prevent displacement of culture and communities through planning and community development).

Synthesis of Event

This event was primarily a meeting of likeminded individuals gathering to establish a baseline of their experiences and seeking to improve the quality of life of their demographic. What was readily apparent in this focus group in particular was the realization that youth are unable to engage with arts in culture because they are beholden to their parent's attitudes toward the arts and culture sector. As stated by one participant, her father tells her that her interest in photography can be pursued as a hobby, but not a career. Compounded with the fact that participants feel that Jamaica, Queens doesn't have much going for it; the end result is demographic that feels that they can only be consumers.

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

This focus group prioritized neighborhood character, art in public space and the social and economic impact as they related to the discussion of arts and culture in Jamaica, NY. The primary discussion around these topics was the historical and societal factors that made these target areas more applicable to daily life in Jamaica, Queens.

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

The discussion pertaining to this focus group had more to do with the connections between the issues than the issues themselves. Neighborhood character, art in public space and the social and economic impact led participants to a discussion that deconstructed the role that arts and culture plays among immigrant communities. This discussion revealed that, in almost universal fashion, an interest in being a part of arts and cultural activities was present. However, the cultural influences that created the art forms participants expounded upon at length, also, hobbled active participation beyond a consumer role. Further, as perhaps characterized by the age of the participants, was the exploration of identity which was not so readily apparent in other focus groups conducted in this manner. While they participated in arts and culture, they didn't seem to quite know what their role was. The sense was that arts and culture was like a Qur'an in a church; inherently benign, but for many, imbued with suspicion.

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

1) Communication: Participants of this focus group felt that the lack of targeted marketing to make them more aware of the artistic and cultural activities taking place in SEQ. They recommend the following actionable steps: a) Conduct outreach through schools in the area to gain larger audiences for age appropriate events. Doing so will engage the administrators and stakeholders in collaborating in arts and culture initiatives. This would also serves as a way to engage students in an environment they are familiar with. b) The creation of a monthly newsletter targeted especially for this demographic (most likely in the digital format) would provide a source of reference for youth looking for events or activities to attend. This will help, as, they will likely would have their classmates to attend cultural events with.

2) Engage Parents: participants in this demographic are acutely aware of their parents' attitudes of artistic and cultural events on a professional and personal level. For many, the maintenance of cultural identity

combined with stereotypical first generation expectations represents a barrier to involvement. a) Create workshops that show parents the validity of non-traditional work paths. For example, workshops could explore how photography as a skill could be applied to other fields. Or exploring the work conducted by an arts administrator in a non-profit organization. Overall, participants stressed workshops or events that would allow families to engage in artistic or cultural work. b) Participants grasped the idea that working professional within the arts and culture sector had transferable skills into other fields. Providing workshops, job opportunities or volunteer opportunities for this demographic would keep this demographic engaged in a manner that their parents would find agreeable.

3) Identity: Youth in this demographic do not feel like there is a space for them within this sector to exchange ideas, culture and to talk about themselves. The creation of a dedicated “safe space” is one that may hold cultural relevance, in the sense that being a resident of Jamaica, holds its own unique tribulations and rewards.

Please share quotes and stories that help illustrate key points from your discussion.

1) I'm a Jehovah's Witness and on Thursdays and Sundays we have meetings to go over the Bible. There's a lot of poetry, it involves deep thought and it's interesting to hear and read.

2) For me, I would think that you have to escape the line. You have to change. For every single time period everyone has their own definition for art. In terms of culture, it's about respect. For me I eat frogs. Other people just have to respect [that].

3) I think murals everywhere. Or [otherwise] really well decorated. Somewhere where the culture really speaks out. If you're on Liberty Avenue you get the feeling that this is a really centered area of this area of people.

4) I would want to develop analytical skills. Besides when sitting in global class and asked to analyze a painting, when I go to museums or galleries or anything with arts by myself. I don't really analyze. I just look at it and let my feelings take over. I want to be able to look at a painting and analyze it on my own.

5) I'm thinking about mural and graffiti's, it makes the neighborhood more colorful, and inviting. People if given the opportunity to create art throughout their community. They'll be able to release anger or whatever they have going on through their art. And they'll feel better in themselves and create a better attitude.

6) I think there is a lack of opportunity here. I don't think that the people here are exceptionally wealthy. Anyone here isn't looking for things like that; they're focused on things like looking for a job. Or they have other responsibilities. I want to get out of Jamaica there isn't anything here for me.

7) My parents don't like me doing stuff that involves art. They want me to be a doctor [or an] engineer which I don't really want to be.

8) I think it's important because, but in government class this year my teacher thinks were so uncultured because he'll put up a song or painting and I've never recognized one. Sometimes you think art is complicated and closer to our time but social situation political situation about what going on in the world

Submitted on- 1/24/2017

Name of Event - Seniors/Retirees Focus Group

Date of Event - 1/9/2017

Location of Event - 90-40 160th St, Jamaica, NY 11432

Borough – Queens

Event Host/s or Sponsor/s - The Harvest Room

Event Contact/s - Rosemary Reyes (rreyes@gjdc.org)

What type of engagement was this? - Focus Group/ Discussion

How many people attended the event? (Overall) - 1- 15

Who were the attendees? - NYC Residents, Seniors, Parents / Guardians / Caregivers, Foreign-born / Immigrant Community, 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.), Social Entrepreneurs, Retirees

Please provide some demographic details about the attendees - Attendees of this focus group were mostly 60 years old or older. All of the participants presented as female. Race, ethnicity and income were all variable. All of the attendees in this focus group were involved in arts and culture in one medium or another. Many had background experience in arts administration.

What activities/ material from the CreateNYC Toolkit did you use to engage people? - None, Focus Groups Questions created by the Jamaica Is... Initiative

Briefly describe any other activities, strategies or materials that you used to gather input.

Participants of this focus group were prompted to their responses by a moderator whom posed questions that aimed to reveal thoughts, attitudes and experiences pertaining to arts and culture in South East Queens, SEQ. These responses were audio recorded via iPhone and are further corroborated by notes taken by the facilitators of this event. Questions were crafted by the project manager of the “Jamaica is...” project prior to the focus group, and were presented to attendees in order of increasing complexity. All attendees were given an equal opportunity to respond to a particular prompt, as well as the opportunity to further iterate or expound upon the responses of other participants. After a brief introduction to the project’s purpose and goals, participants were asked to fill out a community survey to produce quantitative data. In this particular focus group, attendees recorded their responses to scaled questions on Post-It Notes. These scaled questions aimed to better assess participant’s awareness of recreational activities in SEQ, mobility issues and verse with technology.

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), Art in Public Space (How public art and artists are selected), Citywide coordination (Arts and culture across City agencies), Neighborhood character (Prevent displacement of culture and communities through planning and community development)

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

This group prioritized access, affordability and agency. The primary focus in this discussion revealed that participants viewed their relationship with arts and culture as a function of their age group. Their concerns with access elicited responses related to awareness of artistic or cultural events around South East Queens, SEQ. Prompts related to affordability revealed that participants thought frequently about the associated financial strain of remaining active in the arts and culture sector. For example, many participants simply opted to stay home and create rather than combat the rising price of MTA or face severe weather conditions. Responses also revealed participants to be pursuing their interests, through an arts and culture lens.

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

Access, affordability and agency all intertwined in this focus group to produce a coherent and unified understanding of the lens with which this demographic uses to interact with the world. Often the interplay between access and affordability limited the ability of participants to fully engage with the arts and culture they intended to partake in. For many, the reality of the number of stairs in the subway from one destination to another is a severe obstruction. Alternatives that reduce these obstructions are unattractive in other ways; taking the LIRR is guaranteed to lighten wallets.

Synthesis of Event

This event was primarily a meeting of likeminded individuals gathering to establish a baseline of their experiences and seeking to improve the quality of life of their demographic. What was readily apparent in this focus group in particular was the variety of ways that seniors and retirees seek to establish agency. Many are involved with a variety of organizations and pursued arts and culture, if not professional level, than were hobbyists. Three primary takeaways from this conversation made clear that participants were constitutionally eager to learn new skills. Many took advantage of classes offered through senior centers and almost all were relatively computer literate. Penultimate in this regard was an enthusiasm to donate both time and skill towards the cultivation of younger generations. Ultimately, as the final prompt made abundant, was that participants felt that they had a lot to offer in terms of the breadth of their skillset.

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

1) Barriers: The downtown Jamaica area is vibrant in its hustle and bustle. While this is normally an advantage, for many of this demographic it is an impediment to full engagement with the arts and culture sector. a) Parking in the Downtown Jamaica area is difficult to come by. For many seniors or retirees, driving is highly preferred to public transportation as it frees them from MTA's schedule, rising costs, and the stairs inherent in the subway system. b) Time of day: Many artistic or cultural events are held in the evening in order to better engage the public who are often found at work between 9am and 5 pm. For many seniors, who prefer day events, evening events discourage attendance due to health concerns (being unable to see well at night) and general safety, among other concerns. c) The comparative cost of

engaging in artists can cultural events is at odds with living on a fixed income. For many the alternative practice of staying home to create is much more financially sound.

2) Generativity: This demographic is unique in that it is armed with skills tempered by experience and honed by purpose. a) Seniors and retirees have a desire to continue learning. In this regard, they continue to see out join and otherwise participate in various activities. b) In addition, many in this demographic many in this demographic are actively involved in putting their skills in a manner that will benefit youth by advocating for scholarship, mentorship and financial literacy.

Please share quotes and stories that help illustrate key points from your discussion.

1) "I'm just merged with art."

2) "Even though I was born and raised in Queens, I wasn't aware of the different arts groups in the Queens area, the groups I'm affiliated with are in Nassua or Suffolk counties.

3) I put down 8, I know that there's stuff going on in the arts which I involve myself in and also in dance. Most of the classes I attend are in the city but I do know that there are classes out here. There are also dance companies out here, one being United African.

4) Even though I was born and raised in Queens I'm not really aware of the different arts groups in the Queens area. Most of the groups I am affiliated with are in Nassau County.

5) My son is a computer programmer; he told me some years ago that I need to get a computer. I went off and started, if I would writes something down and lose it on the p. I did my masters with teaching with technology. The latest thing is technology. I put down a ten, I try to stay yup with them. Now my son tells me if I have a problem with my computer to call my grandsons. If they can't solve it, to then call him

6) Transportation is a big reason for not coming to the Jamaica area as much as [is] possible. I have gone other places where the parking is accessible and walking is not so bad. I know people who'd rather ride with me in the car than take public transportation. Earlier in the day is better than evening. But not mornings. I don't do mornings.

7) Mobility wise I don't have an issue; I live alone. I live in queens, so transportation is an issue. We live; we have to deal with buses and the scheduling of them. I find it more convenient to deal with eh railroad to go to the city than see a program in queens. In terms of driving and parking living in queens is difficult because sometimes it's difficult to even get grocery shopping.

8) Twice a month I take my 80 year old uncle to the movies, we meet in Manhattan. I would prefer to drive into the city if I could park. Than I would be able to drive him home or go do something else but I can't. I don't think of it as a mobility issue for me, but it is a mobility issue. Even getting here, I would have driven if I could afford the parking. So instead I took the bus.

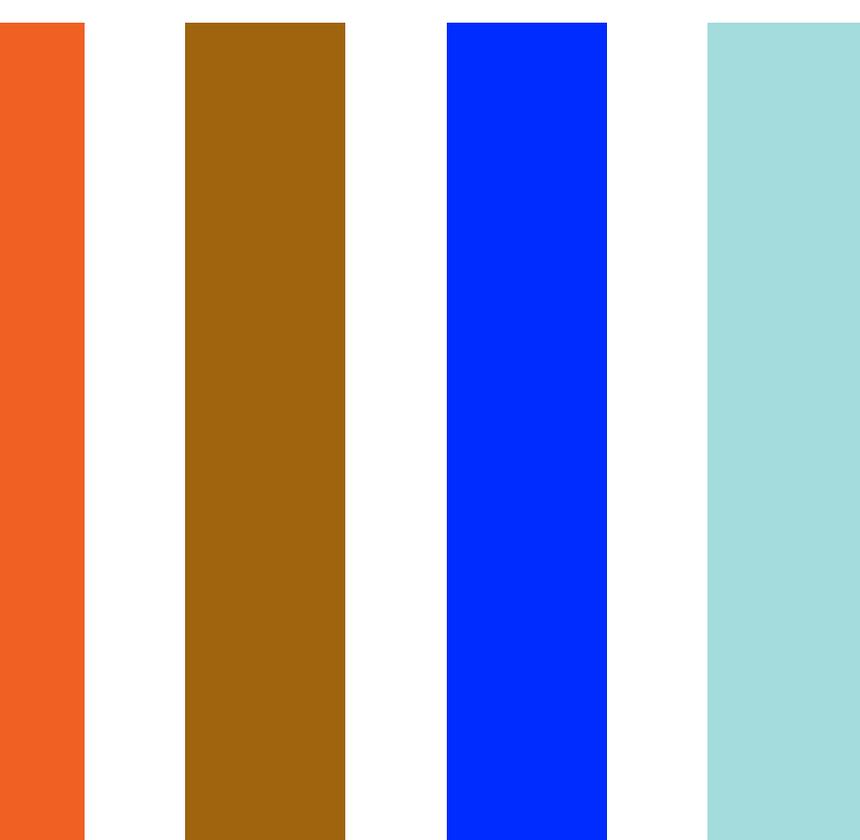
9) It's the expense, the transportation the ticket, the other things for sale and the weather plays a big issue. If it's too hot / cold I don't go out.

10) I can offer showing a better way to be financial prepare for retiring. I would be good to teach them how to be financial set by 40 or fifty so that they wouldn't have to worry about that. It's not about how much money you make it's about taking your money to make money. Financial planning on an international level.



JAMAICA IS...

**BUILDING
COMMUNITY
CAPACITY-
SOUTHEAST
QUEENS**



**RESEARCH
FINDINGS**

March 2017

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The Jamaica Center BID
 Afrikan Poetry Theatre
 First Presbyterian Church
 Black Spectrum Theatre
 Greater Jamaica Development Corp.
 Cultural Collaborative Jamaica
 Newtown Literary
 Edge School of the Arts
 King Manor Museum
 ALON Marketing Group
 A Better Jamaica
 YMCA in Downtown Jamaica
 United African Dance Troupe
 Din Diara Kota
 Desai Eye Clinic
 Hillcrest Senior Center
 No Longer Empty
 Jamaica Center for Arts and Learning
 Brinkerhoff Association,
 SEVA
 Totaram Law Office
 Sutphin Boulevard BID
 Grace Episcopal Church

Tam Jams Productions
 The Queens (Central) Library
 York College
 Cocoa Culture House
 I65th Street Pedestrian Mall Business
 Improvement District
 Queens High School of Science
 Community Mediation Services
 Galleria Noire
 Akoko Nante Ensemble
 Jamaica Hospital
 Kaufman Arts Studio/District
 Hi-Arts Gallery
 Farmer's Boulevard Community
 Development Corp
 Drumsongs Prods. Inc.
 CUNY, Veteran Residency in South Hollis
 Flushing Town Hall
 Queens Memory Project
 Keiko Studios
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Foreword

This research was possible thanks to the generosity and support of the New York Community Trust, the Department of Cultural Affairs of New York City, and the Cultural Agenda Fund in the New York Community Trust. Our fiscal sponsors, King Manor Museum and the Greater Jamaica Development Corporation, were also instrumental in carrying out this work and provided a wealth of time and resources.

A very special thanks to the members of the Building Community Capacity (Jamaica Is...) Steering Committee, all community stakeholders involved, our focus group participants, those who took time to complete surveys, interviewees, and our devoted Research Assistant and Intern, all of whom were the fuel that drove this work forward.

And finally thank you to the residents and workers of Southeast Queens for bringing so much passion and care into these conversations.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The objective of conducting this research was to identify the perceptions around community needs and opportunities in Southeast Queens's arts and cultural landscape. These findings have been formally shared with the Department of Cultural Affairs and the Hester Street Collaborative in order to inform the New York City Cultural Plan being rolled out in July 2017.

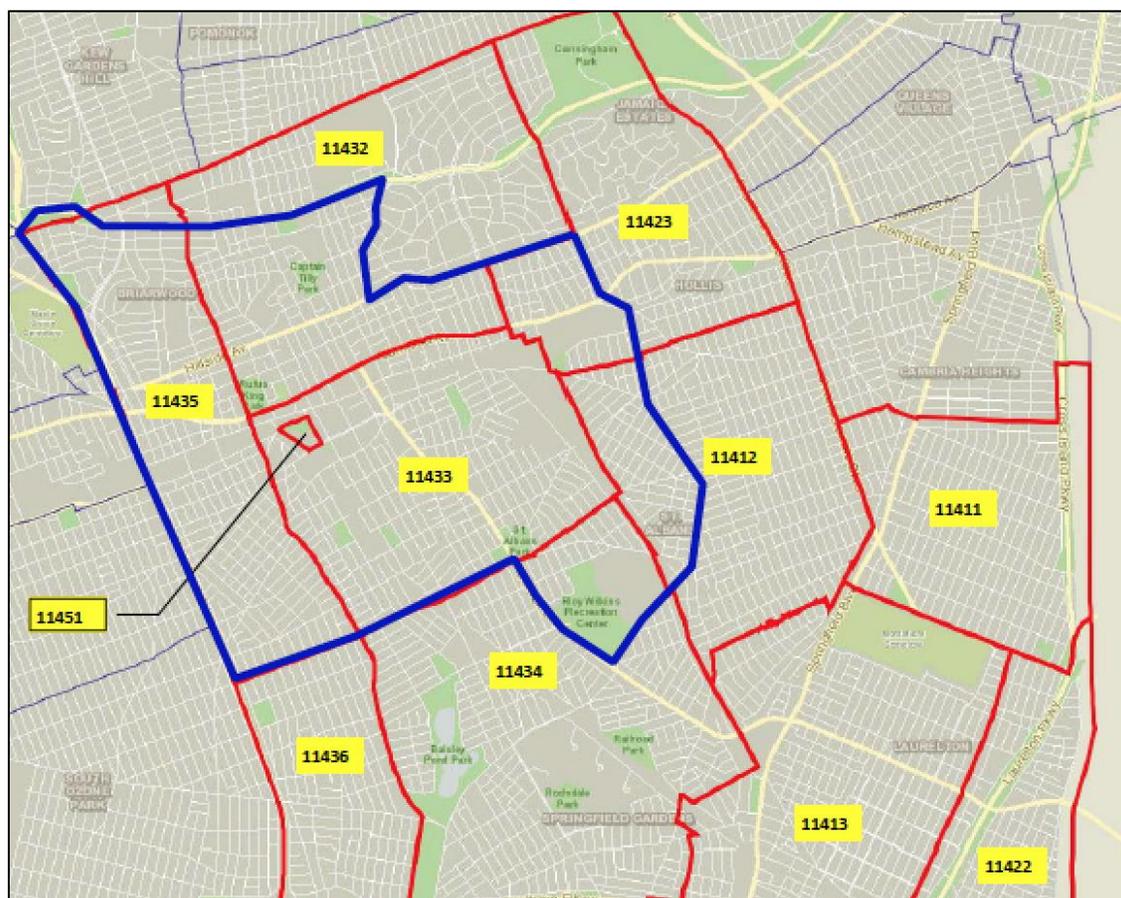
Beyond the intended outcomes of the research, the Jamaica Is... focus groups were meant to be an opportunity for participants to network and meet other likeminded community members, as well as, familiarize themselves with spaces they may not have utilized before.

DISCLAIMER

In conducting outreach and gauging the interest of the community to participate in a needs assessment of the Southeast Queens' arts and culture sector, participants skewed toward women, the elderly, and those who were already active members of their community. The self-selected samples are by no means comprehensive. Admittedly, many survey responses were collected at local outdoor concerts and festivals in the downtown Jamaica area. The findings are, however, an accurate indication of perceptions, needs, and opportunities in the area of arts and culture in Southeast Queens and could stand to be expanded upon further.

The study area designated by all relevant city agencies supporting the Building Community Capacity initiative is highlighted in blue below.

Designated Study Area



In reality, however, the boundaries of what community residents consider to be Southeast Queens spanned much farther. While the zip codes in the catchment area for the study (blue) were well-represented (see appendix page 35 for details), in an effort to be inclusive and invite interest openly, the reach of the study expanded to the areas highlighted in red and beyond.

INTRODUCTION

Jamaica Is... was born out of the Department of Cultural Affairs' Building Community Capacity initiative. With additional funds from the New York Community Trusts' Cultural Agenda Fund, Jamaica Is... dedicated staff completed a deeper research study that serves two purposes: (1) help inform the Cultural Plan of New York City being rolled out in July 2017 and (2) guide burgeoning capacity building efforts in the arts and culture sector in Southeast Queens as the community enters a crucial yet delicate stage of rezoning and development.

Research conducted by Jamaica Is... staff, is intended to initiate a larger reflection and dialogue on specific community needs in the realm of the arts and culture. It hopes to provide a platform for community members to identify ways in which both lifelong and new residents can come together and foster new opportunities for the wealth of artistic talent that exists locally, and how to ignite efforts that will unify all of Southeast Queens' diverse demographics and fulfill their varying needs.

This information is intended to serve as a deliberate tool for city agencies, non-profits, and community members to understand what needs exist in the cultural landscape of Southeast Queens as of 2017, to then follow through with actionable solutions detailed in the "Proposed Solutions and Recommendations" section(s) of this report. In circulating these results widely, at a cultural summit in March and online, the hope is to encourage further research that may use these findings as a foundation.

More broadly, the following is an initial step in considering how to challenge existing cultural policies so that funding allocations can be more equitably distributed throughout neighborhoods and communities. With the inevitability of real estate development and commercial growth planned for downtown Jamaica over the next 5 years, the threat of rapidly increasing prices, displacement, and gentrification remains on the horizon for current residents. The following information serves to empower the native community and current residents, as well as, all those who work in and contribute to the living and breathing organism that is Southeast Queens.

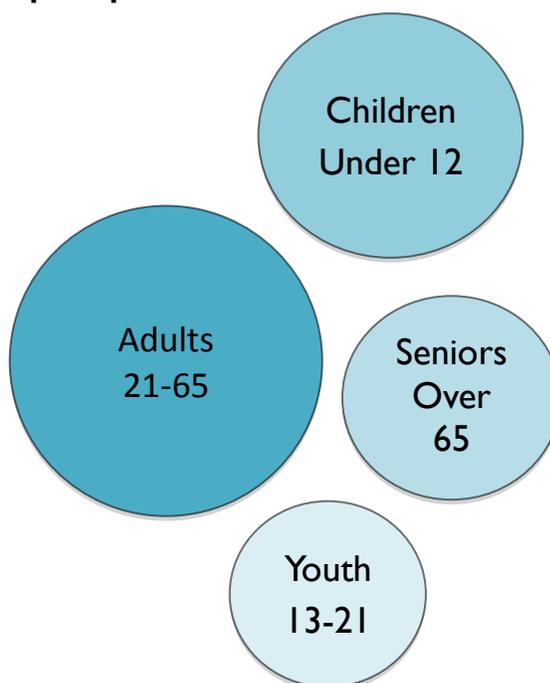
Community Priorities

A simple survey asking residents about their desires, preferences, and concerns around recreation and the arts was distributed at outdoor festivals, concerts, and various community gatherings predominantly located in downtown Jamaica between August and December of 2016.

Demographics

A total of 307 survey respondents were generally skewed toward women and the most represented, albeit the widest, age range was adults between the ages of 21-65, followed by children under 12, then seniors over 65, and youth between 13-21 being the lowest number of representation per each respondent's household.

Age Groups Represented Per Household



Here are some additional points about respondent demographics to consider:

- **Gender: 224 female-identified; 81 male-identified; 2 gender non-conforming**
- **Average age: 47**
- **Most represented zip code: 11432 (see appendix page 35 for details)**

Concerns and Opportunities

One of the survey questions asked respondents to fill in the blank on the statements below. The corresponding word clouds illustrate the breadth of responses; the larger words represent the most common answers.

I am concerned about _____ in my neighborhood.



I am excited about _____ in my neighborhood.



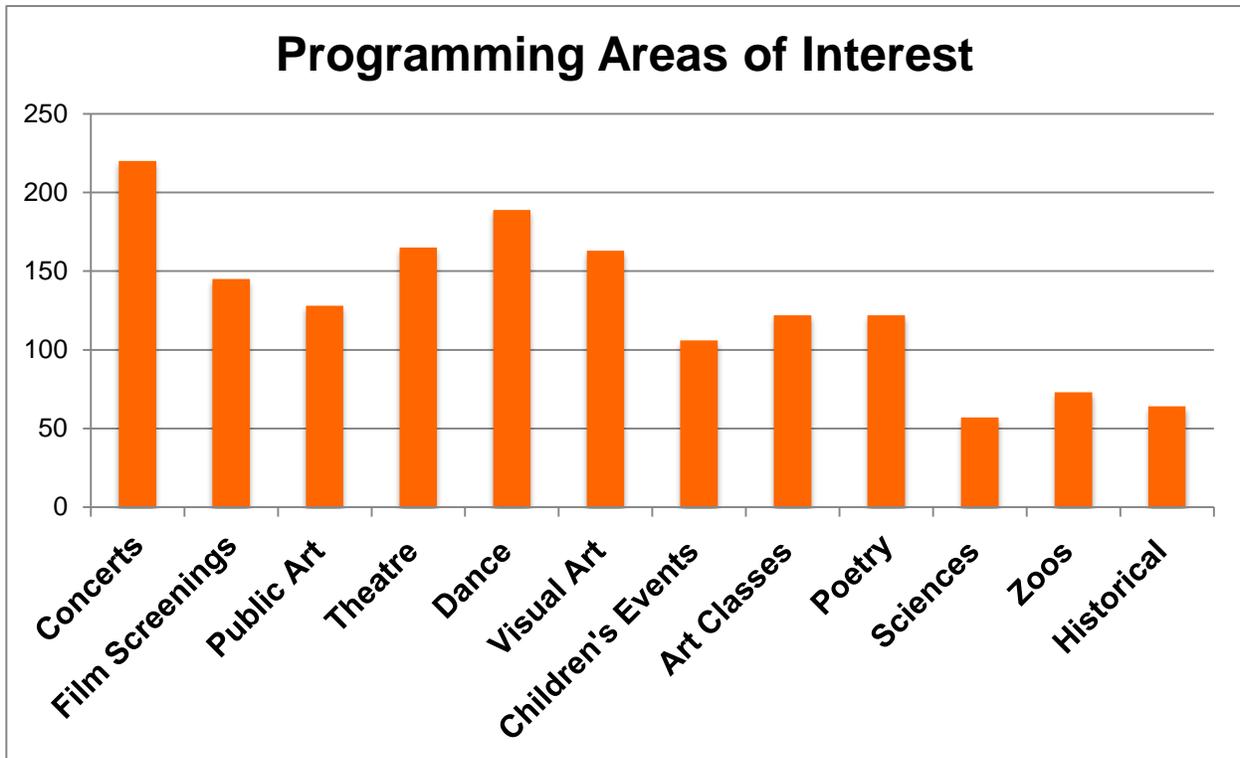
Interestingly, while the resounding concerns revolved around issues of crime, gentrification, rising rent, and rapid economic changes that pose a potential threat to the stability of current residents, many of the points of excitement overlapped with these themes fundamentally. New businesses and economic growth are notably double-edged swords as they are also the catalysts for many of the new resources and cultural opportunities respondents very much desire.

Desired Programming and Services

The following points identify tendencies for activity and event attendance:

- 80% of participants attended events that were free
- The 14% that paid for events, averaged \$22 for admission
- 62.8% attended events in their neighborhoods
- 24.5% attended events in other areas of Queens
- 12.6% attended events in other boroughs
 - Respondents that attended events city-wide averaged 10/year while those who attended events locally averaged 3.6/year

The legacy of jazz, hip-hop, and dance in Southeast Queens evidently influenced the areas of programming that received the most interest (concerts and dance) however, there is still an evenly dispersed desire for a wide range of programming genres.

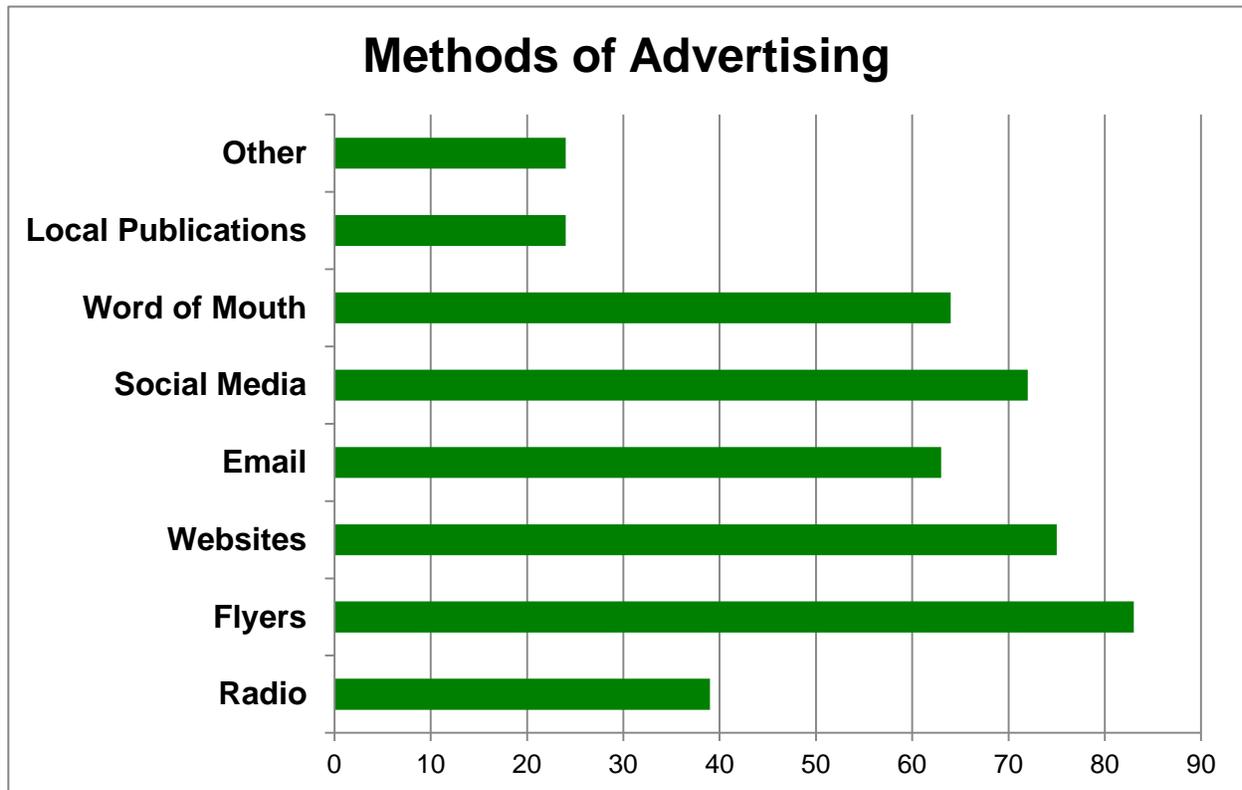


When asked what general services participants wanted more access to, the responses revealed a large interest in lifestyle needs such as fitness classes and childcare.



Responsiveness to Outreach

Despite an increasing dependence on technology to access information about activities and opportunities, the form of advertisement that respondents relied on the most is flyers. This was evident across age groups and other demographics. Websites then social media and word of mouth followed as the second, third, fourth most common forms of outreach.



Focus Groups

Six focus groups were conducted to gain a deeper understanding of what was revealed in the surveys. While the focus groups offered generous insight, input from college-aged residents and students, the LGBTQIA community, and people with disabilities in Southeast Queens would offer even more inclusive and comprehensive information. The following findings are based on the opinions and perceptions of focus group participants that identified as artists, business owners and entrepreneurs, retirees and seniors, youth, new immigrants, and young professionals.



ARTISTS

“I’d love [Southeast] Queens to come alive, but it has never come alive for my career, and that’s why I took my career to Manhattan. That’s where the critics are and that’s the attention we need as artists.”

Summary

On Tuesday, November 29, 2016 Jamaica Is... hosted a group of 15 artists at the Jamaica Center for Arts and Learning to discuss how their practices may be elevated in Southeast Queens. Participants varied in their level of experience, commitment, and medium; some were emerging in the literary arts or photography, while others were long-time painters and sculptors.

While there is a great deal of artistic talent in Southeast Queens, participants of this focus group felt that this potential is not being optimized due to the lack of professional opportunities and resources available to both emerging and seasoned artists. Specifically there was a longing for places where artists could meet, improve their craft, and network with potential collaborators and patrons. Participants agreed that they often have to travel 30 minutes to 1 hour or more (often to Brooklyn and Manhattan) to access opportunities to excel their practices. Existing public places such as libraries, faith-based establishments, recreation centers, and other community spaces either rarely or never host art exhibitions.

Participant Facts

Of the 15 participants in the focus group:

- 11 were female-identified and 4 were male-identified
- The average age of participants was 50 years old
 - The ages of participants ranged from their mid-twenties to late sixties.

Quotes

- “We can meet in the food court, in the hustle and bustle, or like McDonald’s or meet at the Bengali spot...but here in Jamaica where we going to have coffee? On the corner standing in the pouring rain? I feel like if we just had a space, where you go and spend some time casually. We could meet at the library, but that’s about it. Those spots exist in Brooklyn and Harlem. “
- “Where are all the artists in Jamaica? There is no meeting place.”
- “A lot of work needs to be done on many, many fronts.”

- “People want something to do but don’t want to constantly go to Brooklyn or Manhattan to get it!”
- “Where is there a place where I can find out where everything is going on?”

What We Need

1) Outreach and Audience Engagement

- Stakeholders in this focus group discussed the difficulty of engaging audiences for their work locally. Some claimed that sharing their work in other parts of New York City, let alone, nationally and internationally was much more feasible than in Jamaica, Queens.
- Participants expressed a desire for art to be an integral part of the experience in downtown Jamaica (i.e. murals, public art installations, beautified streetscapes, etc.).
- 70-80% of the participants felt the most effective way to advertise resources and opportunities is via email and social media. According to responses from this focus group, the most inefficient forms of reaching audiences are by radio and flyers. This was inconsistent with the reality that flyers are still the most common form of outreach for residents in the community.

2) Training for Emerging Artists and Youth

- There was a general sentiment that art is not being given enough of a priority in schools or at home. One participant aptly said, “...if a child grows up reading, writing, and painting when they go to school they demand it from their teachers and we need to demand it from the schools.” For this group, the key to audience engagement is to cultivate the next generation of producers and consumers of art.

3) Professional Development

- Stakeholders in this focus group were vocal about their needs in sustaining a living as artists. Artists wanted more guidance with professional development and entrepreneurship, specifically, skills like the best ways to sell their art, accessing funding for projects, and more personal financial matters such as saving for retirement. Overall, there is an unaddressed need for financial literacy among artists.

4) Work and Exhibition Space

- Artists often work from dedicated spaces in their homes and also expressed a concern over the lack of exhibition spaces in Southeast Queens. Some suggested that abandoned or underutilized spaces in and around Jamaica should become rent-controlled homes, studios, and exhibition spaces for artists.
- In addition to workspace needs, participants noted that artists would highly benefit from the creation of a permanent meeting space in downtown Jamaica. Such a space would serve as a vehicle for “casual connectivity.”
- There is some excitement over the new capital and development coming to Downtown Jamaica and what new resources that may bring, but with simultaneous concern over the rising cost of living, access to educational resources, transportation, and steady crime rates.

5) Networking Opportunities

- Participants of this focus group felt that there isn't enough diverse inclusion in the greater Jamaica area. Desire for an online database of artists and other content creators (writers, curators, and administrators), as well as, more in-person networking opportunities was expressed. Anecdotally, the artists in the group were surprised and excited to see new faces and spent the last part of the session exchanging contact information and chatting.

6) Access to Materials

- There are no artist supply stores in Southeast Queens. Over half of the participants, bonded over difficulties of having to go to subpar craft stores nearby and still being unable to purchase the proper materials for a project. Most relied on purchasing materials online, which took away from the person-to-person community building that comes with frequenting a brick and mortar establishment.

Business Owners and Entrepreneurs

“I would love to just take the Q77 bus and just work here. But I have to travel and take my business to other communities to support my family. Whenever I'm [working] here [in Southeast Queens] I have to give deep discounts. People aren't willing to pay for it in our community. They don't see the value in art. I have to go where people are willing to pay for my services.”

Summary

On Friday, December 2, 2016, a group of 17 small business owners and entrepreneurs based in Southeast Queens met at The Harvest Room for a focus group. Participants ranged in industry: real estate professionals, tax accountants, small publishers, and youth entertainment companies were among those represented.

An overarching thread in this discussion was the need to prioritize financial literacy for young entrepreneurs and the emerging next generation of creative industry professionals. In analyzing their role and contributions to the cultural landscape of the community, many also concluded that there was a great need for more communication and networking between businesses, as well as, between businesses and their local constituents.

Participant Facts

Of the 17 participants in the focus group:

- 13 were female-identified and 4 were male-identified
- The average age of participants was 45 years old.

Quotes

- “I want to see more support for youth services”
- “There are a lot of talented people here in Queens but they tend to travel to Harlem and Brooklyn for opportunities and events when we have so much culture here.”
- “I don’t see educational opportunities within or outside of the school curriculum for financial literacy.”
- “I believe that the pain of our history adversely effects our appreciation of art.”

What We Need

1) Broader Communication Strategies

- Participants reported feeling isolated from culture and arts events happening locally noting, “we don’t know what’s going on out here unless we stumble upon it. Everything’s a surprise.”
 - Several of the older participants attributed this to the recent advancement of digital communication tools, while younger participants felt that technology wasn’t being activated enough within the community. In several instances during the focus group, there was a clear generation gap in understanding how to enact effective communication.
- Several focus group participants noted that their main priority was to address what they believed to be a lack of advertisement of events and opportunities that were available locally. They often learned of arts and culture activities in Southeast Queens by word of mouth or happenstance, as opposed to intentionally attending something that they learned about through social media or a direct invitation. The broad consensus was that outreach efforts need to be done in as many forms as possible (digital, print, word of mouth, etc.) to target desired constituents.
- A participant who has been a resident of Southeast Queens for 40 years argued that poor communication has resulted in a disconnect between businesses and how art impacts the community’s evolving legacy and future.

2) Youth Services

- The group expressed a general concern for educational opportunities to build practical and vocational skills and programs that support engagement in arts and culture.

3) Work Space

- The need for space affects the manner in which stakeholders operate and conduct their businesses. In an effort to better assess the resources that exist within the community, it is imperative that organizations be willing to work together for mutual benefit.
- Several participants mentioned leveraging faith-based organizations as cultural hubs in the community and places with a large constituent number and frequent programming.

4) Financial Literacy

- One participant summarized the sentiment of many at the table saying, “Many resources and workshops for financial literacy don’t come to Queens.” Identifying who will lend

the space and the time to organize these opportunities is the first challenge, getting people there is the second.

5) Collaboration and Networking

- The group discussed that since there was often little to no contact between businesses, new businesses go unnoticed and often fail, leading to a high turnover.
 - Engagement between businesses and non-profits, as well as, between businesses and their constituents, is low. There was a resounding need to foster stronger bonds and opportunities for businesses to network and collaborate with cultural and artistic groups, as well as, with each other.

Retirees and Seniors

“There are a burgeoning number of seniors, particularly people that look a lot like me. And I see them struggling to stay active and into things because they are kind of in denial and won’t embrace some of the better outreach tools. I wish there was some way we could bridge that gap.”

Summary

On Wednesday, December 7th, 2-3:30pm at The Harvest Room 11 seniors and retirees gathered for a focus group. The group was comprised of predominantly, patrons, artists, and former educators engaged with art at a professional or recreational capacity. There was an overarching interest in performing arts and dance. From the focus groups conducted and surveys filled out, a majority expressed concern over the rising cost of living and housing availability in the area.

There was also a correlation between how well-informed participants felt and whether they have lived in other communities outside of Southeast Queens before (those who have left or came from elsewhere were savvier with seeking out opportunities and activities of interest). External factors like weather, time of day, transportation access, parking, and distance all played an essential role in attendance to cultural activities for this age group.

This focus group differed from the general population since all participants were female-identified. Another common trait worth noting is that due to the fact that participating in the focus group connotes motivation and active involvement in the community, participants were very tapped into the resources they felt would best fill their spare time.

Participant Facts

Of the 11 participants in the focus group:

- All 11 were female-identified
- The average age of participants was 69 years old.

Quotes

“Even though I was born and raised in Queens, I’m not really aware of the different art groups in the Queens area, a lot of the groups I’m affiliated with are in Nassau county or Suffolk county.”

“I used to depend a lot on those Queens community papers but I don’t see them anymore.”

“Right now I don’t get any information unless I trip over it or I see it in a small local newspaper, which is frustrating.”

“Transportation is a big reason why people don’t come to the Jamaica area. I have driven to farther out locations because the people I travel with prefer car over bus and we go where parking is accessible.”

"When we do drive, the expense of parking is ridiculous."

"The majority of us have transportation issues every day because we are in a borough where you can't really go food shopping or do anything without using transportation. Most of the entertainment is in the city. I take the LIRR even though it's pricey; it's much more convenient to go to the city for a program than it is to see a program in Queens"

What We Need

1) Alternative Transportation Options

- Parking in downtown Jamaica and the neighborhoods of Southeast Queens is difficult to come by. The majority of participants indicated a preference for driving instead of public transportation as it frees them from the sometimes, erratic MTA schedule, rising transit costs, and mobility challenges in the subway system and buses. Travel within Queens was noted to be more challenging on public transportation than from Queens to Manhattan.
 - One participant mentioned that even in her residential neighborhood, parking was challenging since now there are up to three to four vehicles per household; with rent on a rapid increase, what were once single family homes are now rented as multiple individual units.

2) Skill Sharing Opportunities

- This demographic is unique in that it is armed with skills and lifelong expertise in a wide range of specialties, yet seniors and retirees have a desire to continue learning. While some seemed to be actively involved in putting their skills to use at their community boards, others expressed a desire to advocate for scholarship, aid in mentorship, educate on financial literacy and investment, share ideas on property acquisition, and share their knowledge of quilting/knitting/sewing.

3) Daytime Activities

- Many arts or cultural events are held in the evening in order to accommodate a traditional 9am to 5pm working schedule. For many seniors, who prefer daytime events, evening events discourage attendance due to health issues (being unable to see well at night) and general safety, among other concerns.

4) Companionship

- Several focus group participants indicated that they lived alone and often were reticent to attend events because they didn't want to go alone.

5) Broader Communication Strategies

- While this was indeed a very tech-savvy group, roughly a third of the participants noted that they felt isolated from activities since the advancement of recent technologies has eliminated forms of communication they typically relied on (i.e. local publications, snail mail notifications, etc.)

6) Person-to-Person Community Building

- When discussing traditions or resources that have been lost in the community, participants noted that they'd like more interaction with their neighbors and a stronger sense of community. Some mentioned that their civic or block associations either didn't exist or were inactive.

7) Intergenerational Engagement

- The group expressed a strong interest in engaging more with youth at a regular and formal capacity. Beyond their personal relationships with their children and grandchildren, participants yearned for a platform in which they could skill share with millennials, young adults, and adolescents.

Youth

“If a place is filled with art and culture, it attracts people from other places. People are also more likely to respect one another's differences more and are more likely to feel welcomed.”

Summary

On December 5, 2016, 6 local youth who attended Queens High School for the Sciences located at York College participated in the focus group at Community Mediation Services. Five participants lived in Southeast Queens and one participant lived in Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn. All participants were either immigrants or first generation Americans in their families. The foundation of the focus group began with a discussion around their general perceptions of Jamaica/Southeast Queens, the impact of arts and culture in their communities, and their personal experiences and reflections engaging with the arts. The students expressed a wide

range of their primary cultural interests: hip-hop, photography, theatre, and contemporary visual art were among those noted.

Participant Facts

Of the 6 participants in the focus group:

- 3 were female-identified and 3 were male-identified
- The average age of participants was 17 years old.

Quotes

“When I think of Jamaica, I think of the Jamaica geotag. When I walk to school every day and see that huge President Obama mural [at Parsons and Archer], that’s Jamaica to me: murals and street art.”

“Jamaica is very unpredictable and constantly changing. It’s much safer now than it used to be. I have more confidence walking around the neighborhood now.”

“At school we don’t really have opportunities to do fun creative stuff like improv. I’d love to have the opportunity to do more stuff like that.”

“Art makes communities a better place.”

“If I wanted to get into painting or photography or something, there isn’t really a place locally where I can get lessons. If I lived in Manhattan I’d have lots of options.”

“There may be other opportunities here, but they’re not as popular. They’re not advertised as much as other places, like the MET.”

“Most of us feel like we want to go to college... we want to go away because there’s nothing in Jamaica for me.”

What We Need

Creative and Analytical Skill Building

- Participants expressed a desire to learn analytical skills that would inform their experiences engaging with visual and performing arts. One student mentioned that she’d love to have an art historical base for understanding and appreciating museum works beyond her emotional reactions. Another similarly felt that she was lacking the expressive tools she needed to form criticism.

2) Parental Engagement

- All participants in this group had parents who are immigrants. Participants were acutely aware of their parents’ attitudes toward arts and culture as a professional option and personal passion. For many, the maintenance of cultural identity combined with stereotypical first generation expectations created a barrier to regular involvement in

the arts. They also mentioned having intercultural and intergenerational challenges in connecting with their parents and identifying the value of pursuing a career in the arts.

3) Local Educational Opportunities in the Arts

- While this group of students seemed to be very active with recreational activities outside of school, the vast majority of the extracurricular programs they were involved in, required travel to other neighborhoods in Manhattan, Brooklyn, or in Queens (mainly Astoria). Several participants also agreed that residents may not seek out opportunities that do exist due to lack of leisure time and disposable income.

4) A Museum Space

- This particular group of participants felt the absence of a museum or more exhibition spaces where they may see visual art for free. Much of their experiences visiting cultural institutions were via trips organized by their school and predominantly limited to the larger, more world-renowned institutions in Manhattan.

5) Social/Recreational Space

- The group noted feeling that there weren't any spaces for them within the arts and culture sector to exchange ideas, skills, or to simply socialize with peers. Beyond the teen library at the Queens Library, most of which admitted to not utilizing, they couldn't name any places where they were able to convene during their free time.

6) Outreach to Schools

- All of the participating students seemed to have little to no experience with the resources that are available locally at established cultural spaces like JCAL, King Manor Museum, and the Queens Library.

New Immigrants

“I make piñatas and would love an opportunity to share how to make them with other people.”

Summary

On Saturday, December 10, 2016, 15 participants took part in the focus group for new immigrants at the Queens (Central) Library. All recruited participants were students from the intermediate English as a Second Language classes taught at the Queens Library. Participants successfully communicated their main ideas despite having limited English language capability. Translation from Urdu, Bengali, and Spanish was available at the time of the focus group. Countries of origin represented include: India, Bangladesh, Haiti, Mexico, and the Dominican Republic.

Much of the conversation for this group revolved around challenges adjusting to American society and culture. Whether participants were satisfied with the amount of opportunities to

celebrate their native festivities and holidays in Southeast Queens, truly depended on their country of origin (South Asian constituents enjoyed more opportunities than their Haitian counterparts, for instance). The majority also expressed a desire for opportunities to learn about other cultures and exchange traditions with their peers. Another resounding commonality between participants was a need to utilize skills that were valuable in their native countries, but were lost upon moving to the United States.

Participant Facts

Of the 15 participants in the focus group:

- 12 were female-identified and 3 were male-identified
- The average age of the participants was 47.

Quotes

“I’m interested in other cultures because we live in a diverse society and I’d like to learn English and then Spanish because [Spanish] is the language used between patients and doctors in the place I volunteer at.”

“There are various cultures that should be taught to younger generations so that people can keep an open mind and respect other cultures.”

What We Need

- 1) More English Language Classes
 - When asked to rate how much of a barrier the English language was in their engagement in arts and culture activities locally (1 being not at all and 10 being very much), participants responded an average of 8. Even though this particular group was tapped into the local resources offered at the Queens Library, there was still a need to expand their language capabilities beyond practice once a week.
- 2) Opportunities for Cultural Exchange
 - When asked about their interest to learn about other cultures (1 being no interest and 10 being very interested) participants responded with an average of 9. There was great enthusiasm about the potential for workshops where participants learn the language and customs of other cultures while sharing their own.
- 3) Skill Sharing Opportunities
 - This group spent some time lamenting that skills they acquired in their native countries went dormant upon moving to the United States. More than simply specialty vocations such as law and medicine, some expressed a desire for a platform in which they could share cultural practices like weaving, singing, and playing instruments specific to their countries of origin.
- 4) Resources in Foreign Languages
 - Participants were motivated and excited about prospects for new resources such as networking opportunities and skill building workshops, however, the reality remains that

accessibility will be limited so long as more materials and information are not available in languages other than English.

Young Professionals

“I wish Southeast Queens had more people that came back. I’d love to have younger neighbors like myself. Like a more transient community like Atlanta or even [parts of] Brooklyn.”

Summary

On Thursday, January 28 a group of 7 participants joined the young professionals focus group targeted toward working professionals under the age of 40. All participants were residents of a Southeast Queens neighborhood and the majority were actually born and raised in the area, as well. Participants ranged in their professions: one worked with people with disabilities, several worked in arts education and production, and another worked in accounting at a local hospital.

A large part of the conversation addressed accessibility to educational and recreational resources and networking opportunities for young professionals in Southeast Queens, as there was a general sentiment that both of those areas were lacking. A prominent concern of the group was also skill-building and career opportunities for younger generations to foster their talents and contribute within the community instead of leaving to build their professions elsewhere, as many do.

Participant Facts

Of the 7 participants in the focus group:

- 4 were female-identified and 3 were male-identified
- The average age of the participants was 27.

Quotes

“I wish there was a mechanism that would make people more aware.”

“I feel like there’s a large networking pool, but I still see the same people everywhere I go.”

“Whenever I’ve attended an event locally it tends to be poorer quality than other areas. They’ve been unorganized. You get there an hour late and they’re still setting up...”

“Just staying informed is the challenge because information is not always readily available.”

“If there’s no networking involved, I’m probably not going to show up.”

“Actually, I’m from here and have always lived here. While the message isn’t always widespread, I tend to enjoy the cultural events I attend, a lot. My son is attending an airbrushing program

right around the corner [in downtown Jamaica]. I went to a great forum recently on political engagement. There's also JCAL. I do everything in my neighborhood.”

“We offer a lot of programs in Southeast Queens, but they're just not at a competitive level and that's the frustrating part.”

“That's the biggest issue is the geographic challenge. Where will I park my car? We're in the city but we're [also] suburban to some extent and we don't have a city center really. I guess here [downtown Jamaica] but it's still not really quite at the level where I want to hang out here.”

What We Need

1) Mentorship for Youth

- A constant thread in this conversation was concern for the next generation of professionals coming from Jamaica and there being a need for youth to have positive role models in their communities.

2) Wider Accessibility of Existing Resources

- Participants in this group noted feeling like they didn't have access to the resources that do exist in the community. Some of this was attributed to rental fees that were too high particularly for smaller organizations that needed venues and spaces for rehearsals, performances, and other gatherings.
- Another barrier noted by this group included the perception that older generations had a tight grasp on established facilities like Roy Wilkins Recreational Center, resulting in programming catered to that very population as opposed to a wider range of demographics.

3) Broader Communication Strategies

- More than half of the participants felt that events were not effectively advertised for and were not on par with their city-wide counterparts in terms of quality. There was a general feeling that there are various demographics within Southeast Queens that are not being included in opportunities.

4) Intergenerational Exchanges

- When discussing opportunities to build community, several participants proclaimed that they would often be the youngest members of their community boards or civic block associations. There is a notable generation gap in civic engagement and community building.

5) Consistency

- Organizers in the group said that excitement of initiatives that they created or saw peers create often petered out after a short amount of time. Participants and stakeholders of those initiatives quickly lost motivation or interest after excitement in the early phases of the endeavor. They also expressed skepticism over new efforts for fear that they would lose funding or lack sustainable leadership.

6) Spaces to Socialize

- A recurring theme in the conversation was that there is no central hub or place for constituents to organize, socialize, network, and build connections. Equally, sit-down restaurants for enhanced entertainment, cafes, and general public spaces to linger and relax were sorely missing. The few options that exist were considered to be expensive and of lower quality, which is why some justified travelling to other boroughs or neighborhoods for more reasonable prices and a more satisfying experience.

Interviews

Between April 2016 and December 2017, over 46 arts and cultural leaders, independent artists, creatives, entrepreneurs, and burgeoning talents of Southeast Queens discussed their contributions and aspirations for their constituents. Five additional interview subjects were leaders of organizations in other communities that may be replicated in Southeast Queens.

Sessions with each interview subject typically began with a tour of their facilities, studios, or offices (if applicable) followed by a needs assessment of Southeast Queens' arts and cultural landscape from their individual perspectives. The interviews ended with a candid look at the future and possible actionable solutions for some of their concerns. Much of what was brought up in these discussions mirrored what residents conveyed in their focus groups and surveys.

Overall interviewees expressed a collective desire to:

- Fully engage with the diversity of Southeast Queens
 - Several representatives from both the legacy cultural institutions (Black Spectrum Theatre, Afrikan Poetry Theatre, King Manor Museum, among others) and newer initiatives (Culture Cocoa House, Newtown Literary, A Better Jamaica) in Southeast Queens expressed a desire for more outreach to and inclusion of the new immigrant communities in the area such as the Latinx, Southeast Asian, and West Indian populations locally.
- Identify alternative sources of funding
 - Founders and leaders of their respective organizations strongly felt the restrictions of working with a small operating budget and being short staffed. Non-profits with 501(c)3 status felt that competing for the same, limited pools of funds with other local organizations created tension in relationships that prevented collaborations. Equally, more grassroots, independent efforts felt that their access to funding was extremely limited without 501(c)3 status. Particularly as government funding for the arts becomes largely unpredictable, the need for new creative ways of fundraising and resource development became a prominent theme in conversations.
- Develop more varied programming
 - Cultural producers expressed a desire to develop more robust programming, however, funding, staffing, audience retention, and space needs were cited as barriers in achieving this.
- Share resources
 - A clear, seemingly immediate solution to funding limitations is cooperative engagement between cultural groups in Southeast Queens. Here, challenges were a great need for trust building and the perceived and real scarcity of resources.
 - Several interviewees mentioned that due to the limited amount of funds available in the areas of arts and culture, competition, political tensions, and complex relational issues prevented a collaborative and community-oriented approach to building their organizations.

- Cultivate more cross-sector collaborations
 - Developing strong relationships is key in achieving collaboration. Beyond partnerships between arts and cultural groups, support between those groups and businesses, social service agencies, schools, and healthcare facilities, among others, truly addresses the fundamental importance of the arts for a community's vitality.
- Captivate the attention of tourists
 - As a regional, national, and international transportation hub, Jamaica, Queens has close proximity and access to commuters from the tristate area and travelers from around the world. Business-minded interviewees identified the need for marketing and disseminating targeted information that would draw more visitors to the cultural offerings and businesses in downtown Jamaica.
- Keep talent in Jamaica
 - A recurring thread in conversations was that Southeast Queens breeds wonderful talent; however, many leave and find success elsewhere, rarely returning to contribute to their communities of origin. Brainstorming around how to retain and encourage successful natives to return was expressed as a need.
- Activate nightlife in downtown Jamaica
 - Subjects noted that after business hours, downtown Jamaica becomes dormant and lacks spaces for leisure and entertainment. New sit-down restaurants, bars, and cafes would augment arts and cultural offerings.
- Leverage new development
 - West Harlem was referenced several times as a model for positive change and revitalization that, to an extent, retained the community's cultural legacy. Organizing and educating current constituents on their rights, how to sustain their living, and have their voices heard amidst rapid economic change is crucial in preventing displacement and improving the quality of life current community residents and workers.

Opportunities to Leverage

Outdoor Spaces

- There are three parks in the greater Jamaica area that are well-utilized in the summer months for screenings, concerts, and festivals: Baisley Pond Park, King Park, and Roy Wilkins Park. These outdoor spaces are wonderful convening points during the spring, summer, and fall and can satisfy the community's thirst for interaction with more diversified programming.

Transportation Hub

- Downtown Jamaica is a regional mass transit hub and its proximity to John F. Kennedy Airport is often cited as a strength that is overlooked. The neighborhood has access to large numbers of people in transit (commuters, international tourists, etc.) and holds great potential in captivating audiences that are on-the-go.

- A Better Jamaica hosts a weekly series of jazz concerts during the evening rush hours on Thursdays on the JFK Air Train platform.

Music

- The greater Jamaica area is home to a number of the world's most renowned jazz and hip-hop artists. The legacy of jazz, hip-hop, and dance is a powerful source of pride for community residents. Several interviewees expressed a curiosity for how to leverage the celebrity of natives like Q-Tip, LL Cool J, 50 Cent, Niki Minaj, Salt n' Peppa, Joseph Simmons, and Tom Browne. Several also lamented the loss of "The Music Building" formally located on 92-32 Union Hall Street, a vibrant warehouse of affordable music studios, which burned down in 1995.

Youth

- With over 15 high schools and middle schools and over 51, 000 residents ages 15-24 in the area surrounding downtown Jamaica alone, there is an immense need to hone in on professional development opportunities for youth. A vast majority of interviewees mentioned creating interactive spaces for teens and young adults to explore the arts as a top priority.

Proposed Solutions and Recommendations

Conversations with focus group participants and interviewees, as well as, comments from survey respondents all provided invaluable input around actionable solutions. While fundraising and/or resource development is at the center of most of these recommendations, some offer interim alternatives to longer-term projects and goals that require a substantial amount of capital. Many solution-oriented efforts are already underway and are noted under relevant recommendations.

Support for Artists and Cultural Producers

- The formation of a permanent coalition or alliance comprised of organizations and individual artists that would organize networking events and cultivate meaningful connections and collaborations between artists in Southeast Queens would enhance opportunities and the cultural ecosystem immensely.
 - Since this research was completed, the Southeast Queens Artists Alliance is being formed and is expected to launch in the Spring of 2017. The Jamaica Arts Alliance is another organization that is still developing and growing.
- More efforts to exhibit art at existing local establishments and small businesses such as: the Queens Library Central Branch, the Jamaica Center and Sutphin Boulevard Station waiting areas, the Archer Boulevard Archways, etc.
 - The public libraries may consider having an open wall or pedestals that circulates the work of local artists.
- Lobbying for more arts programs at public schools and affordable programs outside of the public school system that will support youth engagement in the arts.
 - Currently, JCAL is seeking to expand the STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, Math) Academy to teach local youth skills in product design and creative industries.
 - The Culture Cocoa House is a small, grassroots non-profit that offers educational and professional opportunities for youth to learn creative skills. Its Paid Mural Apprenticeship Program offers young people the experience of painting a Hip-Hop Legacy Mural in Southeast Queens. It is exemplary of many independently-run programs in the area.
- More public art on streetscapes and subway stations. By casually inserting art into people's daily lives, pedestrians will have a stronger sense of value and may be more likely to engage with arts and culture at varying capacities.
 - The New York State Downtown Revitalization Initiative recently awarded Jamaica, Queens \$10 million for catalytic projects. Several of the approved projects for this funding focus on streetscape improvements including one that would create an arts corridor to draw residents and visitors to the downtown.

- In the longer term: identifying a multi-functional public space that can serve as a community art gallery and work/networking space for artists.
 - The Greater Jamaica Development Corporation is currently conducting research and in the conceptual phase of the development of a co-working space to be located in downtown Jamaica.
- The creation of a roundtable for artists and cultural leaders as a mechanism for ongoing collaboration, resource sharing, and networking for a nominal membership fee.
 - The New York City Arts in Education Roundtable is an existing service organization that may be considered as a model for this. It is a community of arts education practitioners that share information, provide professional development, and communicate with the public to promote best practices in public schools.
 - The Queens Council of the Arts recently launched a program, called "Creative Conversations," a monthly dinner meeting hosted in different Queens neighborhoods where artists can network, organize, meet community stakeholders, and develop strategies for community advocacy. This is a fantastic starting point and an untapped resource.
- Workshops on seeking alternative sources of funding for cultural institutions and independent artists such as crowd funding and corporate sponsorship.
 - The Building Community Capacity initiative of DCLA hosted one such workshop in December 2016.
- Many of the cultural producers with great potential in Southeast Queens are small start-up efforts operating out of a private residence. A fund that supports projects and programs initiated by independent artists and small non-profit organizations that do not have 501(c)3 status, is an effective way to invite more opportunity to groups that cannot access, already limited, government-affiliated capital.
 - The Downtown Revitalization Initiative recently approved a cultural fund to support art projects in downtown Jamaica. Details are still being rolled out.

Cross-Sector Relationship Building

- Working with the local Business Improvement Districts to organize regular meet-ups in collaboration with cultural organizations that would provide stakeholders with the opportunity to network with one another on a consistent basis.
 - This speaks to the need to foster strong, trusting relationships between community stakeholders in an effort to share and exchange resources, in addition to bolstering outreach for their respective services.
- A cultural asset map at the Jamaica Center and Sutphin Boulevard stations to direct visitors from the airport to targeted local businesses and cultural institutions.
- Businesses would greatly benefit from establishing stronger ties with city-agencies (like Small Business Services), non-profit organizations, and other local public institutions.

- Larger venues (like JPAC or Black Spectrum Theatre) may consider having a limited amount of monthly slots designated for independent artists and small cultural groups to use spaces for free or a discounted rate in exchange for outreach to their networks for one of their events (JCAL's First Fridays for instance). While such facilities are merely examples, it is important to note that they are also understaffed, but a volunteer system could alleviate some of the burden that may come with implementing additional use of facilities.
- Cultural groups in Southeast Queens would benefit from conducting more outreach and cultivating creative partnerships with schools in the area to gain larger audiences for age appropriate events. This would introduce local students to their services and grow interest, momentum, and a local audience for which to build specified programming.

Inclusion

- English proficiency is an issue for many new immigrants who aren't native English speakers. In fact, it was seemingly the largest obstacle for focus groups participants to engage more in resources that were available to their respective communities. Beyond those available at the Queens Library (Central Branch) expanded English language classes that incorporate a cultural element would be beneficial to these communities. These should be offered more widely across Southeast Queens.
- Information should be shared in foreign languages such as Spanish, Patois, Hindi, and Bengali to accommodate to the language needs of new immigrants and prevent exclusion from resources.
- Different demographics (i.e. new immigrants, seniors, etc.) have skills that they may have developed at different points in their live, and would love a place to be able to share and interact with others who would be interested in learning more about these specialized areas. Opportunities where individuals can share a skill from their heritage (i.e. piñata making, quilt making, playing the tabla, etc.) may be hosted at local cultural organizations, small businesses, or libraries.

Professional Development

- One focus group participant organizes a monthly gathering for female-identified entrepreneurs to exchange ideas and provide support for one another's emerging businesses. Concepts like this should be expanded on and potentially even funded by a local community development corporation, corporate sponsorship, or crowd sourcing.
- An incubator and/or training program for enhancing nightlife, creating more jobs, and supporting creative entrepreneurs.
 - Restaurant training programs like those in New Orleans, where communities similarly experiencing a surge of development after a period of devastation, are great references:
 - Liberty's Kitchen [<http://www.libertyskitchen.org/>]
 - Café Reconcile [<http://cafereconcile.org/>].
- The creation of a summer youth job placement program would galvanize youth to work with local businesses and non-profits, offer a source of income for students, and engage them in practical vocational training that may translate into the development of creative businesses later in their trajectories. The NYC Summer Youth Employment Program

(SYEP) can be used as a template to achieve this aim. The Southern Queens Parks Association and the Police Athletic League are both currently listed as participant organizations of this program.

- One of several independently-run youth programs started by community stakeholders is Reagan Branch's Pipeline to Success. The emerging project aims to pair small local business owners with youth for mentoring on how to implement business ideas and best practices. Such a program with a focus on the creative industries can instill best business practices early in life, so that sustaining a living in the arts is far more feasible.
- Providing hands-on experience in creative fields via workshops, jobs, or volunteer opportunities for this demographic would keep youth engaged in a manner that their parents would find agreeable.

Age-Appropriate Programming and Services

- More intergenerational experiences are sorely needed across all programming areas in the arts and culture sector. Beyond entertainment catered toward families, cultural producers in Southeast Queens may prioritize developing more intentional spaces where both young professionals and retirees can exchange skills and resources.
 - Cultural institutions with an existing platform for social programming may develop more opportunities for different age groups to interact. Perhaps a skill sharing event where young professionals educate elders on SEO or online outreach while they in return learn a cultural legacy skill such as quilting or sewing may be unique, enriching, and exciting.
- Ride share services could be better advertised to target the retired and senior population as an affordable means of getting to and from their cultural activities without concern over parking or walking long distances.
 - While rideshare mobile apps like Lyft, Uber, and Juno tend to be marketed more toward a younger demographic, this particular group of seniors, revealed that they were tech-savvy enough to readily access those services. Cultural institutions and event producers in Southeast Queens may consider partnering with a rideshare service to offer a discount code for seniors.
 - Even though, the senior population may not be able to reap the full benefits of this new technology, it is worth noting that planners and developers may not be prioritizing affordable parking in new construction projects due to the anticipation of automated cars. While still in their pilot phase, their growing prominence in the following decades will eliminate many of the noted parking issues throughout the city.
 - Access-a-Ride is a great example of a city-run shuttle service that improves the daily lives of people with disabilities. Seniors with mobility issues could greatly benefit from such a service.
- Arts and cultural institutions in Southeast Queens may widen their constituent base by developing more programming for adults in the afternoons during the weekdays.
 - The Mayor's Community Affairs Unit planned an "Oldies But Goodies Extravaganza for Senior Appreciation Month" in September of 2016 at the Jamaica Performing Arts Center. It was very successful and attracted large

numbers. Regular events like this would be very well received and could ignite more activity, excitement, and participation among seniors.

- Workshops that present parents with prospects for non-traditional work paths in the arts may be hosted at Queens Library Central Branch or the York College Fine Arts Department. There is a great need to foster the interest and growth of the next generation of art administrators, as well as, entrepreneurial creatives and artists.
- An arts appreciation seminar for parents and their children may be a productive way of fulfilling a need to bridge an intergenerational gap, as well as, develop a skill that may increase their mutual consumption of arts and culture.
 - The non-profit arts organization, No Longer Empty (NLE), curated a pop-up exhibition in an empty storefront on the 165th Street Mall in Jamaica, Queens in the Spring of 2016. As a part of this project, NLE organized a teen docent program where local high school students created their ideal hangout space within the exhibition space and gave tours of the makeshift gallery. A similar program may be replicated on a longer-term basis at one of the local cultural organizations.

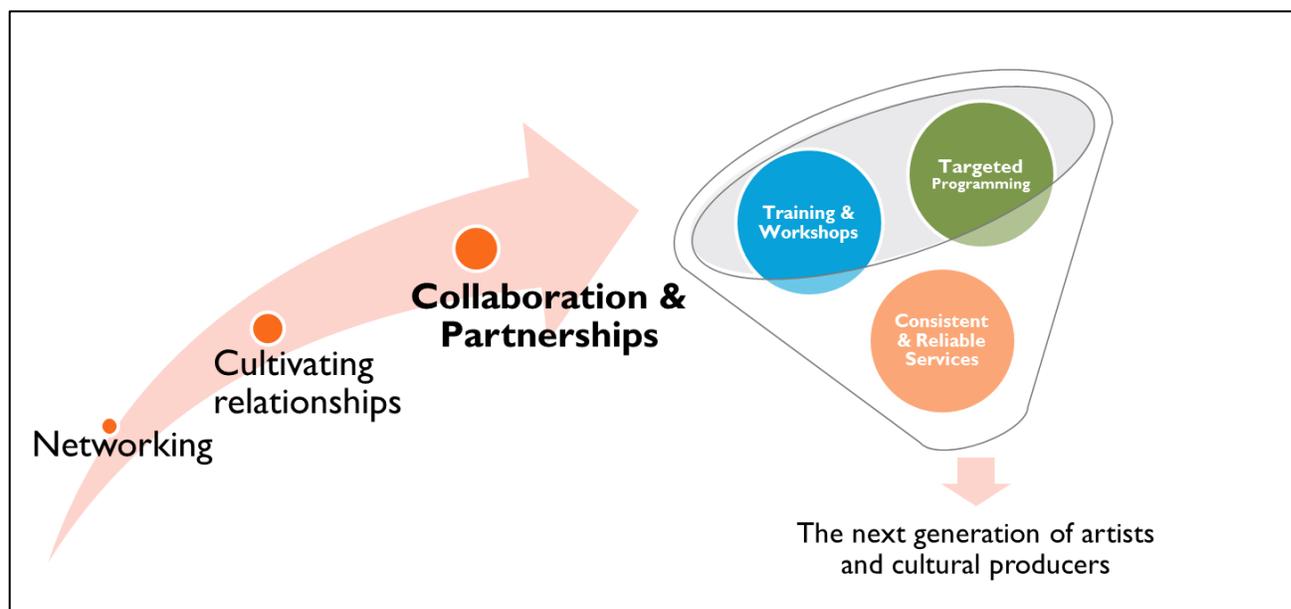
Marketing and Outreach

- The creation of a monthly online newsletter sent to high schools targeted especially for this demographic would provide a point of reference for youth looking for events or activities to attend.
- There is need for a concerted effort to significantly improve outreach and advertisement for local events via e-blasts, social media, flyers, and local publications. The creation of new platforms, both digital and analog, are welcome forms of broadening outreach to all of Southeast Queens' varying demographic needs.
 - Jamaica311.org (extensive online listing of local events) is a great resource that remains under-utilized.
 - The Department of Cultural Affairs is offering free marketing workshops to arts non-profits in Southeast Queens, the South Bronx, Northern Manhattan, and East Brooklyn in April and May 2017.
 - While hard copy publications are being phased out, many demographics still depend on hard copy communications. A monthly calendar or brochure of events, particularly for seniors who may not have access to technology may be useful.

Conclusion

Despite perceptions of lack, undoubtedly tainted by a past of deep trauma and divestment, Southeast Queens is incredibly well positioned for a successful period of growth and positive change. Young talent is beginning to return to their communities after finding opportunities and success elsewhere, young professionals are starting their own community based efforts, the growing senior population is educated, savvy, and motivated, and homeownership for people of color in Southeast Queens is high, among many other strong points.

As more funding streams find their way to downtown Jamaica, ensuring that the needs of local constituents are an integral part of development projects, is vital. With that, collaboration is truly the catalyst that strengthens a community base and positions constituents for success amidst rapid growth and change. Participants of the study expressed a strong desire for meeting like-minded individuals and were ready for networking opportunities. Bringing community members together is the first step in creating a cascade that results in initiatives, new programming, and sustainable services that empower community residents and the next generation of cultural producers.



Appendix

I. Zip Codes Represented in Survey Responses

Zip Code	Total Occurrences
11432	58
11434	35
11412	24
11413	24
11433	23
11435	16
11429	14
11420	12
11411	11
11418	9
11436	9
11423	7
11422	6
11419	5
11427	3
11416	2
11431	1

II. Sample of Survey Distributed

Jamaica Is ...

Community Survey: Arts & Culture

We'd like to understand a little bit about how you engage with arts and cultural opportunities here in Southeast Queens. Please complete this short survey so your neighborhood arts organizations can better serve you and your family,

Zip Code _____

Over the last 12 months, how many times have you attended cultural/community events in this neighborhood: _____ in other Queens neighborhoods _____ Other _____ please specify _____

Were they free events? ____ Yes ____ No ____ Both
If yes, on average how much did you pay per person for an event? _____

What kinds of arts and culture event/activities interest you and your family? (check all that apply)
 Concerts/music performances Film/video screenings Public art Theatre
 Dance performances Art exhibits/visual art Children's events (puppet shows, concerts, festivals...)
 Arts classes Poetry/literary readings Science Zoos History Other _____

Where do you get information about the events you attend? Local publication _____
 Radio Websites Email Social Media _____ Flyers Word of mouth
 Other _____

I am **excited** about _____ in my neighborhood; I am **concerned** about _____ in my neighborhood

.....
Check all age groups represented in your household:

Children (Under 12) Youth (13 to 21) Adults (21 to 65) Seniors (Over 65)

In which year were you born? _____

Gender: Male _____ Female _____ Trans _____ GNC _____ Prefer not to say _____

.....
We'd like to stay in touch with you.

Name: _____

Email Address: _____

Yes, I'd like to volunteer. Please contact me: _____ check box

What additional area(s) of programs/services would you benefit from?
 English (ESL) Class Mental Health Fitness Child Care Medical Other _____

Please use this space to tell us what would make you more likely to attend/participate in arts & culture opportunities in South East Queens :

.....
If mailing, please send to Rosemary Reyes, 90-04 161st Street, 7th Floor, Jamaica, NY 11432. Thank you!

III. Volunteer Guide for Tabling and Recruiting Survey Participants

Volunteer Guide for Jamaica Is...

Thank you for volunteering for “Jamaica Is...” We really appreciate your time and efforts in reinforcing the arts and culture community here in Southeast, Queens. The following is a guide for inquiries you may receive while you are helping us today and tips for engaging visitors. Please review the information below.

BACKGROUND

Mission and Goals

Jamaica Is... aims to bring together the communities that make up Southeast Queens via research, public programs, and collaborative efforts, designed to enhance the role that arts and culture play in developing a healthy, thriving community. Our goals are to:

- *Foster* robust networks.
- *Support* cross-sector relationships.
- *Elevate* public awareness.
- *Expand* opportunities for community members to meaningfully engage in.

Vision

Our vision for Southeast Queens is a community that highlights the arts and culture and that encourages and strengthens broad participation and collaboration through engaging residents, artists, students, and cultural institutions of all kinds.

FAQ

Who are you?

We’re a coalition of arts organizations banding together to elevate public awareness of the arts and culture in Southeast, Queens. We’re also looking to build new resources and expand existing ones to help the cultural offers of Jamaica, Queens thrive!

What are you working on?

- *Video Project:* We have hired a local production company to create a documentary that captures what Jamaica is... today. It is currently in production and will be released later this year!
- *Research:* We are also compiling data and conducting research to better understand what it is the residents of Southeast Queens need and want in arts and culture so we can help make it happen.

III. Volunteer Guide for Tabling and Recruiting Survey Participants (continued)

- *Website:* The findings from our study will be presented on a website we are building for public use that will have additional resources like an artist registry and a calendar of events for the community!
- *Monthly Events:* We also have monthly stakeholder gatherings that encourage collaboration and introduce the community to the cultural institutions in the area.

How can I get involved?

You can become a community stakeholder! Leave your email or contact information and our Project Manager will reach out with all of the details (provide them with the PM's business card). Once you are on our list you'll be invited to all of the monthly stakeholder events that range from free tours of local establishments to networking events.

Where can I find more information?

We are building a website in the near future, but for now you can find us on social media for updates on what we're up to @jamaicais on Instagram, @jamaica_is on Twitter, and facebook.com/jamaicais. We also have a calendar of events at tockify.com/jamaicais.

ADDITIONAL TIPS

- Engage visitors by offering them a sticker (this works great with folks who have kids!).
- Ask: do you enjoy attending arts and culture events locally?
- Convey that: we want to learn what you want to see more of so we can make it happen!
- Try to develop a genuine interest in the person you are speaking to. Ask them about what they do, their hobbies, and learn how they may be able to participate in our efforts.
- Do share activities that we may have coming up or flyers for other activities occurring locally.

IV. Survey Distribution and Tabling Log

Event Name	Date	Location	Time
JAMS 2017	August 6, 2016	Jamaica Avenue (at 160 th St.)	10am-5pm
La Casita Festival	September 17, 2016	JCAL	1pm-4pm
BCC Sneak Peek	September 22, 2016	Afrikan Poetry Theatre	6pm-9pm
Oldies But Goodies	September 26, 2016	JPAC	1pm-5pm
Turn up the Vote	September 27, 2016	King Park	11am-4:30pm
BCC Jazz Concert	October 5, 2016	King Manor Museum	6pm-9pm
Harvest Festival	October 15, 2016	Jamaica Market	11am- 4pm
N/A	November 30, 2016	Jamaica Market	12pm-2pm
Kwanza Celebration	December 30, 2016	Afrikan Poetry Theatre	4pm-9pm

V. Site Visit and Interview Guide

Institution name:

Address:

Type of organization/what do you do:

Street Presence/Visibility: (clear signage?)

Public transportation/Parking:

Open hours/hours of operation:

Fees (if any):

Tickets:

Workshops:

Space rental:

Memberships:

Space: (amount & type: outdoor/indoor, office, programing, rentals, etc.)

Theater (size & specs)

Classrooms (size & specs)

Gallery (size & specs)

Meeting Rooms (size & specs)

Other _____

Budget: (range)

Under \$100K

\$100K - \$250K

V. Site Visit and Interview Guide (continued)

- \$250K - \$500K
- \$500K - \$1M
- > \$1M
- Staffing:
 - Full-time ____
 - Part-time ____
 - Volunteer ____
 - Total ____
- Accessibility:
- What do you see as your/your organization's greatest strengths and weaknesses?
- Website: (up-to-date? Ease of navigation? mobile friendly?)
- Membership: (demographics? Who is constituency - age range, etc?)
- Attendance:
 - What makes Southeast Queens unique? How do the arts fit in?
 - How does what you do fit into the cultural landscape of SEQ?
 - What obstacles do you most often face as an artist who works in SEQ?
 - What is your vision for the SEQ arts community?
 - How do you see the BCC funds best being used?
 - What skills or assets do you possess that will be useful during the BBC process?
 - (For steering Committee); What stakeholders and champions did you recruit during the BCC application process and how do you feel better they will be beneficial to this process?

V. Site Visit and Interview Guide (continued)

- What additional stakeholders and/or champions do you hope will join the process?
- What other community members do you think would be useful to meet with?
- What events or processes have you seen work well?
- What have you observed was not successful in your experience?
- What are your key events and activities? (particularly events scheduled over the next several weeks that I should be apprised of)
- How many years have you been in existence?
- What community do you serve?
- What community service related activities do you or your organization participate in?
- add summary/comment box