

POLICY BRIEF

In June 2015, Mayor Bill de Blasio signed legislation requiring the City to produce its first-ever comprehensive cultural plan: *CreateNYC*. *CreateNYC* will become a roadmap to guide the future of arts and culture in NYC.

As DCLA and HSC collect data and public input to inform the development of *CreateNYC*, the New Coalition of Culturals in City Buildings came together to discuss the unique challenges facing arts organizations.

The New Coalition is a very diverse group in our geography, in our disciplines, and in the range of artists we present and serve, yet we share core values and circumstances and thus wanted to speak with a unified voice in this cultural planning process.

While the New Coalition supports the full set of goals outlined in *CreateNYC*, this Policy Brief focuses on recommendations that maximize the role the City of New York can play in ensuring the health and long-term sustainability of arts and cultural organizations. The recommendations below are drafted with a goal of enhancing equity and uniting our field.

A culturally rich New York City has thriving cultural organizations at its core.

1. LOWER COMMON BASE COSTS

Develop innovative strategies to lower common base operating costs of cultural organizations, including facility expenses; utilities; technology; liability, property, and health insurance; and pensions.

Community-based arts organizations are critical to New York City's cultural vitality. In neighborhoods across the city, these organizations provide high-quality programming with modest resources and investment. While these organizations often face similarly onerous management challenges, they lack the time and capacity to identify cost-efficiencies, organize with their peers to lower common base operations, and pool resources to better invest in their human capital and facilities.

As the Cultural Plan unfolds, a special focus should be placed on identifying options to help cut operating costs across the sector – such as the ability to purchase discounted electricity or participate in other discount purchasing programs or health insurance plans.

Example

In FY17, the City of New York funded a pilot Utility Relief proposal for the New Coalition of Culturals in City Buildings. The extraordinary FY17 investment was earmarked to underwrite utilities expenses for all culturals who are stewards of City-owned spaces. The New Coalition is a very diverse group in its membership. However, all coalition members face the similar challenge of funding utilities for the city-owned cultural spaces they call home. By speaking in one voice about this challenge, the Coalition

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effectively began a solution-focused dialogue with the City of New York that resulted in this promising pilot.

This funding addresses the equity agenda and opens a broader conversation about utility cost for the field. The funding is particularly vital, as coalition members prepare to present expanded free and subsidized arts and culture programming in the coming year, accessible to all New Yorkers. This expansion will deepen the Coalition's shared commitment to providing extensive and in many cases primarily free programming, reaching under-served audiences, retaining staff, and shining a spotlight on art that emanates from diverse cultures.

Recommendations

- Baseline the FY17 Utility Relief funding.
- Leverage this initiative as a pilot and consider its expansion or other approaches to reduce the utility cost of venues throughout the field.
- Designate a position within City Hall to convene, facilitate, and support arts-related cost-saving initiatives and identify cost-savings opportunities that positively impact arts organizations and support additional goals outlined in #OneNYC, such as New York City's efforts to be the most sustainable big city in the world.
- Include arts and culture as an integral part of the city's relief, recovery, and ongoing resiliency strategies.
- Commit to demonstrating impact through research and metrics.

2. INVEST IN ARTISTS

Develop a program for investment in artist fees and increased employment for artists, modeled on the groundbreaking CETA Federal Employment program.

Although artists are at the heart of arts and culture, most artists are not able to achieve a living wage working in their chosen profession. Too often artists are asked to provide their services for free or at significantly reduced wages. This makes it difficult for artists to sustain their practice, keep up with the rising cost of living, and meaningfully contribute to the cultural and civic life of New York City. At the same time, cultural organizations face the dual challenge of fundraising to support artist fees and meeting their human resource needs with talented, committed staff. A significant workforce development investment in artist fees and employment opportunities offers the opportunity to stabilize the financial lives of individual artists while adding creative human capital to cultural organizations.

This is critically important as New York City faces an affordability crisis that threatens the ability of artists to live here and create work.

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Example

The Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) was a federal United States program to provide training and jobs in the public service to workers. Inspired by the WPA's employment of artists in the service to the community in the '30's, the San Francisco Arts Commission began the CETA/Neighborhood Arts Program in the 1970s, employing painters, muralists, musicians, performing artists, poets, and gardeners to work in schools, community centers, prisons, and other places where their skills and services were of value to the community. A success in San Francisco, the program became a model for similar programs, nationally.

Between 1973 and 1981, the federal government spent more than \$300 million on this jobs program for artists. CETA placed artists in communities, creating and training others to create murals, paintings, photography, and sculpture in public parks, public schools, agency lobbies, and waiting rooms. CETA also funded artist residencies and temporary staff positions in arts organizations.

Recommendations

- Invest in the creative vitality of every neighborhood in New York City by providing funding and financing to employ artists to work in schools, community-based organizations, as temporary staff in arts organizations, and in other places where their skills are of value to the community.
- Include artists and cultural organizations in strategy discussions about workforce development issues facing the city.
- Identify and support opportunities for artists to be employed as part of city- and community-based initiatives.
- Invest in creative workforce strategies through ongoing mechanisms such as an artist corps and artist-in-residence programs.
- Make citywide employment programs easier to participate in for artists by reducing barriers to entry.
- Increase cultural funding to 1% of the city expense budget, with a special focus on increased investment in artist fees.

3. LAUNCH FIELD-WIDE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Create field-wide professional development opportunities, targeting both emerging and seasoned nonprofit leaders.

While many arts organizations are fueled by passion and creativity, they also require strong management in order to survive and thrive. A field-wide professional development initiative has the potential to spotlight and encourage the development of excellent management practices within the diversity of arts and cultural organizations across the city. This effort would not only strengthen local leadership but would help create professional networks that support long-term field resiliency. Professional development topics might include managing toward impact, effective governance,

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transparent financial management, and strategic resource development, among other nationally recognized management areas.

In addition, research suggests that professional development opportunities such as unpaid internships and masters' degrees can present a financial barrier for candidates of color or from low-income communities, as they work to enter the field and progress within their careers. Field-wide professional development opportunities have the potential to minimize these barriers by focusing on equity in recruitment efforts or by offering participants stipends for participation.

Example

The Downtown Brooklyn Arts Management Fellowship is a new professional training program designed to eliminate barriers to employment in the arts and provide low-income and historically underrepresented early career arts managers the practical skills, leadership development, and professional networks to seek employment in arts administration. Funded by state, city, and private funds, the Fellowship is administered by a network of organizations that are members of the Downtown Brooklyn Arts Alliance, a coalition of more than 35 organizations that advocate for Downtown Brooklyn and promote professional exchange among its members.

Selected Fellows will participate in a structured 40-week curriculum that includes four types of directed learning sessions: Foundational Concepts, Cross-Departmental Topics, Brown Bag Lunches with Consortium Staff, and Fellowship Lunch Professional Development Sessions. For example, Foundational Workshops address "Writing in a Business Context – Best Practices" and "Program Design I: How to Get from Ideas to Product." These Foundation Workshops progress in complexity through the 40-week curriculum to topics such as "Evaluating Grants or Program Applications" and "Behind the Scenes with the Design Team."

This replicable program is designed to develop a pipeline of skilled arts managers that will strengthen the diversity and equity of the New York City arts and culture field more broadly.

Recommendations

- Replicate existing successful professional development programs field-wide.
- Recruit participants that reflect New York's diverse communities and cultures.
- Incentivize participation through stipends for participants and grant awards to organizations.
- Partner with existing professional development programs and institutions to provide scholarships and cohort opportunities for arts managers.
- Support informal or grassroots opportunities for community-based networks to learn from one another, coordinate their efforts, and scale up through collective action.

4. LEARN FROM OTHER SECTORS

Create a regular roundtable to consider and disseminate management and purchasing innovations from other sectors, inviting leading executives from other fields.

The cultural plan offers an opportunity to extend the cultural sector's knowledge beyond itself and take advantage of management solutions beta tested in other sectors. By inviting leading executives from other fields to participate in regular open discussions about management practices and purchasing innovations, we can together take proactive steps to create a 21st century arts and culture sector.

A progressive field is an entrepreneurial one. Through the cultural plan, we can commit to strengthening our field through open discussion and cross-sector learning opportunities. The innovation derived from networking with other sectors has the potential to be translated to large, mid-sized, and small organizations, if adapted thoughtfully and with intention. Working collectively, we can function efficiently and achieve maximum impact.

Example

Through a cooperative model, ArtsPool's services help participating non-profit arts organizations control costs, save time, and focus on what matters most. ArtsPool began in 2010 as a project of the Alliance of Resident Theatres/New York (A.R.T./New York). The framework for the company was proposed in [Collective Insourcing: A Systemic Approach to Arts Management \(2011\)](#).

A cornerstone of the research and inspiration for ArtsPool, highlighted in the above proposal, was lessons learned from the emerging sharing economy. For example, Zipcar proved a compelling case study in how the sharing economy has evolved. Zipcar's business model questioned the idea that people, in particular in major cities, needed to own a car. Instead, users could access one of Zipcar's fleet when needed. Others, like RelayRides and GetAround "out-shared" Zipcar by creating web-based platforms to allow people to share their own cars. In these instances, the profits from the transaction were shared, and existing assets were exclusively used.

Inspired by this model, ArtsPool's shared services for members today include finance, workforce administration, and compliance. ArtsPool leverages resources within the field to maximize their use to greater effect and reduce waste within the field.

Recommendations

- Designate a position within the Department of Cultural Affairs to convene, facilitate, and support arts-focused roundtable with leading executives from other fields.
- Support and incubate management pilots and creative purchasing innovations that arise from these discussions through a special annual funding opportunity.
- Ensure accessibility and access to these roundtables for small and community-based cultural organizations.

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CONCLUSION

How can *CreateNYC* support the long-term sustainability and well-being of arts and culture organizations?

Together, we can leverage the knowledge and creativity that exists within our field (and beyond it) – including best practices, shared values, innovative solutions, data, and policy – to support the health and well-being of community-based organizations and beloved arts institutions. New Yorkers in every pocket of the city look to these organizations for a sense of community, inspiration, connectivity, and creativity. The Cultural Plan has a powerful role to play in achieving these goals.

New Coalition of Culturals in City Buildings

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| 651 Arts | Downtown Community | Pregones/Puerto Rican |
| BRIC | Television Center | Traveling Theater |
| Caribbean Cultural Center | Harlem Stage | Theatre for a New Audience |
| African Diaspora Institute | Mabou Mines | UrbanGlass |
| Clemente Soto Véllez Cultural and Educational Center | MoCADA | Weeksville Heritage Center |
| | Performance Space 122 | |

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