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On the Cover

Blossom, Mixed media, oil paint on canvas, © 2020 Devon Smillie | @JALJAE

This piece is an illustration of a person of color blossoming and maintaining through introspective disruption. A metaphor

for the topic of how Black men think and deal with their own masculinity. The terms in which we see ourselves as a collective monolith can be abrasive to our own personal identity. The end path leading to a blossoming individual.

FROM AN EDITOR

As we are sending this issue to publish — a combined Fall/Winter special — the world marks one year of the novel coronavirus pandemic. While our ongoing focus on racial equity and justice in arts funding remains unwavering, we are increasingly driven to center this inter-sectionally. We must approach our knowledge building collaboratively with those closest to the work, from artists and community leaders to organizers, and with those committed to stewarding resources.

To do this, first we are grounding ourselves in the reality that we are inextricably interdependent. In our first podcast of the year, Program Manager Sherylynn Sealy and Dr. Barbara J. Love discussed Dr. Love's developing a Liberatory Conscious anchored in a truth of our connectedness. "While we all want to continue to work for social change to reduce inequity and bring about greater justice, we continue to behave in ways that preserve and perpetuate the existing system," Love writes. Accountability and commitment are concerned with how we understand and manage this possibility for perspective sharing and ally-ship in liberation work, as shown in a reprint by David McGoy in the inaugural issue of *Nonprofit Wakanda Quarterly*, Jim Canales, president and trustee, and Barbara Hostetter, board chair and co-founder, of the Barr Foundation, and Quinton Skinner in reflections about the Equity Builder Loan Program with Propel Nonprofits.

And, secondly, we are acknowledging that there is much to learn from our peers' efforts, both within and adjacent to our field. We feature several pieces in this issue that can be viewed as case studies: Anida Yoeu Ali and Shin Yu Pai on lessons to funders when equity and transparency interfere with the panel process, Jonathon Glus' call to learn from paradigm shifts witnessed outside of the cultural sector, Ngoc-Tran Vu's article examining the challenges gig economy artists face in homeownership as independent workers, and Necole Irvin and



Deidre Thomas describing development of Houston's cultural planning process to help reimagine the city's public funding. And, from the perspective of farmers and landwards in Northern California, Kiley Arroyo offers approaches to regenerative justice and whole systems care.

As long practiced, GIA is committed to providing quality research. The annual funding snapshot represents an important and informative collection of years of data and trends. We are pleased to be working again with Reina Mukai of Candid and Ryan Stubbs and Patricia Mullaney-Loss of National Assembly of State Arts Agencies to provide an update on the most recent private foundation and public trends. The findings reflect an overall increase in arts and culture funding with unique challenges anticipated when looking forward at the implications of Covid-19, including reduced state and local budgets and unprecedented issuing of unrestricted funds.

As are many other cultural nonprofits, GIA is challenged to imagine ourselves as a future looking organization. Throughout 2020, the GIA team navigated working remotely, bringing on a new Program Assistant, and hosting our first-ever virtual convening. In the spirit of responsiveness, this will be the last printed volume of the *GIA Reader*. Over the next several months, we will pause production in order to redesign the *Reader* as a fully digital publication. I have thoroughly enjoyed working on the *Reader* over the past three years, and before we close this chapter as is, I would like to thank Carmen Graciela Díaz, Steve Cline, and the whole GIA team for the excellent production work; Kate Andersen, copy editor, for being thorough and considerate; Warren Wilkins for his partnership and dedication; and last, Frances Phillips, her thoughtful

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Submissions and Editorial Policies

We welcome suggestions for article topics and writers, as well as submissions of previously unpublished articles of various lengths — ranging from short reflections and long-form articles to research and personal essays to poetry and book reviews — that are of interest to arts and culture funders, organizers, advocates, and producers. While GIA members have priority access for submission review, we accept submissions from any and all writers interested in submitting. Please read our full Submission Guidelines for complete information on our revised submission process, article formatting, and other policies at <https://www.giarts.org/reader-submission-guidelines>.

The *Reader* is published three times per year, digital and print issues.

Subscriptions

Anyone can subscribe to the *GIA Reader*. An annual subscription (three issues) is \$36.00, or \$50.00 overseas.

GIA members can also download the mobile-friendly ePub *Reader* for free on the GIA website (www.giarts.org/readers). The ePub edition of *GIA Reader* will be also available to the general public for \$10.00 an issue. Paid subscribers will receive a link by email.

Archive of Back Issues

The *Reader* is archived on GIA's website at www.giarts.org/readers. Individual articles are also available in GIA's online library, searchable by keyword as well as a full text search. See: www.giarts.org/search_library.

Grantmakers in the Arts

Our Mission

A national network of private, public, and corporate arts funders, Grantmakers in the Arts provides leadership and service that advances the use of philanthropic and governmental resources to support the growth of the arts and culture.

As we strive to be an anti-racist and anti-oppressive organization, we ground our daily practice in four guiding principles: collaboration, curiosity, equity, and inclusiveness.

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and committed work as a volunteer coeditor for more than 30 years!

My best to the entire GIA membership in the interim; we will see you again in Winter 2022!

Nadia Elokda
vice president &
director of programs
Reader coeditor
Grantmakers in the Art

FROM THE PRESIDENT & CEO

President's Letter 2021

Grantmakers in the Arts is presenting our last *GIA Reader* of 2021. We are embracing the opportunity we have now, one year into the pandemic, to reimagine ourselves in ways that more explicitly center the future we want to see for our field and for ourselves.

We believe that racism was used to facilitate an exploitive economic system that acts in concert with other systems — such as the courts and carceral system — to form exploitive social structures. Considering the offering by Donella Meadows in her research, “Leverage Points: Places to Intervene in a System,” GIA believes that arts and culture exist at the foundational level of the mindset or paradigm out of which systems — their goals, power, structure, their culture — arise. Our allowing racialized outcomes in any system hinges upon our denying the full humanity of ALAANA people. Denying the validity of the cultural expression of



racialized communities is central to affirming their humanity. We treat arts and culture as part of self-determination. GIA believes that every form of support to oppressed peoples must include support for their cultural self-determination for the sake of affirming their humanity, so they are shown to be more than just problems to be solved but instead as creative and generative.

Racial justice requires an ecosystems approach. We do not believe that it is artists' job to create social justice. We believe it is grantmakers' jobs to create justice by funding in a manner that is just and by working as part of a movement toward a more just society. To be clear, as a

grantmaker, I've made every mistake possible. I am actively participating in learning with our field.

As GIA works to reimagine the *GIA Reader*, we have the opportunity to reflect upon the insights we are beginning to glean from our engagement with the field in imagining the future we want. GIA wants our field's support for culture to help our society transcend mindsets and paradigms, making culture a part of our creation of a future we've never experienced in the past — a future of justice and liberation for all.

Our collective future will be marked by our addressing intersectionality, by working in concert with other parts of the funding and service ecosystem and being part of building power for communities. We look forward to creating that future with you.

Eddie Torres
president & CEO
Grantmakers in the Arts

Foundation Grants to Arts and Culture, 2018

A One-Year Snapshot

Reina Mukai

In 2018, giving by the approximately 86,000 active US private and community foundations rose 4% to \$80.7 billion. Among the largest US independent, corporate, community, and grantmaking operating foundations included in Candid's 2018 Foundation 1000 data set, overall giving was down 2% among a matched set of funders, however, arts and culture funding was up 7%. Arts and culture remained among top foundation funding priorities ranking fifth following human services.

Highlights

Candid offers these key findings from GIA's nineteenth snapshot of foundation giving to arts and culture. The definition of arts and culture used for this snapshot is based on Candid's Philanthropy Classification System and encompasses funding for the performing arts, museums, visual arts, multi-disciplinary arts, humanities, historical activities, arts services, folk arts, public arts, and cultural awareness. The findings in this snapshot are based on analysis of two closely related data sets. The analysis of the distribution of 2018 arts and culture giving uses the latest Foundation 1000 dataset,¹ while the analysis of changes in foundation giving for the arts between 2017 and 2018 use a matched set of foundations that are consistent between the Foundation 1000 for each of those two years.²

The foundation grantmaking examined here represents only one source of arts financing. It does not examine arts support from earned income, governments, individual donors, or the business community. This analysis also looks only at foundation arts support for nonprofit organizations, and not for individual artists, commercial arts enterprises, or informal and unincorporated activities.

Arts funding as a share of total dollars was up in 2018.

Among the 1,000 largest foundations included in Candid's grants sample for 2018, arts giving totaled \$3 billion, or 9% of overall grant dollars. Compared to the previous year, share of dollars was up slightly and share of number of grants remained basically unchanged.

Foundation funding for arts and culture was up in 2018.

Among a matched set of leading funders, arts funding increased 7% between 2017 and 2018 compared to a 2% decline in overall giving by these foundations.

The size of the median arts grant was up.

The median arts and culture grant size — \$28,150 — increased from \$27,500. This was below the \$35,000 median amount for all foundation grants in the latest year.

Large grants account for more than half of arts grant dollars.

Large arts grants of \$500,000 and more captured 65% of total grant dollars for the arts in 2018, up from 63% in 2017.

Relative to overall giving, a larger share of arts grant dollars was for general operating support.

In 2018, general operating support accounted for 25% of arts and culture grant dollars. The share is significantly higher than the 19% share awarded for general operating support for overall giving.

Top arts funders accounted for a larger share of overall giving than in 2017.

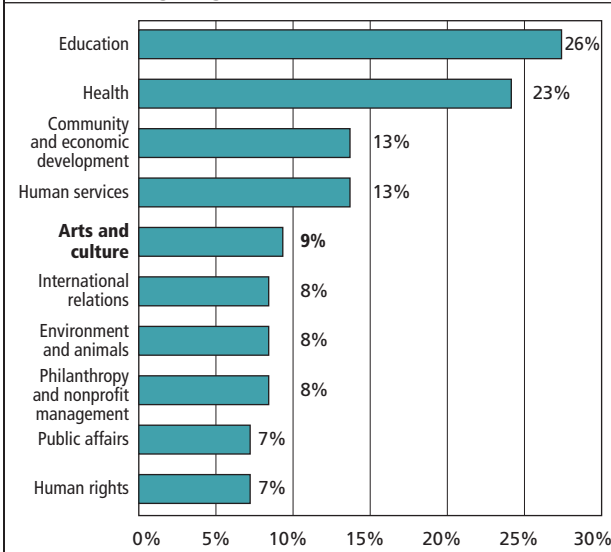
The top twenty-five arts funders by giving amount provided 42% of total foundation arts dollars in 2018, up from the 38% share reported in 2017. The share of arts giving accounted for by the top funders has remained relatively consistent for the past decade.

Specific Findings

Overall foundation dollars for the arts.

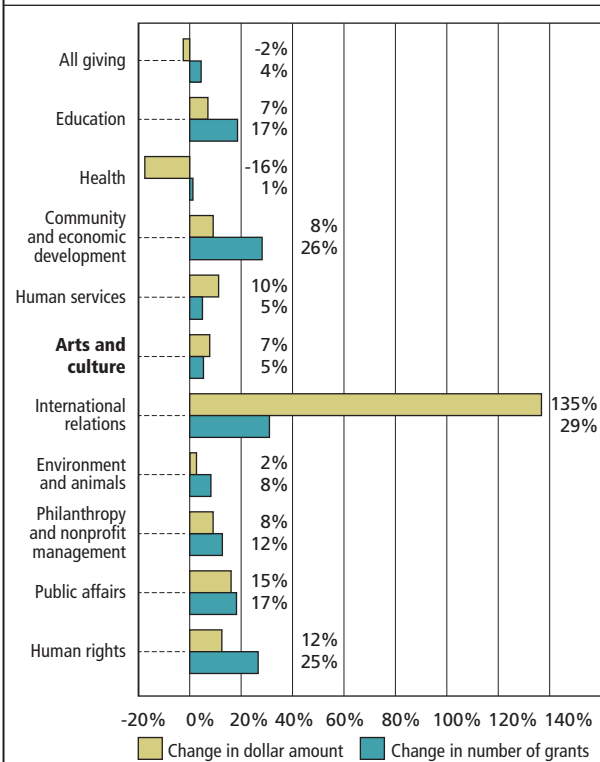
The foundations included in Candid's 2018 Foundation 1000 data set awarded 19,074 arts and culture grants totaling \$3 billion, or 9% of overall grant dollars. Compared to the previous year, the share for arts dollars was up slightly (8% in 2017), while the share of number of grants remained basically unchanged. Among a matched subset of 839 funders, grant dollars for the arts was up 7% between 2017 and 2018, compared to a 2% decrease in grant dollars overall. Among the top-ranked subject areas by grant dollars, international relations, public affairs, human rights, and human services reported the fastest increases in dollars.

FIGURE 1. Percentage of grant dollars by major field of giving, 2018



Source: Candid, 2021. Based on all grants of \$10,000 or more awarded by 1,000 of the largest foundations representing approximately half of total giving by all US private and community foundations. Includes areas of giving representing at least 5% of grant dollars. Grants may occasionally be for multiple issue areas and would thereby be counted more than once.

FIGURE 2. Change in giving by major field of giving, 2017 to 2018



Source: Candid, 2021. Based on all grants of \$10,000 or more awarded by a matched sample of 839 of the largest foundations. Includes areas of giving representing at least 5% of grant dollars in 2018. Grants may occasionally be for multiple issue areas and would thereby be counted more than once.

The impact of exceptionally large grants.

Every year and in all funding areas, a few very large grants can skew overall totals, creating distortions in long-term grantmaking trends. In 2018, 22 arts and culture grants provided at least \$10 million, and instances where these grants had a notable impact on grantmaking patterns are identified throughout this analysis. Yet despite the potential fluctuations caused by these exceptional grants, Candid data in all fields have always included them, providing consistency over time.³

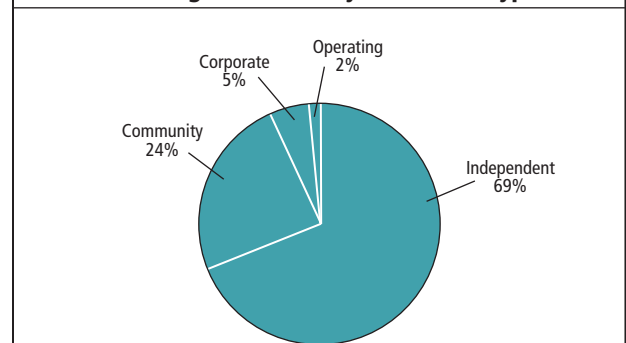
Corporate foundations represent an important source of support for arts and culture.

Corporate foundations account for roughly 8% of overall US private and community foundation giving, and these larger corporate foundations included in the 2018 grants sample provided 5% of grant dollars for the arts. Actual grant dollars totaled \$153 million. By number, corporate foundations allocated 1,619 grants, or 9%, of the overall number of arts grants in 2018. These figures do not include direct corporate giving; the amount that corporations contribute to the arts is undoubtedly higher.

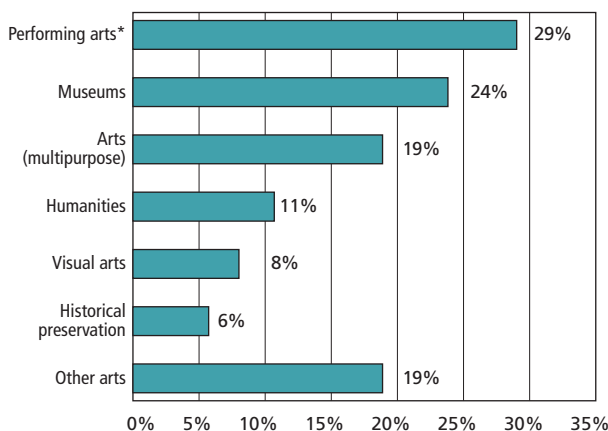
Grants by Arts Subfield

Funding for performing arts accounted for close to one-third of all foundation art dollars in 2018, surpassing the share reported for museums (24%). From the start of the 1980s until 1997, the performing arts have consistently received more foundation support than museums. However, museums surpassed the performing arts by share in the late 1990s to early 2000s and several times in recent

FIGURE 3. Arts grant dollars by foundation type, 2018



Source: Candid, 2021. Based on all grants of \$10,000 or more awarded by 1,000 of the largest foundations representing approximately half of total giving by all US private and community foundations.

FIGURE 4. Arts and culture, giving to subfields 2018

Source: Candid, 2021. Based on all grants of \$10,000 or more awarded by 1,000 of the largest foundations representing approximately half of total giving by all US private and community foundations. Grants may occasionally be for multiple issue areas and would thereby be counted twice.

* Includes giving for folk arts, public arts, and cultural awareness.

years (2010, 2013, and 2014). The shifts in share between these two fields of activity from year to year could be due to the entry onto the scene of new and large arts funders, extraordinarily large grants, the contribution of valuable art collections, and new capital projects at museums.

Giving to performing arts.

In 2018, among a matched set of funders, performing arts grant dollars was down 1% compared to 2017, while the number of grants increased 5%. A total of 7,729 grants were awarded for the performing arts by foundations in the set — more than double the number reported for museums. In general, the average performing arts grant tends to be smaller in size than the average museum grant (around \$112,000 versus \$221,000 in 2018). The largest share of giving to the performing arts supported theaters and performing arts centers. Among the largest performing arts grant in the latest sample was a \$10 million general support award from the Community Foundation of Greater Memphis to Ballet Memphis. Included within the performing arts is support for performing arts education, which totaled \$54.8 million in 2018. For more detail of foundation grant dollars supporting other types of arts education, see "Giving to multidisciplinary arts."

Giving to museums.

In 2018, museums benefited from 3,228 grants totaling \$714 million awarded by the 1,000 largest foundations included in the Foundation 1000 data set. Nearly half of funding supported art museums. Among a matched set of funders,

grant dollars allocated to museums was down 8% between 2017 and 2018, while the number of grants declined 4%. The largest museum grant in 2018 was a \$48.9 million grant from Silicon Valley Community Foundation to the Flying Heritage and Combat Armor Museum.

Giving to the humanities.

In 2018, the humanities benefited from 1,871 grants totaling \$328 million awarded by the 1,000 largest foundations included in the Foundation 1000 data set.⁴ Funding for this area accounted for 10% of arts grant dollars in 2018, consistent with the share captured in 2017. Among a matched set of funders, grant dollars awarded for the humanities increased 8%, while the number of grants awarded was up 39%.

Giving to historic preservation.

Support for historic preservation declined 23% between 2017 and 2018 among a matched set of funders, while the number of grants awarded remained the same.⁵ Among the largest grants awarded for historic preservation in the latest year was a \$5 million grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to Equal Justice Initiative for the construction of a center of education, interpretation, and art at the National Memorial for Peace and Justice, and the development of programs that will disseminate knowledge about the history of slavery in the United States. Overall, historic preservation benefited from 1,318 grants totaling \$165.2 million in 2018.

Giving to multidisciplinary arts.

The share of arts giving for multidisciplinary arts went up to 19% in 2018 from 11% in 2017.⁶ Grant dollars awarded for multidisciplinary arts also increased 76% between 2017 and 2018 among the matched set of funders. Within multidisciplinary arts, arts services generally, defined as a provision of services to arts organizations, including facilities or touring assistance, saw a significant increase. Among the various subcategories of multidisciplinary arts, arts education (excluding performing arts education) totaled \$92 million in the latest year.

Giving to the visual arts.

Among a matched set of funders, grant dollars for the visual arts and architecture increased 37% between 2017 and 2018, while the number of grants for the field was up 6%. The visual arts and architecture benefited from \$229 million in 2018, including a \$4 million grant from the Bernard and

TABLE 1. Distribution of grants by support strategy, 2018

Support strategy	Dollar amount	%	No. of grants	%
Capacity-building and technical assistance	160,832,374	5.4	568	3.0
Capital and infrastructure	417,322,898	14.0	1,347	7.1
Building acquisitions	960,000	–	4	–
Building and renovations	189,187,374	6.3	385	2.0
Capital campaigns	86,442,087	2.9	255	1.3
Collections acquisitions	19,124,295	0.6	113	0.6
Collections management and preservation	15,534,439	0.5	25	0.1
Equipment	8,196,260	0.3	131	0.7
Facilities maintenance	4,800,996	0.2	9	–
Information technology	11,609,961	0.4	55	0.3
Land acquisitions	6,158,598	0.2	11	0.1
Rent	–	–	–	–
Other capital and infrastructure	100,149,411	3.3	431	2.3
Financial sustainability	189,794,065	6.3	755	4.0
Annual campaigns	25,107,753	0.8	119	0.6
Debt reduction	2,928,242	0.1	5	–
Earned income	145,000	–	4	–
Emergency funds	33,930,032	1.1	19	0.1
Endowments	101,780,830	3.4	136	0.7
Financial services	365,000	–	2	–
Fundraising	21,539,902	0.7	285	1.5
Sponsorships	7,563,945	0.3	27	0.1
Other financial sustainability	23,708,329	0.8	171	0.9
General support	745,868,643	24.9	5,057	26.5
Individual development and student aid	125,957,986	4.2	679	3.6
Leadership and professional development	41,447,058	1.4	199	1.0
Network-building and collaboration	77,665,592	2.6	385	2.0
Participatory grantmaking	400,000	–	1	–
Policy, advocacy, and systems reform	59,518,610	2.0	260	1.4
Advocacy	19,878,809	0.7	93	0.5
Coalition building	360,000	–	2	–
Equal access	25,013,708	0.8	140	0.7
Ethics and accountability	497,500	–	9	–
Grassroots organizing	625,000	–	8	–
Litigation	60,000	–	2	–
Public policy and systems reform	3,185,663	0.1	30	0.2
Other policy, advocacy, and systems reform	14,603,414	0.5	51	0.3
Publishing and productions	348,318,505	11.6	2642	13.9
Product and service development	2,361,160	0.1	15	0.1
Program support	714,436,680	23.9	4,451	23.3
Public engagement and marketing	125,936,034	4.2	399	2.1
Research and evaluation	78,997,094	2.6	202	1.1
Other specified strategies	119,129,625	4.0	284	1.5
Not specified	528,240,754	17.7	4,655	24.4
Total	2,989,899,989	100.0	19,074	100.0

Source: Candid, 2021. Based on all grants of \$10,000 or more awarded by 1,000 of the largest foundations representing approximately half of total giving by all US private and community foundations. Grants may occasionally be for multiple support strategies, e.g., for new works and for endowment, and would thereby be counted twice.

Anne Spitzer Charitable Trust to the City College of New York for the Bernard and Anne Spitzer School of Architecture.

Grants by Support Strategy

An important caveat to report with regard to the allocation of foundation dollars by specific support strategy is that for roughly one-fifth of arts grant dollars in the 2018 Candid sample, the support strategy could not be identified. This means that modest differences in percentages may not be reliable.⁷

The arts compared to other foundation fields of giving.

The three largest categories of support tracked by Candid are general operating support, program support, and capital support.

General operating support received the largest share of arts grants dollars in 2018 (25% of all arts funding). The shares of grant dollars and number of grants allocated for this support strategy in 2018 were higher for arts and culture (25% and 27%, respectively) than the overall share directed to general operating support by the Foundation 1000 foundations, which accounted for 19% of grant dollars and 22% of the number of grants.

Program support accounted for the second largest share of arts grant dollars in 2018 (24% of all arts funding). Special programs and projects typically receive one of the largest shares of arts and culture grant dollars and grants. In fact, the same is true in most of the major fields, such as health and education, where program support consistently accounts for one of the largest shares of funding.

Capital support accounted for the third largest share of arts grant dollars. Similar to general support, the share of grant dollars allocated for this type of support was also higher for arts and culture

TABLE 2. Arts grants by grant size, 2018

Grant range	No. of grants	%	Dollar amount	%
\$5 million and over	71	0.4	\$810,458,054	27.1
\$1 million – under \$5 million	453	2.4	774,077,922	25.9
\$500,000 – under \$1 million	581	3.0	362,906,089	12.1
\$100,000 – under \$500,000	3,302	17.3	628,599,154	21.0
\$50,000 – under \$100,000	2,952	15.5	181,671,077	6.1
\$25,000 – under \$50,000	4,174	21.9	128,053,190	4.3
\$10,000 – under \$25,000	7,541	39.5	104,134,503	3.5
Total	19,074	100.0	\$2,989,899,989	100.0

Source: Candid, 2021. Based on all grants of \$10,000 or more awarded by 1,000 of the largest foundations representing approximately half of total giving by all US private and community foundations.

TABLE 3. Twenty-five largest arts, culture, and media funders, 2018

Rank	Foundation	State	No. of arts grants	Arts grant dollars	Total grant dollars	Arts as % of total dollars	Arts capital support dollars	Arts other support dollars
1.	The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation	NY	261	\$192,902,274	\$310,707,774	62.1	\$29,971,000	\$181,992,274
2.	Silicon Valley Community Foundation	CA	465	150,488,180	1,946,989,438	7.7	325,000	8,146,037
3.	Greater Kansas City Community Foundation	MO	95	97,440,146	249,460,563	39.1	10,200	28,774,459
4.	Windgate Charitable Foundation, Inc.	AR	146	82,689,051	110,295,901	75.0	22,750,000	67,545,251
5.	Lilly Endowment Inc.	IN	76	73,002,997	509,982,399	14.3	3,051,756	69,400,951
6.	The Columbus Foundation	OH	252	55,691,333	170,259,769	32.7	56,212	54,227,770
7.	Bloomberg Philanthropies, Inc.	NY	20	40,755,700	560,123,788	7.3	22,750,000	17,574,700
8.	Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, Inc.	NY	64	39,928,600	88,183,842	45.3	10,000,000	29,393,600
9.	136 Fund	NY	3	39,000,000	39,000,000	100.0	-	38,750,000
10.	Walton Family Foundation	AR	62	37,266,810	480,632,074	7.8	-	34,709,894
11.	Eli & Edythe Broad Foundation	CA	19	37,184,478	153,502,455	24.2	1,000,000	36,975,328
12.	NoVo Foundation	NY	44	35,387,500	226,692,745	15.6	-	33,537,500
13.	Drue Heinz Trust	PA	8	35,158,451	37,750,451	93.1	-	35,158,451
14.	The Davee Foundation	IL	19	35,120,000	93,579,500	37.5	-	35,120,000
15.	Ford Foundation	NY	118	31,979,000	503,632,619	6.3	2,300,000	29,979,000
16.	The Grainger Foundation Inc.	IL	26	30,852,072	66,887,652	46.1	5,276,336	30,567,072
17.	Dodge Jones Foundation	TX	14	30,716,796	109,250,072	28.1	303,250	30,625,796
18.	Community Foundation of Greater Memphis	TN	174	28,933,871	200,542,919	14.4	6,146,782	25,474,219
19.	The San Francisco Foundation	CA	131	28,318,624	145,937,247	19.4	14,591,053	21,433,138
20.	The Shubert Foundation Inc	NY	484	27,925,000	29,525,000	94.6	-	27,870,000
21.	The Freedom Forum, Inc.	DC	1	26,583,292	34,787,030	76.4	-	26,583,292
22.	John S. and James L. Knight Foundation	FL	122	26,233,183	87,000,340	30.2	500,000	19,080,816
23.	The Brown Foundation, Inc.	TX	163	25,423,305	63,487,053	40.0	14,581,271	22,508,379
24.	The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation	CA	129	24,514,500	418,365,964	5.9	1,250,000	24,414,500
25.	Charles Stewart Mott Foundation	MI	12	24,089,490	122,674,079	19.6	19,750,000	4,339,490
	Total		2,908	\$1,257,584,653	\$6,759,250,674	18.6	\$154,612,860	\$934,181,917

Source: Candid, 2021. Based on all grants of \$10,000 or more awarded by 1,000 of the largest foundations representing approximately half of total giving by all US private and community foundations. Grants may provide capital support and other types of support. In these cases, grants would be counted in both totals. Figures include only grants that could be coded as providing specific types of support.

(14%) than for grants overall (8%). Grants for capital support are larger on average than awards for program and general operating support, and exceptionally large capital grants can have a pronounced effect on the distribution of funding by support strategy.

Arts grants by specific types of support.

Table 1 provides a breakdown of more specific support strategies within the larger support categories and lists both the specific dollar value and number of grants made in each type. As for all data in the "snapshot," it is important to keep in mind that this table includes only grants of \$10,000 or more awarded to organizations by a sample of the top 1,000 foundations by total giving. It is also important to note that about one-fifth of the arts grant dollars in this sample did not have a specified support strategy.

Grants by Grant Size

Median grant size.

The median or "typical" grant amount for arts and culture in 2018 was \$28,150, which was below the median amount for all foundation grants (\$35,000).⁸ While this is the fourth consecutive year that the median arts grant amount has exceeded \$25,000* more study would be required to determine whether this is a lasting upswing in the size of arts grants.⁹

Small and midsized grants.

Roughly two-thirds (61%) of all arts grants in the 2018 sample were for amounts between \$10,000 and \$49,999, nearly unchanged from the 2017 share. The share of midsized arts grants (\$50,000 to \$499,999) also remained consistent, accounting for one-third of arts grants.

TABLE 4. Top thirty-five foundations by share of arts giving out of overall giving, 2018

Rank	Foundation	State	Foundation type*	No. of arts grants	Arts grant dollars	Total grant dollars	Arts as % of total dollars	Arts capital support dollars**	Arts other types of support dollars**
1.	136 Fund	NY	CS	3	\$39,000,000	\$39,000,000	100.0	–	\$38,750,000
2.	Jerome Foundation Inc.	MN	IN	91	4,433,000	4,433,000	100.0	–	4,433,000
3.	Johnson Art and Education Foundation	NJ	IN	2	3,750,000	3,750,000	100.0	–	3,750,000
4.	Hsu Family Foundation Inc.	FL	IN	1	1,250,000	1,250,000	100.0	–	1,250,000
5.	The William C. and Susan F. Morris Foundation	NY	IN	1	100,000	100,000	100.0	–	100,000
6.	The Harriet and Esteban Vicente Foundation, Inc.	NY	IN	2	100,000	100,000	100.0	–	100,000
7.	The Querrey Simpson Charitable Foundation	FL	IN	1	31,441	31,441	100.0	–	31,441
8.	The Walt and Lilly Disney Foundation	CA	IN	4	9,399,901	9,534,901	98.6	–	100,000
9.	The SHS Foundation	NY	IN	56	5,802,300	6,052,300	95.9	25,000	2,862,300
10.	The Shubert Foundation Inc	NY	IN	484	27,925,000	29,525,000	94.6	–	27,870,000
11.	Muriel McBrien Kauffman Foundation	MO	IN	71	12,794,446	13,724,446	93.2	610,000	11,929,924
12.	Drue Heinz Trust	PA	IN	8	35,158,451	37,750,451	93.1	–	35,158,451
13.	Lloyd Rigler Lawrence E. Deutsch Foundation	CA	IN	8	5,892,590	6,337,590	93.0	–	–
14.	The Riggio Foundation	NY	IN	15	4,055,000	4,654,105	87.1	2,320,000	1,720,000
15.	Dunard Fund USA, Ltd.	IL	CS	14	2,920,474	3,429,875	85.1	–	2,920,474
16.	Howard Gilman Foundation	NY	IN	153	15,815,000	18,988,750	83.3	925,000	15,500,000
17.	J. Paul Getty Trust	CA	OP	107	8,631,000	10,601,222	81.4	2,635,307	8,380,500
18.	Ann and Gordon Getty Foundation	CA	IN	88	7,455,000	9,192,500	81.1	–	134,500
19.	Terra Foundation for American Art	IL	IN	38	9,085,182	11,273,477	80.6	35,000	7,112,346
20.	The Packard Humanities Institute	CA	OP	8	4,760,275	5,944,275	80.1	–	4,435,000
21.	The Christensen Fund	CA	IN	14	4,342,900	5,434,900	79.9	–	4,307,900
22.	The Florence Gould Foundation	NY	IN	31	4,348,110	5,501,047	79.0	524,460	3,698,110
23.	Bonfils-Stanton Foundation	CO	IN	48	2,627,500	3,392,500	77.5	810,000	1,917,500
24.	The Lee and Juliet Folger Fund	VA	IN	13	3,953,000	5,163,000	76.6	3,338,000	2,911,000
25.	The Freedom Forum, Inc.	DC	OP	1	26,583,292	34,787,030	76.4	–	26,583,292
26.	Arison Arts Foundation	FL	IN	37	17,053,599	22,403,599	76.1	–	17,053,599
27.	Windgate Charitable Foundation, Inc.	AR	IN	146	82,689,051	110,295,901	75.0	22,750,000	67,545,251
28.	Millicent and Eugene Bell Foundation	MA	IN	4	66,500	91,500	72.7	–	66,500
29.	The Sidney E. Frank Foundation	CA	IN	44	11,037,505	15,710,455	70.3	305,000	10,877,275
30.	The Goatie Foundation	OH	IN	11	6,025,000	8,955,000	67.3	4,025,000	5,135,000
31.	The Laurie M. Tisch Foundation, Inc.	NY	IN	57	12,922,500	19,915,431	64.9	3,350,000	5,420,000
32.	The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation	NY	IN	261	192,902,274	310,707,774	62.1	29,971,000	181,992,274
33.	O'Donnell Foundation	TX	IN	5	1,888,333	3,058,676	61.7	–	1,888,333
34.	The Hsieh Family Foundation	CA	IN	4	557,500	903,490	61.7	–	557,500
35.	First Horizon Foundation	TN	CS	127	3,634,710	5,896,417	61.6	–	3,609,710

Source: Candid, 2021. Based on all grants of \$10,000 or more awarded by 1,000 of the largest foundations representing approximately half of total giving by all US private and community foundations.

* IN = Independent; OP = Operating; CS = Corporate

** Grants may provide capital support and other types of support. In these cases, grants would be counted in both totals. Figures include only grants that could be coded as providing specific types of support.

Large grants.

The share of larger arts grants (\$500,000 and over) remained consistent, between 5–6% of the total number of arts grants in 2018. Their share of total grant dollars remained roughly the same accounting for 65%. Overall, foundations in the sample made 158 arts grants of at least \$2.5 million in 2018, up from 126 grants in 2017.

In addition to the \$10 million general support award from the Community Foundation of Greater Memphis to Ballet Memphis noted earlier, examples of other especially large grants in 2018 include Bloomberg Philanthropies \$20 million grant for support and maintenance for the Shed NYC, a cultural center that commissions, produces, and presents a wide range of activities in performing arts, visual arts, and pop culture; a \$5.4 million grant from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation

to the New England Foundation for the Arts to support the National Dance Project, which enables artists to create, present and tour new dance work; and a \$3 million award from the Avenir Foundation to the Denver Art Museum for the museum's Vision 2021 campaign.

The twenty-five largest arts funders.

The top twenty-five arts funders by giving amount provided 42% of the total arts dollars in Candid's 2018 sample, above the 38% share from 2017.

Overall, the share of giving accounted for by the top twenty-five arts funders has fluctuated between roughly 30–40% since the end of the 1990s.

Top foundations by share of arts giving out of overall giving.

Of the foundations that committed large percentages of their grant dollars to arts and culture, many are smaller foundations in the sample. Among the top one hundred foundations ranked by share of arts giving out of total giving, one-third (or 32 funders) gave less than \$5 million in total arts grant dollars in 2018.

Giving for international cultural exchange

Grant dollars supporting international cultural exchange was down 14% between 2017 and 2018 among a matched subset of funders. In 2018, foundations awarded 131 grants related to international cultural exchange totaling \$14.5 million. Among the larger awards was a \$1 million grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation for its USArtists International program which supports performances by US artists at impactful international festivals and performing arts marketplaces outside the United States and its territories.

Reina Mukai currently serves as manager on the Global Projects & Partnerships team at Candid (formerly Foundation Center and GuideStar). In this role, she works on a range of research and data-driven projects. Mukai has authored numerous reports on national, regional, and special-topic trends in the field of philanthropy, among them, Giving in Illinois, Arts Funding Snapshot: GIA's Annual Research on Support for Arts and Culture, and the Key Fact Sheet series. She also works with partners on custom data consulting services and research projects.

NOTES

1. Candid's 2018 Foundation 1000 set includes all grants of \$10,000 or more reported by 1,000 of the largest US independent, corporate, community, and grantmaking operating foundations by total giving. For community foundations, the set includes only discretionary grants and donor-advised grants (when provided by the funder). The set excludes grants to individuals. This set accounts for approximately half of giving by all of the roughly 86,000 active US-based private and community foundations. Grant amounts may represent the full authorized amount of the grant or the amount paid in that year, depending on the information made available by each foundation.
2. Between 2017 and 2018 the composition of the Foundation 1000 has changed, which could distort year-to-year fluctuations in grant dollars targeting specific issue areas. To account for these potential distortions year to year, Candid has analyzed changes in giving based on a subset of 839 funders for which we had 2017 and 2018 data.
3. Candid provides statistics based on share of number of grants, which are not skewed by exceptionally large grants.
4. Included within the humanities is funding for art history, history and archaeology, classical and foreign languages, linguistics, literature, philosophy, and theology.
5. Includes support for archaeology, art history, modern and classical languages, philosophy, ethics, theology, and comparative religion.
6. Includes support for multidisciplinary centers, arts councils, artist's services, arts administration, arts exchange, and arts education.
7. The grant records available to Candid often lack the information necessary to identify the support strategy. For example, it is often the case that the only source of data on grants is the 990-PF tax return, and this tends to be less complete than other forms of grant reporting.
8. The median — meaning that half of the grants are above and half are below the amount — is generally acknowledged to be a more representative measure of the typical grant than the mean or "average," because the median is not influenced by extreme high or low amounts.
9. Prior to 2015, the median amount had remained consistent at \$25,000 since the early 1990s.

Public Funding for the Arts 2020

Ryan Stubbs and Patricia Mullaney-Loss

Public funding for the arts in the US is allocated from federal, state, and local governments. Congressional allocations to the NEA, legislative appropriations to state arts agencies and local government funds going to local arts agencies reported in Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 provide useful indicators of public support for the arts and culture before the Covid-19 pandemic. Together, these agencies and organizations distribute grants and services to artists and cultural organizations across the nation.

2020 Funding Levels

The federal government, states, and localities appropriated a combined \$1.47 billion to the arts in FY2020, for a total per capita investment of \$4.42. Comprising this total were:

- \$162.3 million in appropriations to the NEA, an increase of 4.7% from FY2019.
- \$435.4 million in legislative appropriations to state and jurisdictional arts agencies (SAAs), an increase of 21% from FY2019.
- \$860.0 million in funds allocated by municipal and county governments to local arts agencies (LAAs),¹ which remained flat from FY2019.

Trends over Time

Before the pandemic, aggregate funding for the arts reached a new high water mark of the last two decades, an increase of almost 17% during the past 20 years. State and local funding patterns correlate with periods of economic growth and recession. After the longest economic expansion in recent history,² enacted appropriations almost surpassed the FY2001 funding levels (without

adjusting for inflation). Local funding reported maintaining a historic high point over the last two fiscal years. Federal funding for the NEA has displayed incremental growth after sustaining cuts during the last recession.

Public funding for the arts has not kept pace with inflation despite nominal increases. When adjusting for inflation, total public funding decreased by 19% during the past 20 years. In constant dollar terms, state arts agency appropriations decreased by 33%, local funding contracted by 14%, and federal funds have increased by 7%.

Serving a Growing Population

Inflation measures how far each dollar stretches today compared to decades past. Measuring public funding relative to the population shows how much each tax dollar is stretched to benefit all residents. As populations grow, public arts agencies need to serve more people. Combined, federal, state, and local arts funding yielded a per capita investment of \$4.42 per person in 2020. Federal, state, and local funding each contribute \$0.49, \$1.32, and \$2.61, respectively. Combined per capita appropriations have been increasing since 2012 and just surpassed nominal 2001 in FY2020. When taking inflation into consideration, total per capita appropriation equaled \$3.06 in 2020. This analysis shows that the decreasing value of the dollar, coupled with an increasing population, limits the services and programs public agencies can deliver to constituents.

Looking Forward and the Implications of Covid-19

Before the pandemic hit the US last February, the majority of states were expecting positive revenue increases to continue into FY2021. Following a decade of economic expansion, states were at an all-time aggregate high in rainy-day funds and were better off financially than they were before the Great Recession. However, in the wake of Covid-19, state revenues declined for the first time since the Great Recession. All states are experiencing or expecting significant budget cuts and the worse is yet to come as state tax collections and state spending are slower to respond to economic cycles. Since most states have balanced budget restrictions, cuts are expected to be as high as 15–20% in the next two fiscal years.³ The Center for Budget and Policy priorities estimates that state budget shortfalls could reach \$400 billion by FY2022,⁴ particularly if the federal government issues no further direct state relief.⁵ This estimate does not account for the rise in healthcare costs

FIGURE 1. Federal, state, and local government per capita appropriations, 2020

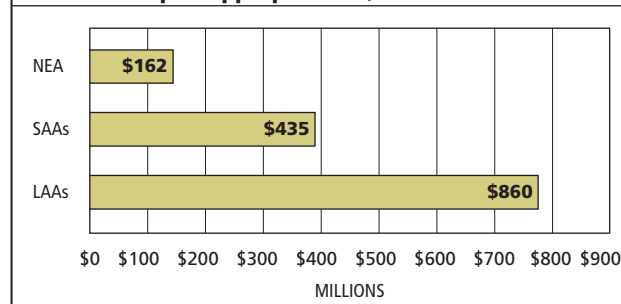
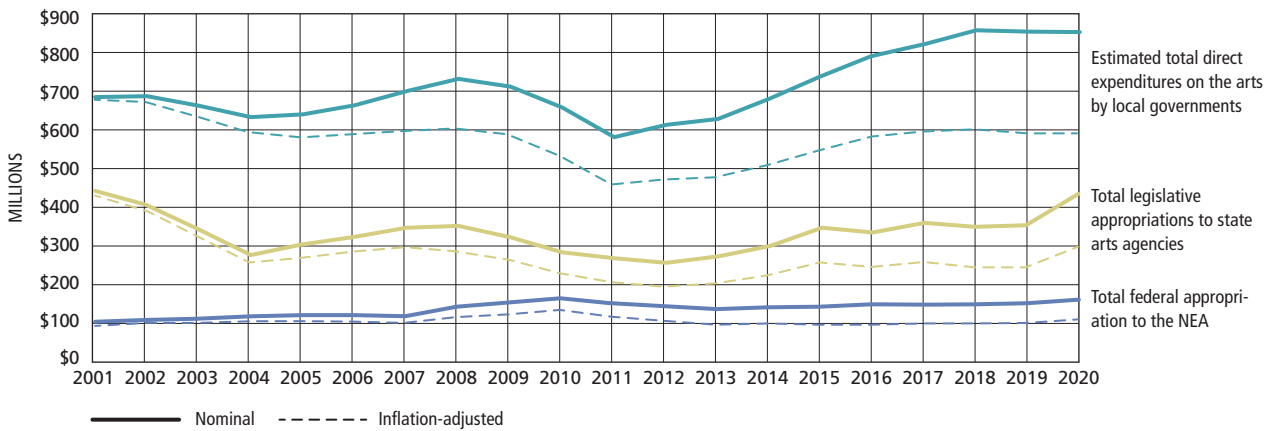


FIGURE 2. Federal, state, and local government arts funding, nominal and inflation-adjusted dollars, 2001–2020



Federal, state, and local government arts funding, nominal and inflation-adjusted dollars, 2001–2020. Inflation-adjusted figures are represented by corresponding lines below each source. Inflation adjustments are calculated using Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Price Index (CPI) figures with a base year of 2001.

related to Covid-19, nor the sustained assistance citizens need during the ongoing pandemic.

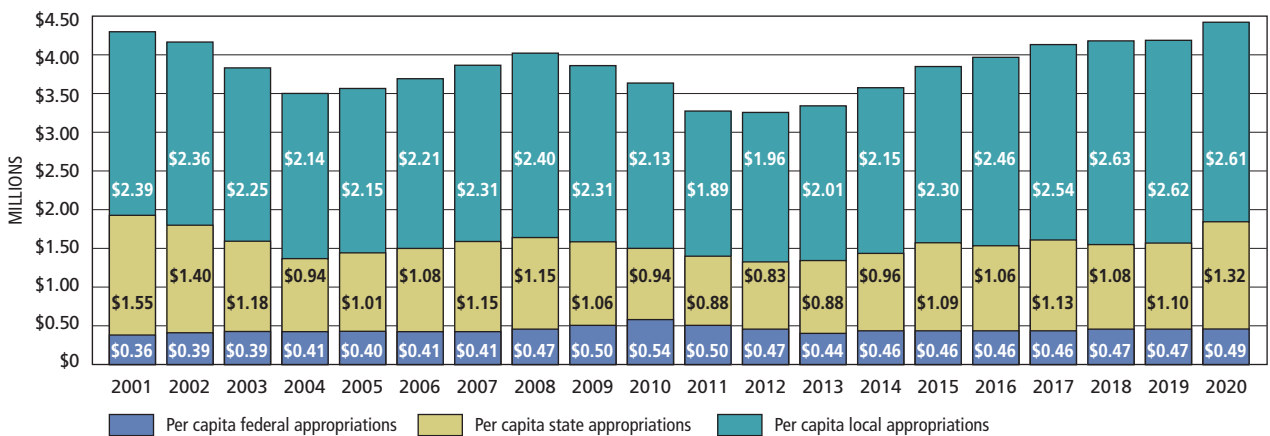
Appropriations to state art agencies are directly linked to state revenue. Based on preliminary estimates for FY2021, aggregate funding to states arts agencies is projected to significantly decrease. Thirty-six states will likely experience flat or decreased funding, compared to 17 in FY2020. Additionally, 32 states are expected to invest less than \$1.00 per capita for the arts.⁶

In Americans for the Arts’ Local Arts Agency 2019 Census, 64% of LAAs reported operating budgets increasing or remaining flat.⁷ However, given FY2020 and FY2021 financial realities, one can expect fewer budget increases for LAAs over the next few years. Most of LAA’s revenue is derived from earned or contributed income and from

local government revenue. All of these sources are expected to decrease in the wake of the recession. Local governments in particular have been hit hard with Covid-related expenses. According to a survey by the National League of Cities, general fund revenue growth was near zero in FY2020 and 90% of cities surveyed will be less able to meet the fiscal needs of residents.⁸

States and localities are looking to the federal government for relief and assistance during this crisis. At the time of this writing, the Congress has passed two Covid-relief bills, but has not passed a full FY2021 budget. The first stimulus bill, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act passed back in March, gave additional funds to the NEA for emergency grants and direct funding to states. Further details on how CARES funding has affected the arts and cultural sector is detailed below. Congress

FIGURE 3. Federal, state, and local government per capita appropriations, 2001-2020



Per capita appropriations from federal, state, and local government for the past 20 years showing consistently the largest proportion of funding coming from local government and the smallest proportion of funding coming from the federal government, per capita.

recently passed a second Covid stimulus bill that includes direct aid to individuals, but no additional aid for states and localities.

Federal support through the CARES Act has been an important part of the toolkit that federal and state governments are using to address losses caused by Covid-19 in the cultural sector. The CARES Act included \$75 million in funds distributed through the NEA granted to arts organizations directly. By law, 40% of those dollars were allocated to SAAs and regional arts organizations, which are regranting them through state level arts relief programs. Apart from these funds, the CARES Act also included \$150 billion in aid to states and localities. Some states elected to use some of these funds for grants or loans to mitigate economic harm caused by the pandemic. At the time of this publication, 29 states are in the process of tapping into this aid for the cultural sector. Most of these CARES Act dollars are going to emergency relief grants for organizations and individuals in the cultural sector. In the upcoming year, it is likely that more states will allocate portions of federal relief funding to arts institutions and artists, but that is also contingent on whether further federal relief is distributed states and localities in 2021.

Implications for Grantmaking

Over the last ten months, public and private sectors have had to adapt to new public health and economic realities. Aside from the additional federal assistance to the cultural sector described above, agencies at all levels of government have had to modify existing grant programs or quickly create new grants to serve organizations and individuals in crisis. Grantmaking adaptations due to the pandemic have yielded a range of strategies to serve constituents in need. Universally, SAAs allowed for flexibility in the administration of grant funds for programs that were suddenly unable to be conducted as originally conceived. Examples of adaptations included: allowing grantees to utilize project support for operating support; allowing for proposed programming to switch from in-person to online activities; extending deadlines over a longer period; and reducing matching requirements. At the federal level, the NEA allowed for flexibilities such as deadline extension and reasonable programmatic adjustments. Public funders are also grappling with the extent to which program adjustments should be continued in a post-Covid environment.

Before the pandemic, direct federal grants from the NEA totaled 2,227 at \$55.9 million in FY2019.

Another \$51.5 million, or about 40% of the NEA's appropriation, was awarded to state and regional agencies for further grantmaking and related services. SAAs awarded 24,984 grants and \$315.1 million in award dollars in FY2019 using a combination of state and federal funds.

In turn, state arts agencies work in partnership and provide funding and services with many local government arts agencies. SAAs invest almost \$37 million in local arts agencies. These grants help them secure additional public and private dollars at the local level.⁹ A large portion of SAA grants to local agencies (31%) is for operating support — flexible dollars that can be used to support community arts activities and operations in accordance with local needs and circumstances.¹⁰ In addition to funding performances, exhibitions, and other programs, some SAAs also fund decentralized grantmaking through local arts agencies.

Local governments invest more dollars on arts and culture when compared to states and the NEA, but LAAs are less likely to focus their services on grantmaking. According to the 2019 local arts agency census, 58% of local arts agencies operate direct grantmaking programs.¹¹ Larger percentages of LAAs support direct culture programming (84%) and manage cultural facilities (62%), while 28% also provide non-grant contracts to organizations.

Grantmaking across Sectors

Grantmaking across public and private sectors provide funding for a diverse array of programs, organizations, and services. However, there is not an exact alignment when comparing data. LAAs, for instance, do not currently use a standard data collection process across the nation. To understand relative investments across public and private funders, we can use published data from state arts agencies, the NEA, and Candid's 2018 data on the 1,000 largest foundations.

Like per capita calculations, analyzing the number and size of awards proves useful when assessing how public funds serve the entire population. The distribution of grants from publicly funded art agencies reflect the priority of reaching more communities across the country. In order to reach more constituents with the amount of appropriations a public entity receives, many of these grants will be small in size. To illustrate this, SAAs have a median award value of \$5,000. Although the median award amount from the NEA is \$20,000, 51% of all awarded NEA grants are less than \$25,000 in size. In contrast, the 1,000 largest foundation award

higher levels of grant dollars, 92% of which are above \$50,000.

Another important point of comparison is types of support strategies employed by public and private funders. Foundations and SAAs make significant grant investments in operating support. Foundations spent approximately 25% of their arts and culture grant dollars on operating support in 2018. In terms of the percentage of dollars invested, both foundations and SAAs make the largest commitment to operational support — 30.5% of state arts agency grant dollars and 20% of all state arts agency awards went to operational supporting FY2019.

Although the NEA's statute prohibits the agency from awarding operating support grants, over \$50 million dollars are invested in SAAs and regional art organizations. These dollars enable state and local arts agencies to make investments in operating support by increasing the total dollars agencies have available for grants and services.

Outside of operating support, it is possible to compare a few other grant categories and activity types. Foundations, SAAs, and the NEA all make investments in museums and arts education. A key contrast between public and private sectors is investment in capital construction and physical infrastructure. Foundations bear the load for funding physical cultural infrastructure in the US, with 14% of foundation grant dollars going to capital and infrastructure.

Another challenging topic for grantmakers is investment in individual artists and fellowships.¹² At the local level, 39% award grants to individual artists and 42% of LAAs provide non-grant contracts to individual artists. In FY2019, state arts agencies made 2,600 awards to individual artists.¹³ When compared to other types of applicants, awards to individual artists were the second most frequent type of award made by SAAs. The NEA makes a few selected investments in individual artists — through National Heritage Fellows, Jazz Masters, and Literature Fellowships — but is otherwise statutorily restricted from awarding grant funds to individual artists. Private foundations also fund individuals, but comparison data is not available.

Private and public funders fulfill different roles within the arts and cultural ecosystem. This complimentary array of support strategies is necessary for the cultural sector to thrive. While the private sector provides the lion's share of support, public funds support different grantmaking patterns to reach the needs of their constituencies and public mandates.¹⁴ Government support at the federal, state, and local levels makes access to arts and culture across the nation possible.

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NOTES

1. Americans for the Arts substantially changed the methodology for collecting local arts agency investments through the local arts agency census in 2016. Annual estimates are used prior to 2011 and after 2016.
2. <https://www.nber.org/research/data/us-business-cycle-expansions-and-contractions>
3. <http://budgetblog.nasbo.org/budgetblogs/blogs/shelby-kerns1/2020/09/08/state-revenues-decline-for-first-time-since-the-gr>
4. <https://www.cbpp.org/research/state-budget-and-tax/pandemics-impact-on-state-revenues-less-than-earlier-expected-but>
5. <http://budgetblog.nasbo.org/budgetblogs/blogs/shelby-kerns1/2020/09/08/state-revenues-decline-for-first-time-since-the-gr>
6. Trend data on legislative arts funding in every state and jurisdiction can be found at https://nasaa-arts.org/nasaa_research/8306/.
7. https://www.americansforthearts.org/sites/default/files/pdf/2019/networks_and_councils/local_arts_network/profile/2019_LocalArtsAgencyProfile_FullReport_FINAL.pdf
8. NCL, City Fiscal Conditions 2020 https://www.nlc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/City_Fiscal_Conditions_2020_FINAL.pdf
9. <https://nasaa-arts.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/LAA-Grant-Making-Fact-Sheet.pdf>
10. National Assembly of State Arts Agencies, Support for Local Arts Agencies, FY2019. https://nasaa-arts.org/nasaa_research/laa-grant-making-fact-sheet/
11. Americans for the Arts, Local Arts Agency Profile, 2019 https://www.americansforthearts.org/sites/default/files/pdf/2019/networks_and_councils/local_arts_network/profile/2019_LocalArtsAgencyProfile_FullReport_FINAL.pdf
12. Grantmakers in the Arts, Support for Individual Artists <http://www.giarts.org/support-individual-artists>
13. NASAA, State Arts Agency Support for Individual Artist Fact Sheet https://nasaa-arts.org/nasaa_research/indivartistgrantmakingfactsheet0316/
14. Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Better Together; Public and Private Funding for the Arts, Pam Breaux <https://mellon.org/resources/shared-experiences-blog/better-together-public-and-private-funding-arts/>

Centered. Elevated. Celebrated. Well Resourced. Welcome to Nonprofit Wakanda.

David McGoy

This piece was originally published in the inaugural issue of Nonprofit Wakanda Quarterly, an independent and free space for Black people who work or who are involved in the nonprofit sector to dream, aspire, interrogate, and express, freely.

More than anything, Nonprofit Wakanda Quarterly is a platform for authentic, meaningful dialogue. Be clear, the vision for a Nonprofit Wakanda, much like many of our visions for the sector, is a space where Black folx are celebrated, recognized, and given agency. We are not going to spend time on the Wakanda reference; y'all know. Much like Wakanda, though, true racial and gender equity the nonprofit sector is fictitious, so we must dream, imagine, and then reimagine what a Nonprofit Wakanda looks, feels, tastes, smells, sounds, and pays like...we hold this space to share our own visions and in time, when we create our desired future, our history of struggle and achievement will have been precisely and accurately recorded.

• • •

Our goal is simple: provide space for Black nonprofit leaders to flex their intellectual muscles in a way that will truly move the sector forward. We are more committed to that goal than being the holders of the space; we await your bigger and better ideas so we can shift to that. Until then, Nonprofit Wakanda forever! We love you, we pray this space will be a blessing and reflect the abundance that flows through our melanated communities in New York City.

*— In struggle, with love and solidarity,
Nonprofit Wakanda Quarterly
George Suttles*

• • •

"For those of you familiar with the 2018 Marvel movie 'Black Panther,' Wakanda is a fictional African country where, in all of its glory, Blackness is centered, elevated, celebrated, and well resourced."

— Founding Members of Nonprofit Wakanda Quarterly

Centered. Elevated. Celebrated. Well Resourced.

THAT'S what I'm talking about.

Right now, we're far from that. We're fragmented, embattled, and under-resourced. But let's not dwell on the current state. The purpose of this exercise is to focus on the desired state — the place where we're headed.

We are headed towards a state of self-sufficiency, ownership, and measurable, population-level change. That's right, my fellow Black nonprofit professionals: in the end, this is all about results. It's about creating a nonprofit ecosystem that is designed to live out its usefulness, not perpetuate its power and influence. We aren't fighting poverty, cancer, mass incarceration, homophobia, climate change, or anything else, for its own sake. We don't want to fight these things forever,

**That's the first feature of Nonprofit
Wakanda: We are centered. It's about us.
For us. It's about our communities, and for
our communities. It is about our people,
and for our people.**

even though we will if we have to. We're fighting these things so that we can eradicate them, so that one day, whatever the fight may be, we no longer have to fight it.

So, what does that look like?

First of all, it looks like us. "Us" being whoever the people are who are most affected. In this instance, when I say "us" I'm talking about Black people, and I reference our unique journey through slavery and oppression in America to distinguish us from other segments of the social justice movement.

That's the first feature of Nonprofit Wakanda: We are centered. It's about us. For us. It's about our communities, and for our communities. It is about our people, and for our people. Black people. African Americans. I also include Caribbean Americans, whose colonizers simply landed a little farther south, and Native Americans, our kindred spirits, who were victimized by white oppression even before we were, among our number. But that's it.

In Nonprofit Wakanda, we don't have to ask white people for anything. Fuck a grant. In Nonprofit Wakanda, nonprofits have endowments, awarded as reparations for the struggle that I and my people have been through for over 400 years. This investment gives nonprofit leaders of color the stability and flexibility — the FREEDOM — to be creative and innovative about how they pursue their missions. It allows them to become disruptors and change agents, instead of remaining complicit to the white power structure of philanthropy, for the sake of a balanced budget or a paycheck. It untethers them from the shackles of year-to-year grant cycles and the burden of managing ten, twenty, or thirty grantee relationships while constantly having to build new ones.

Foundations are sitting on nearly a trillion dollars of wealth, much of it having been built on the backs of enslaved people and through centuries of organized, coordinated, and legalized oppression. In Nonprofit Wakanda, those dollars are OUR dollars, and our voices, BLACK voices, are at the table where grant decisions are being made. We're in the room where grantmaking strategies are being formed, approved, and hopefully, reimaged. And not only are we at that table, we are the majority. The grantmaking landscape cannot reform or improve itself without our perspective, our lived experience, or input and expertise. We are what is missing.

That's the next feature of Nonprofit Wakanda: We are elevated and celebrated. We are beautiful, powerful and magnificent. Even more so because of our struggles in this country and our dignity and resilience through them. Wherever we go and whatever we do, we add flavor — and, yes, color — to what came before us. We've seen it in every walk of life. All of the Black pioneers throughout history — entertainment, arts, science, sports, politics — somehow reinvented and elevated their craft. Now it's our time, my fellow Black nonprofit professionals, to elevate ourselves in the work that we do. It's time to put ourselves, our collective Self, before every and anything else. Only then will we reach Nonprofit Wakanda, which is not a place, but a state of being, in which Black-endowed foundations are funding nonprofits with Black leaders that provide programs and services for Black people in Black communities. For us, by us, about us.

In Nonprofit Wakanda we are unapologetic about our independence and self-determination.

We lead with justice and righteousness and we are uncompromising in our commitment to achieving both — in ourselves, our communities, and society.

That's the final feature of Nonprofit Wakanda: We are well-resourced. We already have everything that we need to achieve this state. We don't have to ask for anything from anyone. The resources are here. They are ours. Many of them lie within each of us, and the ones that don't are

Foundations are sitting on nearly a trillion dollars of wealth, much of it having been built on the backs of slaves and through centuries of organized, coordinated, and legalized oppression.

ours for the taking. We are our best resource. Not only because of our lived and professional experience, knowledge, skills, and attributes, but also because of our legacy of struggle in this country, struggle that always ends in triumph. The only barrier between us and victory is the work that we have to put in to claim what is ours, so we can use our resources for the greater good. Because even though Nonprofit Wakanda is for us, by us and about us, it ultimately benefits everyone.

In 400 years, we have lost many battles. Many soldiers and martyrs have fallen, and there has been far too much collateral damage. But make no mistake about it: we are winning this war, and the tide is turning in our favor. Today we are fighting a battle for the heart, soul, mind, conscience, and resources of the nonprofit sector. Let's go get it!

To learn more about *Nonprofit Wakanda Quarterly*, and to read the complete inaugural issue, visit the GIA website at <https://www.giarts.org/blog/carmen-graciela-diaz/nonprofit-wakanda-quarterly-what-were-reading>.

David McGoy is a writer, consultant, trainer, presenter, and coach with over 25 years of experience in nonprofit management, fundraising, development, governance, and philanthropy. He is founder and president of ASSIST Development Consulting, host/moderator for Black Funders Forum, and a proud member of NYC's strong and growing "Nonprofit Wakanda" network.

DEI Work is Governance Work

Jim Canales and Barbara Hostetter

As with many of our foundation peers, the Barr Foundation has been grappling with what 2020 demands of us. This year has brought a global pandemic with devastating health and economic impacts as well as the fraying of civil discourse and public trust in government and democracy. Simultaneously, our country is facing a long overdue national reckoning with systemic racism and anti-Blackness. At Barr, this is all leading us to ask ourselves some fundamental questions: How do we best live out our values? How do we advance our philanthropic mission in this context? In order to meet this moment, what needs to change in what we do and how we do it?

These questions have been at the center of each of the four (virtual) trustee meetings we have held since mid-March. And our discussions have led us to affirm three principles to guide Barr's work at this moment and for the years ahead:

- We must be unequivocal about our foundation's commitment to racial equity.
- We must view this as a long-term commitment.
- We must expand our commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) with a focus on anti-racism.

It was also clear to us that Barr will need to significantly expand our grantmaking in the years ahead — both through augmented investments in our core programs and to support new efforts that explicitly advance racial equity.

Since we published on Barr's blog about these commitments, several of our foundation peers asked what it took for our board to embrace these directions. It's an important question because, for our board to get to the point of being able to make these decisions, we need to look back to "the before times," before 2020, and to what, for us has been an intentional journey many years in the making. As the two of us — partners as a board chair and a foundation president — reflect on that journey, and on the critical conditions that have enabled our progress, we share three lessons that may be useful to others as well:

First, ensure your board reflects diversity of voices, perspectives, and life experiences.

In philanthropy and the nonprofit sector, we often focus our discussions about board diversity on demographic characteristics, and those are absolutely essential. Indeed for Barr, the decision to broaden our board beyond its co-founders was linked to an express commitment to greater diversity of race, ethnicity, and gender.

We are still a small board today, with seven directors, three of whom are family members. Our board today consists of a majority of women and 43% people of color. But beyond that, our trustees bring varied life experiences

We have also been intentional about building a board whose members actually don't share a deep history together. We recognize that, while pre-existing relationships can make board members feel more comfortable with each other more quickly, they can also lead to insular thinking and even inhibit open dialogue, where new ideas and expansiveness should be the goals.

and perspectives to our deliberations, from trustees who have worked directly on anti-gang violence initiatives to leading a community development corporation focused on Latino communities, to chairing a city-wide racial equity fund.

These diverse backgrounds and networks enrich board deliberations and keep us grounded in the opportunities, needs, and concerns within the varied communities we aim to support. It also means our board members bring a certain credibility, authority, and voice that can speak directly to this moment we are in. As one tangible illustration, we share this heartfelt and powerful letter by one of Barr's trustees, Lee Pelton, following the murder of George Floyd.

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can make board members feel more comfortable with each other more quickly, they can also lead to insular thinking and even inhibit open dialogue, where new ideas and expansiveness should be the goals.

Second, don't delegate diversity, equity, and inclusion work.

For over two years now, our organization has been on a journey to more deeply understand the ways in which diversity, equity, and inclusion plays out in our work, both in regard to our internal culture and our grantmaking strategies and priorities. Over this time, we have developed shared vocabulary, assessed our intercultural competencies (both individually and as an organization), deepened our understanding of structural racism and anti-Blackness and how they manifest in our society (and in institutions like ours), and applied our learning to various facets of our work.

At every step of this journey, the two of us have been personally engaged. As president, Jim has served as an active member of Barr's internal DEI working group, and as board chair, Barbara has participated in all of our trainings, retreats, and all-staff work sessions. We have done this not only because we seek to learn and grow ourselves, but because we believe this work simply does not work when

know that this continuing, shared work is the essential work for our institution to undertake at this time.

Third, commit to authenticity, vulnerability, and to engaging in challenging and uncomfortable conversations.

One of the early findings in our work on DEI was that our "culture of politeness" was a barrier to open, honest, and difficult — but essential — conversations. The power dynamics of the two of us being in these discussions didn't make it any easier.

To our staff's credit, they did not shy away from pushing these harder conversations — even with us in the room. And I hope we too played a role by demonstrating curiosity, probing for more detail when warranted, and allowing our own vulnerability and uncertainty to be expressed and seen by all. As challenging and difficult as some of the discussions have been, we are becoming a better organization because of them.

Engaging in DEI as a foundation requires that our staff and board confront their own privilege, and interrogate the power we hold as gatekeepers to the foundation's resources. We also must consider what organizational practices may work against our commitments to equity. Requiring grant seekers to have a minimum annual budget size as a precondition for support is one example of the types of practices we are taking a close look at. And all of this is just a start, as we explore who benefits and who is marginalized by our grantmaking, and by our choices of vendors, consultants, or researchers.

We share these reflections in an effort to encourage others to do the same. There is certainly much for all of us to learn from each other, and there is a great deal of work still to be done.

What is eminently clear to us, however, is that absent the active engagement of foundation board members and leadership in DEI work, change will not take hold in our institutions. Let's be sure to seize this moment to make it otherwise.

Jim Canales is president and trustee of the Barr Foundation.

Barbara Hostetter is board chair and co-founder of the Barr Foundation.

For more, visit <https://www.barrfoundation.org>.

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it is treated as something for the staff to do on their own, and for leadership merely to be informed about and affirm. Leadership's active sponsorship of and direct engagement with this work is vital and necessary. It demonstrates institutional buy-in and commitment, and it leads to stronger relationships, more open discussions, and a better workplace.

While proud of our progress, we have much more to learn and to do. And our trustees

The Equity Builder Loan Program

Looking Toward Autonomy and Freedom from the Crisis Cycle

Quinton Skinner

Over the course of decades of working with nonprofits, particularly arts- and community-based organizations, we've seen an unfortunate pattern emerge. With the regularity of waves, many nonprofits move in and out of cycles of fiscal instability. The factors are familiar and well-known: drops in earned revenue for various reasons, often out of leaders' control; shifts in the priorities of donors; turmoil in staffing and leadership; and restrictions placed on funds.

We see these cycles of financial crisis, and we take what steps we can to respond to them. But we also know our tactics are reactive, and at times it feels as though we're plugging one hole in anticipation of another opening.

In 2015, Propel Nonprofits began a program designed to address the cycle of crisis by incentivizing cash savings and the possibilities for stability that we believe spring from fiscal reserves. The Equity Builder loan program was a three-year collaborative partnership, which enjoyed the participation of 21 nonprofit arts organizations in Minnesota, with the ultimate goal of contributing to their autonomy and service to their communities.

This experiment was intended to be targeted toward finding solutions for long-term problems. Along the way, the unexpected calamity of the Covid-19 pandemic also brought into stark focus the immediacy of unpredictable and unprecedented challenges for nonprofits. We find evidence that savings, practices, and tools make a difference in the face of short-term shocks as well as long-range stability.

Along with fiscal health, Equity Builder sought to strengthen fiscal management and leadership practices for the participating nonprofits, as well as increase their capacity for adaptation and risk. Along with opportunity for stabilizing internal structures, financial strength also enables the vigor of these organizations as community anchors.

Ultimately, the word equity has two vital meanings, both important and, in this case,

intrinsically connected to one another. Fiscal health in the form of equity and cash reserves is crucial to culturally explicit arts nonprofits. And, social equity is at the core of what these organizations are pursuing in this moment — which is vital to the health of all communities.

The question we ask is: can we help advance the latter by way of the former?

The Genesis of Equity Builder

The conceptual roots of Equity Builder extend back to the seminal work on capitalization done by Grantmakers in the Arts.¹ These ideas came to the fore with the 2015 report from the DeVos Institute on Arts Management, which evaluated the finances of a range of culturally specific nonprofits from around the country and compared them to their larger institutional counterparts. The BIPOC-led nonprofits in the study were found to have smaller budgets, with more precarious finances prone to cycles of crisis, and a much smaller share of revenue and income from the kind of unrestricted funds associated with individual donors.

There wasn't much to dispute. These findings were in line with observations made for decades across the nonprofit funding community. But the report went on to make recommendations that sparked a less affirmative reaction.

The report recommended to grantmakers that they consolidate their giving and fund allocation to a smaller number of culturally explicit

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organizations deemed stronger and more likely to endure. This felt like advice — pick winners, basically — that we disagreed with. It meant putting a finger on the scales, promoting the fortunes of those deemed likely to survive while forcing others to find new funding models, by necessity, or disappear altogether. It also largely

overlooked the intrinsic and distinct value of organizations based in their communities.

It didn't feel right. To help formulate a reply, the next year Propel asked the National Center for Arts Research (NCAR) to produce a report specifically on Minnesota's community-based arts nonprofits. The report concluded that nonprofits serving constituencies of color tend to be younger in institutional age, and that they operate with lower revenue and budgets. Propel built on these insights in our own report incorporating NCAR's findings.

A crucial insight emerged from this data: many of these nonprofits could be viewed holistically as part of the larger ecosystem. From this vantage, they are, in some cases, existing in an earlier stage of their life cycle than their non-BIPOC peers. And with the realities of funding disparities, BIPOC organizations are historically undercapitalized as a result of systemic funding models.

This viewpoint leads to the conclusion that it's unfounded, as well as premature, to regard these organizations as expendable on the basis of fiscal instability. And that this disregard also fails to account for the historical and contemporary factors of inequity and exclusion that are inseparable from their fiscal conditions — as well as their very reason for being.

Again, in this case it seems to be no accident of language that "equity" describes strength and stability, adaptability and possibility, and better fortune for our society.

How It Worked

We understood that any initiative aiming to bolster fiscal resilience for culturally explicit arts nonprofits would have to be holistic and collaborative in its programmatic basis. And these qualities don't happen overnight.

In order to understand, and be able to share, our successes and failures, the process would

have to have guidelines as well as a defined beginning and end. From this, the three-year scope of Equity Builder emerged.

The foundational structure of the program was based on flexible-use loans of \$50,000 to \$200,000, structured based on unique factors within each particular organization and repay-

able over three years. The second brick in the foundation: 20–30% of these loans was directly convertible to grants that produced cash savings in the form of long-term strategic fiscal reserves. Here, loan forgiveness contributing to long-term financial equity was directly tied to organizations developing their own culture of monthly savings.

The major funders who embarked on this adventure with us

were the Kresge Foundation, Bush Foundation, Surdna Foundation, and the Patrick and Aimee Butler Family Foundation.

This was also an opportunity to deepen our reciprocal relationships with each of the 21 participants. One of the criteria for selecting potential participants was a sense that their undercapitalization was impeding their capacity to fully deliver on their missions and community leadership. Strong capitalization thus was seen as connecting the dots between fiscal stability and governance and realization of vision.

Along with cash benefits, Propel worked in a customized manner with each on fiscal management tools including training and support, guidance with budgets and planning, peer learning through cohort events, and strategies geared toward savings and fiscal stability from staff to leadership to the board level.

There was a lot of excitement from Propel staff in the planning stages onward. This was an opportunity for benefits to accrue in both directions. Along with exploring a new approach to funding and investment, we wanted to encourage a new way of thinking about the inexorable



A gathering of Equity Builder Loan Program participants, of diverse sizes, programs, and geographies, discussing how to shift approaches to their financial operations. Photo courtesy of Propel Nonprofits.

connection between fiscal and organizational stability and solidity.

The Process

The incentivized, loan-to-grant structure of Equity Builder led to organizations beginning to set aside monthly sums from the earliest months. In conversations and reviews including the use of an outside consultant, Propel learned that some leaders were connecting this growing

With the beginnings of a paradigm shift toward cash savings also came opportunities for shifting some internal practices.

cash reserve to building confidence in their own leadership, as well as beginning to envision the possibility of taking greater risks from a position of financial stability.

“The part of the agreement that required us to put some of our own money into the savings account seems like such a simple idea,” says Betsy Roder, executive director of the New York Mills Cultural Center, located in a small community in western Minnesota. “But we weren’t doing that in practice. It really did build the habit of saving.”

Roder also relates what several leaders describe as a “too good to be true” reaction when first hearing of the terms of Equity Builder, particularly in conversations with their boards. This was to be expected — especially with board members who operate under the assumption that nonprofits should “zero out” their finances each year (a mentality that can come from both the nonprofit as well as the private sectors, and one that needs to be met with careful explanation of the power of cash reserves and equity).

Propel also made \$13,000 infrastructure grants to each of the participating Equity Builder organizations — a one-time operating gift applied equally and noncompetitively, disbursed automatically without application process or review. These funds were put to a variety of uses, including office furniture and equipment, ticketing and patron service systems, entertainment items for fundraising and development, and sound and technical equipment.

As the program moved forward, relationships between Propel and the participants, some

already decades in the making, deepened even more. With the beginnings of a paradigm shift toward cash savings also came opportunities for shifting some internal practices.

“I would meet once a week with Propel,” says David Hamilton, executive director of the Minneapolis multicultural performance venue Cedar Cultural Center. “They would help me understand how our financial statements worked, and they gave advice on some processes and some challenges I was having with the structure of our board. Having that support was like a validation for me to do what I needed.”

This lattice of deepening trust and mutual learning was also enhanced through the development of peer cohorts, where some relationships developed between participating members’ leadership. Along the way, it became important to keep in mind the necessity of meeting each organization where it happened to be at that moment in time, because change inevitably occurred on a number of levels.

Adaptation and Evolution

If change is the only constant, the nonprofit world is a place to find ample evidence. Many things were not the same from the beginning of the three-plus-year Equity Builder term to its conclusion. Fifteen of the 21 participating organizations underwent major organizational events or crises during this time including: serious financial challenges, leadership changes, issues around the #MeToo movement, and impactful shifts in staffing and mission.

And in 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic impacted many arts organizations with a large-scale and unanticipated crisis that strained finances and operations exposing deep structural challenges. In some cases, the cash reserves begun three years prior with Equity Builder were there to help.

“From a cash equity point of view, the program was a lifesaver,” says Carolyn Payne, the executive director of Minneapolis’ Soo Visual Arts Center, frequent host to work by BIPOC artists. “I don’t know that we could be open today if they hadn’t included us in that opportunity.”

This meant that there had to be nimble footwork all around. At the same time, internally at Propel we started to confirm that our culture of “we’ll figure it out as we go along” wasn’t

best serving our staff or the organizations we worked with.

But there were also positive takeaways. Because our relationship with each nonprofit within Equity Builder was customized, we were able to make adaptive responses to substantial changes. Because we placed a fundamental emphasis on relationships, trust built throughout the process enabled continuity in building cash reserves and taking advantage of cohort learning and other educational resources.

Cohort meetings were a venue for some BIPOC leaders to be in the same room when they otherwise wouldn't be, an invaluable opportunity for both learning and the power of shared experience.

By the end, many participants reported a true and concrete shift in their viewpoints on fiscal stewardship. Cash saving became a regular part of the monthly plan.

And greater resilience can take many forms. SooVAC's Payne reports applying skills she learned with Propel to serve as treasurer for a Twin Cities dance group. Roder's Cultural Center sold one building and paid off two mortgages as part of a years-long effort at improving fiscal stability that led to even more cash savings. These examples are not to credit Propel, but to demonstrate the effects of a financial equity mindset that grows, shares, and is better positioned to serve in times of challenge.

Fiscal and management practices aimed at long-term stability counteract long histories of year-to-year, month-to-month, crisis-to-crisis survival and a perception of scarcity that can accompany it. These nonprofits have important work to do, and they need the time and solid ground under their feet to do it.

What We Learned

We consider Equity Builder a success. It was complicated, demanding, and ambitious for everyone involved. Our execution was far from perfect. We learned by doing, and it was difficult.

Equity Builder was, in a sense, 21 different, highly customized versions of the same plan. This was both a strength and a weakness. With the benefit of hindsight, if we started over, we'd begin by emphasizing at the outset a diagnostic process to understand as much as possible where each organization was in terms of these building blocks:

- Capacity for analyzing financials;
- Rigorous, accurate cash-flow projections;
- The board's understanding of nonprofit finance and management;
- Plans and procedures for consistent cash flow;
- Leadership management and governance; and
- Effective fundraising and development.

It is vitally important to meet each nonprofit where they happen to be, and clarity of understanding makes this possible. Like everything

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else in Equity Builder, this kind of diagnostic process has to be collaborative. We encountered advanced levels of operations in these aspects with some organizations, while others were more basic. Within the understanding of the life cycle of the nonprofit, greater clarity makes for more in-depth conversations about where leadership wishes to place their efforts in terms of fiscal soundness and future health and stability.

We also learned that we had to be realistic. Some of the Equity Builder Participants communicated with us a lot, checked in often, and were scrupulously observant of financial goal points. Predictably, we liked that a lot. But others were less engaged, and we didn't hear from them as much.

Some organizations reported to our evaluation consultant that Equity Builder had a deep and significant impact. We liked that very much. But others didn't. We were able to learn from all kinds of feedback, which will inform what we do in the future.

We learned that some things on our end were less than helpful. During Equity Builder, Propel Nonprofits was formed out of the merger of two pre-existing organizations. From experience, we do not recommend launching a large and ambitious new program in the midst of an

internal merger and physical moving of two staffs into one space.

We also didn't specifically staff for Equity Builder, which in retrospect was a mistake. We simply underestimated our capacity for balancing this new workload with our pre-existing

We also didn't specifically staff for Equity Builder, which in retrospect was a mistake. We simply underestimated our capacity for balancing this new workload with our pre-existing portfolios of responsibility.

portfolios of responsibility. We had no shortage of staff enthusiasm for the program, but we weren't properly realistic about the fact that, for many of us, it added 15 hours of work per week to already packed schedules. Related to this was a lack of internal clarity about who was "in charge" of Equity Builder, which would have been cleared up by dedicated staffing.

Our work could have been stronger in diversity, equity, and inclusion in the BIPOC-led organizations we worked with. We didn't acknowledge the disparities these nonprofits experience when we made across-the-board infrastructure grants. And in learning by doing, we saw the ways in which a White-led organization with good intentions can perpetuate damage through language, communication, and action. While Propel's own diversity, equity, and inclusion work has grown internally over these last three years, our challenge continues to be building equity in both senses of the word — with any steps toward success including naming, noticing,

and recognizing these intentions in relationships with BIPOC leaders and staff.

Like any initiative worth repeating, the end for us feels like a beginning. Equity Builder can serve as an experienced voice in the conversation about mission-based nonprofits, in the arts and otherwise, and how they can look forward to a more solid future.

Few in the funding community need to be convinced that these organizations are important, and that they play a pivotal role in a society that is bending in an arc of equity and social justice. Their autonomy and vision benefit us all. And their thriving enables us to picture a future in which they are the established, well-funded, stable, and revered institutions that can serve as examples and exemplars for generations to come.

Quinton Skinner is and author of numerous works of fiction and non-fiction. His essays, journalistic features, and criticism have appeared in Variety, Glamour, Huffington Post, Delta Sky, American Theatre, Experience Life, Minnesota Monthly, Mpls-St. Paul Magazine, Literary Hub, Minneapolis Star Tribune, St. Paul Pioneer Press, Speakeasy, City Pages, METRO Magazine, and others. Skinner is co-founder of Logosphere Storysmiths, an agency specializing in writing for business startups, nonprofits, corporations, and individuals.

NOTES

1. Grantmakers in the Arts defines capitalization as "the accumulation of the resources an organization needs to fulfill its mission over time," specifically with regard to financial health. In response to the observation that it has been the norm for the nonprofit arts sector to be poorly capitalized, an issue which disproportionately affects ALAANA organizations, GIA embarked on the National Capitalization Project (NCP) in 2010. To learn more about the Grantmakers in the Arts' Conversations on Capitalization and Community workshops, visit <https://www.giarts.org/arts-funding/capitalization>.
2. Learn more about the Equity Builder Loan Program at <https://www.propelnonprofits.org/equity-builder-loan-program/> and follow us on Twitter at @PropelNP/#EquityBuilder.

Equity. Equity. Equity.

Shaunda McDill

In William Faulkner's novel, *As I Lay Dying*, a young character by the name of Vardaman is allowed to believe that his "mother is a fish," because no one takes the time to tell him that his mother is dead. Instead he associates what he witnesses with the reality he understands within a highly dysfunctional family. In the novel, he repeats, "fish. fish. fish." Similarly, I would offer that we are currently operating in a highly dysfunctional philanthropic family. I believe in the potential of our work. I am invigorated working with my colleagues at The Heinz Endowments, and I cherish the etymology of the term "philanthropy." So, it is only with love I offer that equity is dead.

My vision for the future of philanthropy is for a just field, not an equitable one. That minor linguistic shift could be the key to the field of philanthropy assigning resources to our rhetoric. It is additionally an acknowledgement that a comparative solution — or attempt at equity — is impossible and perhaps an insult. There simply is not enough money and not enough will among the privileged to shift the money that exists in a manner that might possibly prove more equitable.

As stated in a 2017 article published in FAKEQUITY, "Equity is the outcome when race will no longer be a predicator of health, education, income, etc."¹ Justice feels to me like a more forward moving, action-oriented task required for the aforementioned equitable outcomes that result from seeing "others" as we see ourselves and actively investing in the reversal/re-imagining of systems that will primarily benefit "others."

As I think of the Declaration of Independence,² justice is the work of enforcing the truths that we say we hold to "be self-evident," without fear of our "right to alter or to abolish . . . institute" something new when man's efforts have become "destructive of these ends" and hinder the "safety and happiness" of us all.

Too often, our conversations around "equity" are linked to a comparative notion of that which should be in light of what those in privilege already have. What I envision for a sustaining arts ecology that includes Black and marginalized creatives and cultural workers has not yet been achieved in any manner, anywhere.

Many of the cultural organizations that have been historically privileged face gaping annual deficits, audience development challenges, and a consistent dependency on foundation support. I don't want to (personally or professionally) help to build a repeat of that — if that is equity. Therefore, I am not looking to oppressive systems (or people) to solve, fund, or provide solutions because they don't have them. Money alone will not change the social underpinnings that help to shape and reinforce supremacist behaviors.

Radical courage is required to see people, to challenge our biases, and to move in ways that feel extremely risky with people we do not know (or more dangerously, think that we DO know). That courage may lead to real truth-telling, trusting relationships and deep and abiding investments in new artists, efforts and/or organizations because we are in the business of providing opportunities because of our love for all mankind.

As an artist, program officer of a reputable and compassionate foundation, philanthropist (with my meager personal resources), and Black woman, I invoke the title of Nas' eighth album release and repeat — equity is dead.

In closing, I would remind everyone to keep their masks on. Not only the physical masks that we need to wear for public safety, but also the masks that we wear in our field, for safety. If those in power remain more concerned with how to manage the effect of our decisions on the historically privileged above how we might best support those suffering from the incessant injustice of our decisions, we will continue to suffer grave losses. Until philanthropy is prepared to accept the death of philanthropy as we knew it, some of us must continue to don a mask that "hides our cheeks and shades our eyes" as we "let the world dream otherwise" as Paul Laurence Dunbar wrote.³

Shaunda McDill is program officer, Arts & Culture, at The Heinz Endowments.

NOTES

1. "Can We Stop Using the Box Graphic When We Talk about Racial Equity," FAKEQUITY, <https://fakequity.com/2017/04/28/can-we-stop-using-the-box-graphic-when-we-talk-about-racial-equity/>
2. Declaration of Independence, National Archive, <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript>
3. Paul Laurence Dunbar, "We Wear the Mask," The Poetry Foundation, <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/44203/we-wear-the-mask>

Arts Funders Should Build Stability and Resilience for Black Artists and Cultural Communities

Tracey Knuckles

To better support Black artists and cultural communities, arts philanthropy should increase its focus on stability and resilience in creative practice. Covid has fully revealed its long-standing fragility, leaving 63% of all artists unemployed and 66% unable to access the infrastructure necessary for their work.¹

I know how deep this fragility runs from my own path to arts philanthropy via legal practice, service in a municipal arts agency and consulting for cities: making art too often requires navigating systems not developed with the creative sector in mind. My path was also shaped by a childhood making art with my mother, a Black artist, and with other Black artists whose work was deeply effective at supporting community and empowerment. They demonstrated that creative practice can flourish with stable funding, creative infrastructure and investment in organizational leadership. Arts philanthropy has an opportunity to expand its role in all three.

Stable funding.

What if Black artists and organizations could count on long-term general operating support (GOS) from philanthropy? Imagine the energy and resources that could be redirected from constant fundraising to creative practice. Indeed, among the learnings from our capacity building program for small and mid-sized organizations known as Arts Innovation & Management² (AIM), is that BIPOC organizations find the GOS component to be among the elements they value most, adding stability and supporting organizational aspiration.

Creative infrastructure.

Similarly, more funding is needed for the infrastructure essential to creative practice including studio space, residencies and partnership tools. The City of Newark's inaugural Creative Catalyst Fund³ has done this by funding Newark-based artists (most of whom are Black) through fellowships that cover studio rent, art supplies and

exhibition costs, alongside GOS for artist collectives, nonprofits and LLCs. Likewise, United States Artists' model of unrestricted individual funding supports what artists need most.⁴

Organizational leadership.

Additional investment is needed in organizational leadership through truly responsive professional development (PD) and technical assistance (TA), including board governance. PD should sharpen tools needed for executive

Creative practice can flourish with stable funding, creative infrastructure and investment in organizational leadership. Arts philanthropy has an opportunity to expand its role in all three.

directors to make complex decisions and create networks of trusted peers. Too often, TA offers basics that Black artists and administrators have far surpassed through work in community. TA for BIPOC organizations should be based on individual growth in local context, rather than a one-size-fits-all approach. AIM has sought to do that with a diversified curriculum including board leadership and bespoke services for grantees.⁵

A deeper commitment by philanthropy in these areas can reduce the fragility of creative practice, making sure we effectively support the artists and organizations who influence public discourse, anchor community and bring inspired ideas to our collective challenges.

Tracey Knuckles is the practice lead for the Cultural Assets Management discipline of Bloomberg Associates, a philanthropic civic consulting firm within Bloomberg Philanthropies.

NOTES

1. "COVID-19's Pandemic's Impact on The Arts: Research Update March 23, 2021," Americans for the Arts. <https://www.americansforthearts.org/node/103614>
2. Arts Innovation & Management, <https://www.bloomberg.org/program/arts/arts-innovation-management/>
3. Creative Catalyst Fund, <https://newarkarts.org/creative-catalyst-fund/>
4. United States Artists, unrestricted funding model, <https://www.unitedstatesartists.org/>
5. Bloomberg Philanthropies AIM program has a diversified curriculum for individualized growth within a local context, <https://www.bloomberg.org/program/arts/arts-innovation-management/>

A Question of (dis)Trust

Lessons When Your Institution Gets Taken Down

Anida Yoeu Ali and Shin Yu Pai

When Seattle-based arts funder Artist Trust invited us, two artists, to serve as jurors for its prestigious Artist Innovator Award (AIA), we accepted the responsibility with various desires — from feeling a sense of honorable duty to be asked as a juror to a want to uplift underrepresented artists. With a commitment to bringing a racial equity lens to the administration of two major \$25,000 prizes, both of us, along with three other jurors, immersed ourselves in reviewing more than 125 applications submitted from artists around the State of Washington.

As designed so often in these grantmaking processes, after reading and notating each application, the jurors gathered together for a series of in-person, facilitated meetings, all which took place before the Covid-19 lockdowns. The jury convened to narrow down applications, interview eight finalists, and discuss final recommendations. Throughout the proceedings, passionate arguments were made for and against each applicant. At times, facilitation of the panel became overt and strategic on the part of the program director overseeing the process, who exhibited a bias towards specific artists. Throughout the process, the jury overwhelmingly agreed that operating agreements were violated during the review process and gathered to create a new agreement that would allow for the disruption of conversation by any jury member if the facilitator should fail to intervene.

Ultimately, the panel submitted its decision to Artist Trust staff to award the prizes to two accomplished artists with long histories of producing innovative, creative work in Seattle, nationally, and internationally. The selected winners also happen to be women of color, specifically persons of Asian descent. Each of

the eight finalists represented a diverse group of Washington state artists, from a range of artistic disciplines and ethnic and gender identities.

When we did not receive an update about the awards in subsequent weeks, we were surprised as the lack of communication from Artist Trust was atypical. But, like our fellow jurors, we all trusted the process. In early March, each of the jurors received personal phone calls and an email from Artist Trust board members informing them that the integrity of the panel had

been compromised. As a result, their recommendations would be replaced by the deliberations of a new jury, and all artist applicants would be subjected to going through the review process again.

From the close of the jury panel process through early March, there was an unusual silence from Artist Trust. What transpired was truly unexpected and ultimately resulted in the dismissal of the panel's recommendations and notice that all artist-applicants would be subjected to going through the review process again. Much of this process entailed statements from the Board of Directors, resignations of the CEO and Program Director, and an organizing campaign looking for acknowledgment and structural

change of racist and sexist practices within arts grantmaking.

The community campaign, playfully referred to as *Artist (dis)Trust*, was established in partnership with Satpreet Kahlon, an artist and curator recognized for her racial equity work, who also publicly voiced concern over the abrupt cancellation of another Artist Trust fellowship award, to which she was an applicant.¹ Our group seized upon the moment to organize action toward transparency and greater justice. The *Artist (dis)Trust* campaign asked for an internal investigation of Artist Trust and took its inspiration from two prominent fights: [1] the open letter written by poets to The Poetry Foundation of Chicago; and [2] a petition by former museum staff of the New Orleans Museum of Art that demanded interrogation of inequitable institutional practices.



Artist Distrust Open Letter, a group of artists, including three of the five AIA panelists, published an open letter capturing their experiences with the funder as being “inequitable, opaque, and unresponsive to community needs” with “long-held practices that have unjustly impacted Black, Indigenous, and otherwise racialized peoples.” Image courtesy of Artist Distrust.

In the time since the panel's work, we had developed with community a highly coordinated and strategic plan that included [1] an online public letter that summarized grievances with Artist Trust gathering hundreds of signatures from artists and community leaders; [2] a letter-writing campaign by former Artist Trust staffers, community members, and former award winners that was directed towards the board and

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brought human resources and organizational issues to light;² [3] a letter-writing campaign by finalists of the AIA award demanding investigation and accountability; [4] a focused media blitz that began with regional press and snowballed into national media coverage in outlets that included *Chronicle of Philanthropy* and *The Hill*; [5] a campaign by key community members who either met with former board members and former staff or who contacted individual and institutional donors of Artist Trust, like the Emily Tremaine Foundation and The Chihuly Foundation, to inform them of the controversies surrounding the organization.

Throughout the *Artist (dis)Trust* campaign, the co-organizers listened and strategized carefully to ensure community participation and to secure community buy-in. The open letter was written by more than 50 contributors and edited by Ali, Kahlon, and Pai to take on a unified voice. Despite many discussions back and forth, the *Artist (dis)Trust* letter, unlike other public letters to organizations, did *not* call for resignations or staff termination. Taking a more moderate approach, the public letter refrained from the language of "demands" and urged strongly for investigations and a community boycott of Artist Trust.

From our perspectives as co-organizers, the campaign was successful in creating a closer examination of institutional practices. With Kahlon, the three leaders collectively contributed more than 400 hours of uncompensated labor and community engagement for Artist Trust. Through their extensive networks, they investigated and asked important questions from the artist community, equity work that Artist Trust leadership should have led and conducted. As our last act, we invoiced Artist Trust and have since declined participating in ongoing community meetings or open calls to join the board. We have shared our critique of Artist Trust with board members and staff and we offer below lessons and reflections that funders might consider to be in better partnership with artists and to learn from the collective wisdom of the community.

1. Clear and open communications

Organizations need to have a basic understanding that any "top-down" process with no clear communication with community constituents is and will always be problematic. A board coming into an award process in which four out of the five jurors are people of color, offering no evidence nor information of wrongdoing will be severely questioned. It is a power play that is antithetical to equity work and diversity initiatives. There should have been enough of a foundation of respect that open conversations with the jurors, individually or collectively, could be had and commitments made to include the jurors themselves in any perceived problems or "unethical" claims.

2. Jury composition, recruitment, and vetting

Organizations need to strengthen their recruiting and vetting of skilled jurors to better represent artistic and geographic diversity. The 2020 AIA jury was composed of four POC professionals from the greater Seattle-Tacoma region and one White representative from Spokane. Two of the POC jurors were established mid-career artists, one POC juror was late career, and the final POC juror was a grantmaker at a peer organization. Four of the five panelists had previously served on juries for significant funding amounts. The juror representing Spokane had lived in Washington State for less than a year at the time of her service on the jury. Her professional experience prior to her arts-based role in Spokane focused on roles in social service in another

state. Given this, the juror lacked awareness or knowledge of the full landscape of Washington State artists and the ability to argue persuasively in favor of specific artists. Uncovered through the community investigation, artists in Spokane reported meeting with Artist Trust staff and making recommendations of potential jurors from the local community. But these recommendations were not represented in the AIA jury.

3. Ensure disciplinary representation

Artist Trust could consider rotating funding disciplines from year to year, so that a wider breadth of creative disciplines could be recognized for these prizes. Similar to 4Culture's Arc

Meeting once before collaborative work begins allows for jurors to gain a better understanding of individual juror's strengths and expertise, as well as communication styles. Spending the time to build relationships and create shared experiences before work begins, allows for stakeholders to be more relaxed and curious with one another. This potentially lays the foundation for them to better problem-solve together.

Award, which rotates funding priorities each year, this leveling of the field would allow for greater *disciplinary equity*.

The application pool for AIA received a number of applications from mid-career and well-established musicians. Unfortunately, there was no musician on the panel that could vet applications or advocate for music as a category of the arts. The jury lacked expertise. It was only after a passion vote resulted in advancing a musical artist that a musician was elevated to the final pool of eight. Music was also grouped into a category with dance, performing arts, and theater, instead of its own discrete discipline.

4. Establish clear definitions and criteria for funding

According to Artist Trust staff, jurors over the past iterations of the award program were left to debate the definition of "innovative" and were responsible for setting the priorities for funding from year to year.

The funders of the AIA awards were deliberate in not defining these criteria. However, this placed an unfair and difficult burden upon jurors to come to an agreement about what constitutes innovation. Further, some jurors believed that the size of a \$25,000 prize seemed better suited to more established artists with a significant body of work that could recognize achievement; whereas, other jurors questioned whether the prizes would make a greater, or more meaningful impact for an emerging artist at the beginning of their career. No guidance was given with respect to funding priorities.

5. Limit outside observers

Throughout the jury's three days of in-person meetings, their deliberations were observed by staff, interns, and a member of the Seattle community. As a result, some jurors felt unsafe at times in openly expressing disagreement or dissent, for fear of judgment. During one particularly awkward moment, a staff member and juror called upon the outside community member to share his thoughts on applying for music funding. At other times, Artist Trust staff observers engaged jurors in casual and informal conversation. This created the impression that the jury was not a defined or safe space, with strangers coming in and out each day.

6. Create space to meet fellow jurors before adjudication

Meeting once before collaborative work begins allows for jurors to gain a better understanding of individual juror's strengths and expertise, as well as communication styles. Spending the time to build relationships and create shared experiences before work begins, allows for stakeholders to be more relaxed and curious with one another. This potentially lays the foundation for them to better problem-solve together, if tensions arise. A prior meeting could also initiate basic agreement conversations, laying groundwork for the rest of the deliberation process.

7. Co-create operating agreements

Artist Trust provided the AIA jurors operating agreements and asked for verbal buy-in from the group. There was limited opportunity to discuss the principles guiding the group's work, and while jurors suggested additional rules and codes of conduct, the process would have been improved by spending more time on norm setting and a discussion of how to bring these rules into play. During the in-person juror deliberations these agreements should be printed, written, and/or posted visibly as an important ever-present reference tool.

8. Adopt a safe word or gesture

When deliberations in the jury room become heated or tense, the ability to call upon a physical gesture or safe word would have allowed any juror to indicate to the facilitator that they were triggered or uncomfortable with a process. That could have then prompted the facilitator to slow down, take a break, and create space to work through disagreement or a difficult issue, allowing the group to reset and re-establish trust.

9. Appoint a jury foreperson

The communication between Artist Trust staff and board resulted in unreliable information influencing the decision the board made. Assigning a jury foreperson could allow for an agreed-upon representative from the jury to directly deliver juror recommendations to the board. This could also allow the board to stay better connected to community members and leaders involved in facilitating the work of Artist Trust and make the work more relational as opposed to transactional.

10. Activate the back-up candidate

As a jury, we were asked to identify one alternate candidate to whom we would give the award, if for some reason the award could not

go to one of the finalists. Despite the jury having selected that individual, Artist Trust did not consider this option before it dismissed panel recommendations. If an alternate will never be used in even a best-case scenario, the jury should not be required to labor or spend additional time deliberating over an alternative.

11. Show up for your community and be consistent

In initial correspondence and meetings between the jury and board members, conversations

were led by a male-identified president and other officers of the board who guarded carefully against admission of wrongdoing or error. In later meetings, gender representation and diversity of board members shifted very obviously to female-identifying board members and women of color, while others were markedly absent. The rationale presented to the jurors was a reluctance on the part of (mostly male) board officers to unbalance power dynamics through their obvious presence. But as a result of their decision to opt out, board

members reinforced the message that they did not care about the process or about community members. Communication with community must be consistent, transparent, authentic, and go beyond the transactional.

12. Compensate community expertise

Collectively, our team — Ali, Pai, and Kahlon — contributed 400 hours of uncompensated consulting to Artist Trust in order to put the organization in direct conversation with its constituents. Throughout this process, Artist Trust engaged legal expertise, racial equity consultants trained in facilitation, and a human resources consultant to conduct internal investigations and audits. We can only expect that these professionals were paid at their standard hourly market rate. Artist Trust is currently



ARTS' intention with the new space is to increase opportunities for communities of color to present their work. The dedicated cultural space will provide public access to presentation and creative spaces, ARTS staff and resources, space for city convenings, and professional development and other services that were requested through the outreach process. This is an innovative plan that utilizes an underused city resource to address issues of affordability and livability while preserving the unique creative economy that drives Seattle. Photo courtesy of Seattle Office of Arts and Culture.

recruiting for new volunteer board members and also organizing community conversations in which its constituents will be invited to give feedback to the organization. Instead of asking community members to volunteer their time, Artist Trust could turn to looking at models such as The King Street Station project in Seattle,³ which engages community members in long-term relationships. Organized by the City of Seattle's Office of Arts & Culture, the entity financially compensates advisory members for their service and their work in building and strengthening grantmaking systems that fund underrepresented artists. Another model to look to and learn from is the work of The Wing Luke Museum, which was an early pioneer in developing a Community Advisory Council model of involving communities in the creation and execution of its programming.⁴

In the end, the Artist Trust Board and Executive Director did offer a formal apology to the finalists and jurors of the 2020 Arts Innovator Award. They also reinstated the jurors' awardee decision and publicly committed to restructuring the board and continuing racial equity work. The Arts Innovator Award was given to Etsuko Ichikawa and Degenerate Art Ensemble, accomplished artists with a long history of producing innovative, creative work in Seattle, nationally, and internationally. All eight finalists have been publicly recognized and include Priscilla Dobler, Lori Goldston, Tessa Hulls, Wes Hurley, Casandra Lopez, and Barbara Earl Thomas. Artist Trust has continued to steward more grants and fellowships.

*The 2021 Arts Innovator Award grant cycle is underway at Artist Trust focused on short- and long-term changes. In an interview with artist and board member Mariella Luz, Artist Trust published an extended interview about the current grant cycle and transformations in process. "The AIA workgroup was and is part of a larger conversation we're having at Artist Trust about how to work with artists. The topic came up in large part due to behind-the-scenes work the staff had been doing as well as the AIA/Artist Distrust letter. The Board and staff have really been trying to show up and do the work to make Artist Trust more equitable for artists and with this in mind, we started these sessions."*⁵

Anida Yoeu Ali is an artist whose works span performance, installation, video, images, public encounters, and political agitation. She is a first generation Muslim Khmer woman born in Cambodia and raised in Chicago. After residing for over three decades outside of Cambodia,

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Ali returned to work in Phnom Penh as part of her 2011 US Fulbright Fellowship. Utilizing an interdisciplinary approach to artmaking, her installation and performance works investigate the artistic, spiritual, and political collisions of a hybrid transnational identity.

Shin Yu Pai is the author of ten books of poetry and a 2014 Stranger Genius Award nominee. Her work has appeared in publications throughout the US, Japan, China, Taiwan, UK, and Canada. Poems have been commissioned by the Dallas Museum of Art twice, and her work is also featured in the Poetry-in-Motion Program sponsored by DART. She has been a featured presenter at national and international literary festivals including the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation Poetry Festival and the Montreal Zen Poetry Festival.

NOTES

1. "An Open Letter to Artist Trust," July 6, 2020, <https://artistdistrust.wordpress.com/>
2. "Co-organizers Respond with Invoice," July 30, 2020, <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Vm5hGF0aSODYRkUtks1TJswP9Jik-xij/view>
3. ARTS at King Street Station, which incorporates a new 7,500-square-foot cultural space available to the general public, a studio for artists-in-residence and offices for staff of the Seattle Office of Arts & Culture, was conceived to increase opportunities for people of color to generate and present their work and to reflect and foster the creativity and talents of people that continue to create the fabric of Seattle. Seattle Office of Arts and Culture, <https://www.seattle.gov/arts/programs/arts-at-king-street-station#:~:text=ARTS%20at%20King%20Street%20Station%2C%20which%20incorporates%20a%20new%207%2C500,present%20their%20work%20and%20to>
4. Cay Lane Wren, "The Wing Takes Flight: How the Wing Luke Museum Built a Home for the Asian American Community" (2020). Wing Luke Museum. <https://scholarworks.seattleu.edu/wing-luke-museum/1>
5. "Behind the Scenes: Arts Innovator Award Workgroup," <https://artisttrust.org/behind-the-scenes-arts-innovator-award-workgroup/>

San Diego/Tijuana

One Region Two Countries

Jonathon Glus

THE FRONT, a gallery and performing arts space that serves the communities of San Ysidro and Tijuana, sits on a busy thoroughfare only a few hundred yards from the busiest border land crossing in the Western Hemisphere. A program of Casa Familiar — a social service organization that operates senior and affordable housing to health services to youth programming in facilities scattered in and around San Ysidro's well-loved Beyer Park — THE FRONT was opened in 2004 as a passion project for artists living and rooted in San Ysidro, the southernmost neighborhood of San Diego. Today, THE FRONT is the unofficial cultural heart of the border artists community.

Linda Caballero Sotelo, an artist and now the director of the New Americans Museum, refers to the border as an "accident of geography." Linda was raised in Tijuana and attended parochial school in San Diego. Linda is convinced there is both cultural and political will to move the region forward with arts and culture leading the way.

The question at hand may not be the will or the resources, but really, how to model what's happening outside of the arts sector as we know it. How can cultural policy better advance one metroplex governed by two federal and philanthropic systems and multiple local jurisdictions? How can artists and culture bearers help the region address the pressing issues of migration, homelessness, and water policy.

The Conurbation

Emanating out from the actual border — north into the United States and south into Mexico, sharing the Pacific coast to the west and reaching the California desert to the east — are two profoundly different but inextricably linked metropolises. Zona Metropolitana de Tijuana, or metropolitan Tijuana, is the fifth largest city and urbanized region in Mexico, while metropolitan San Diego is the eighth largest US city.

Together they form the San Diego-Tijuana, Baja California conurbation, home to more than 5.5 million people. The US side of the region is larger than the states of Rhode Island and Delaware combined. The Mexican side is nearly

as large. The conjoined siblings lie entirely in the land of the Kumiyaay nation, sharing geography, commerce, history, and culture.

The cultures of two countries in one community is baked into the region's DNA. Almost constant northbound migration brings a host of humanitarian burdens to Tijuana, but ultimately helps ensure Tijuana's comparatively fluid identity and creative openness. San Diego's institutions continue to stretch their understanding of audience and community. Each bring their country's biases and class and economic structures.

Cultural Institutions

Cultural institutions anchor the region and many have "bi-national" baked into their mission.

Tijuana Cultural Center (CECUT) opened in 1982 as the largest center for art and culture in Mexico outside of Mexico City. As a federal institution, its mission is to provide cultural education of the entire country, with an emphasis on

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the Baja region. Nearly forty years later, CECUT serves more than a million visitors a year and deeply reflects the region's artists and culture.

The San Diego Symphony reached a milestone in early 2018 by performing John Luther Adams' "Inuksuit" at the border. The initiative was nearly ten years in the making and literally played on both sides of the fence. Musicians from the Symphony were joined by musicians from Baja. By 2018 the wall between the two cities had grown from a single steel mesh fence to dual, parallel fences and partial walls with a swath of no man's land in between. The past relative ease of informal, ad hoc, or spontaneous music or spoken word by that time was replaced with layers of federal and regional approvals. The symphony received its final approvals within hours of the performance.

The San Diego Art Institute has built the art and artists of the border into its mission. Board members are actively recruited from throughout the Baja-San Diego region, and audiences often reflect the commitment. Board member Arturo

Rodriguez is a Tijuana-based art dealer who has evolved his gallery space into a working arts education space. La Caja Galeria represents 19 artists, all from the Tijuana-San Diego region. What was only recently a traditional white wall exhibition space is now a workspace where more than 10,000 school children and young adults have had hands-on art making experience with gallery artists. His business model shift is intentional, "We need to build audiences and teach the intricacies of art making. We're investing in the future of the region."

On any given weekday school buses from throughout the region ascend on Balboa Park. The seventeen cultural institutions comprising the "Smithsonian of the West" host tens of thousands of school-aged children annually. Along with the Museum of Contemporary Art in downtown and LaJolla, the San Diego Museum of Art, Fleet Science Center, Natural History Museum, Mingei International Museum, and others provide intensive curriculum-based education and hands-on practical instruction. Importantly, thousands of the children travel from public and private schools on the Mexican side of the region.

Funding for this large scale cultural hub is derived from a patchwork of foundation and government sources.

Artists Work/Projects

Francisco Morales, the Mexico City native and director at THE FRONT, describes being a "border or bi-national artist" as a "personal decision" for those who cross the border "culturally comfortably." He defines a "transborder artist" as someone who thrives regionwide.

The number of artists who identify as "transborder" continues to grow. To a great extent educational and economic systems encourage this fusion, as the universities in San Diego continue to increase the number of bi-national students enrolled while the high costs of San Diego drive artists, creatives and culture workers across the border for affordable live and work space. Galleries have followed, initiating global collaborations with artists and galleries in Asia, the Caribbean, Europe, and throughout the Americas. Collective Magpie, a transborder artist collective, exemplifies this movement.

Education/Housing/Work

Given this robust, often fervent cultural production, sustainability and archival documentation

are practical, central questions to philanthropy and government, along with questions of identity and belonging.

Jennifer dePoyen is the executive director of Space4Art, a longtime downtown San Diego artist live/work space. She points to downtown San

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Diego gentrification — and the accompanying high costs and lack of practical work space — as the key driver pushing artists east into rural, mountainous California and south a dozen miles to central Tijuana.

Prominent degree programs at universities and colleges in the region continue to attract artists of all disciplines, in particular acting and directing, art theory, studio, and Chicano studies. The university systems provide ample opportunities for artists to stay in the region. Increasingly, not just young artists, but faculty and cultural workers at all points in their careers consider or move to Tijuana. Urban myth calls for as many as 30% of San Diego-identifying artists and cultural workers now live in Tijuana. (This isn't codified, but is a priority of the San Diego Commission for Arts & Culture to better understand.)

Navigating two federal and local systems can be daunting for even the largest cultural institution. For small organizations and individual artists, it can be ruinous. Californian Lawyers for the Arts (CLA), the longtime statewide legal service organization for artists and creatives, has tooled its San Diego office to serve the direct needs of working bi-nationally. Real estate, employment contracts, insurance, taxes, copyright protection, etc., are elemental components of bi-national artists' livelihoods. CLA has expanded its focus on border-related issues to an annual conference, now in its third year. In 2020, the conference extended its focus to border cities worldwide, in an effort to share best practices and common culture unique to border cities.

Government/Cultural Funding

The governments of Tijuana and San Diego have a longstanding commitment to cooperation.

Biannually the mayors of the two cities sign a joint agreement addressing trade, climate and environment, transportation, arts, culture, literacy, and more.

An overriding challenge with governmental cooperation is the differences in timing and structure. The centralized Mexican government appoints senior level officials every two years, and with the changes, priorities and resources

What would a bi-national cultural planning initiative prioritize, and how could a bi-national cultural funding structure operate?

shift. Among the most influential drivers in the cultural life of the region are the Ministry of Culture for the state of Baja and IMAC, the Municipal Institute of Art and Culture of Tijuana. The vast majority of Baja's cultural funding flows through those agencies. Leadership of both agencies follow the protocol of changing biennially. On the US side, the City of San Diego is the region's largest annual arts funder, however individual philanthropy directs the largest overall amount of support to arts and culture.

The Model of Non-Arts Infrastructure

Lessons for greater cultural sustainability in the region may reside outside the arts. Sociologist Larry Herzog frames the ebb and flow of regional power and protocol in response to external political and economic shifts as "debordering" and "rebordering."

The 1994 NAFTA agreement profoundly reduced physical, legal, and economic barriers on both sides of the border, consequently expanding the number of residents electing to live on one side and work or educate on the other. Culturally, institutions such as the CECUT flourished from the perspective of audience diversity. The events of 9/11 brought a profound change to the cities' shared ease and fluidity, with a rapid escalation of security. We rebordered.

Most recently, federal immigration and trade policies have wreaked havoc on our land border.

Daily crossings have been challenged, and importantly, so have critical issues such as work visas for exhibiting artists, dancers, and actors, let alone audiences.

However, as in many urbanized regions, the Tijuana-San Diego region has over the years created cooperative government agencies and agreements to address critical joint concerns and implement efforts. Transportation, environment, trade, and tourism are among the efforts. Massive planning initiatives set a vision and collective investment drive implementation.

What would a bi-national cultural planning initiative prioritize, and how could a bi-national cultural funding structure operate? Are we there yet? I suggest we are.

Culture bearers carry our history and traditions. Artists reveal and art elevates our collective humanity. Art responds to bordering and debordering and the implications therein. It forms a cultural glue that supersedes, and in the most desirable form, it leads.

A bi-national regionwide cultural policy could galvanize the efforts of government, philanthropy and individual generosity. It would address practical and fundamental challenges such as sustained access to arts education, affordable housing for artists and cultural workers, and the power of culture bearers to tell our shared stories. It could also identify efficient strategies for the arts to address issues of homelessness and environment. And it could create mid- and long-term funding streams for regionwide cultural initiatives.

The role and responsibility of funders and agents of cultural policy in a region as complex as the San Diego-Tijuana conurbation will be adaptive and responsive to models which are not the norm for the US nor Mexican arts infrastructure. Our work can transcend the border. We need to design for community. At our best, we, the gatekeepers, will have one purpose: to ensure the individuals we serve have the resources to create and experience arts, culture, and creativity on their own terms and of their own creation.

Jonathon Glus is executive director, Commission for Arts and Culture at the City of San Diego.

We Need to Open Better Pathways to Homeownership for Gig Economy Artists and Freelancers

Ngoc-Tran Vu

Millennials live differently than previous generations of Americans. We stay single longer. More of us have student debt and are self-employed, freelancers, and members of the growing gig economy. According to Randstad's research on the workplace, more than half of Americans will be self-employed by 2025. More than 40% of gig workers will be millennials, a figure that will likely grow given the size of the generation and its youth. Millennials are the largest demographic in American history. We are the future.

Like previous generations though, we still want to own homes to build equity and to close the gap wealth. So you would think that mortgage lenders would be updating their guidelines to reflect this giant shift, developing new ways to support freelancers who want to become homeowners instead of holding them to the same standards of W-2 employees — most notably predictable income levels. In reality, I found the opposite in my recent experience trying to buy a house in Boston, as a gig economy employed millennial. My struggle in trying to obtain a mortgage says we still have a lot of work to do.

I knew Boston was a tough town to buy a place to live when I started looking in late 2017. The average prices for condos and single family homes are between \$500k to almost a million, a rate that had more than doubled from when I left Dorchester for college in 2006. It's hard to save enough for a down payment, at least not without a lot of help from family. But the current market is particularly hard for millennials, Americans aged 23 to 38 this year.

I should know. I knew the odds were not in my favor as a single millennial woman and artist of color, yet I wasn't easily deterred by roadblocks. I spent most of my 20s getting my finances in shape in order to qualify for a mortgage. I moved back in with my parents in Dorchester, my home community, after finishing graduate school, to keep my expenses low, allowing me to save more. I am a working artist, but I also have

a day job to make sure I have a regular income. When I decided to start the home-buying process, I had a credit score of 783, enough saved to put 10% down on a place in my price range, plus money for all the extra incurred costs like insurance and fees. And I was pre-approved for a loan. I was relieved. Most properties in Boston are taken off the market after a week and are usually purchased by cash buyers, investors, and/or individuals with high incomes — none of which apply to me.

Still, it took me six months, more than a dozen bids, and two loans pulled from approval at the last minute. One loan was through a first-time home buyers program that initially miscalculated my income — it turned out I made

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slightly over the required income to qualify for it — and the other claimed to be uncomfortable about my "work history being an artist and community activist."

I was fortunate to have a good mortgage lawyer, who told me to appeal to a supervisor at the second bank. After a week of back-and-forth, in which I provided a more detailed work history, and agreed to a higher down payment, my application was approved. I felt vindicated yet also incredibly frustrated at how complicated the whole process was! I felt the loan should have already been approved in the first place. The fact that I had told the loan officer that I would not give up quietly made me wonder whether that was the tipping point to get treated fairly with the bank. Why was it so difficult for me to buy a house?

I questioned whether the results would have been different had I been a White candidate or with a partner with a second income. Around the same time, in February 2018, Reveal from the Center for Investigative Reporting released *Kept Out*, a special report which demonstrated the common discriminatory practices by financial institutions to prevent people of color from owning homes.¹ I couldn't help but feel a direct

connection to their conclusions. Could the bank be denying me because I was a person of color, single, and from a working-class artist community? After all, the rejection rates for Black, Latinx, and Asian people are much higher than that of White people according to reporting by the Washington Post on home loan applications.²

Rebecca Steele, CEO of the National Foundation for Credit Counseling, concurred that my experience reflects a more challenging market for my generation in the traditional banking system than our predecessors. Not only do we stay single longer, more of us have student debt, and we significantly more likely to be self-employed members of the growing gig economy.

Most banks prefer buyers with traditional W-2 salary because it implies a more stable income stream than those who are self-employed or freelancers who may have fluctuating incomes. There are Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac guidelines that recommend taking a two-year work history or average of schedule C income for loan applicants who are self-employed. But,

As an artist, I go through periods of time where I do not receive the commissions or grants I am hoping for and some clients haven't paid me on time.

Steele says the two-year measure is challenging for freelancers, because their pay can be irregular. As an artist, I go through periods of time where I do not receive the commissions or grants I am hoping for and some clients haven't paid me on time.

Steele recommends that lenders adapt to the changing workforce in several ways; they need to create more expansive guidelines to support those who have 1099-MISC incomes, or those who have multiple income streams. She also advocates for families and young people to start building credit and utilizing financial best practices early to prepare for homeownership. The city of Boston could help, too — I went through the city's approved first-time homebuyer course, and while it was helpful, it lacked curriculum and resources for self-employed and freelance workers. The city runs Metrolist that shares housing resources and has some programs in place to help with affordable housing such as a first-time homebuyer mortgage, down payment support,

and affordable condo lotteries. These programs are extremely competitive and often do not reach historically disadvantaged communities, nor those who may speak different languages.

I'd like to see the city create specific policies and incentivize financial institutions to encourage homeownership among millennials and freelancers, especially artists and cultural workers. Perhaps designate more housing and workshops specifically for artists, lessen the requirements for stable income documentation, and provide grants plus interest-free insurance to support freelancers with down payments. And, as we know, discrimination still runs rampant in home buying. Governments need to stay vigilant about protecting vulnerable communities — BIPOC folks, immigrants and refugees, people with disabilities, and gig economy workers, to name a few — from such practices. A major investigative report found that in many cities, lenders still discriminate against people based on their skin color, their marital status, occupation, or zip code. Boston was not on the list of cities, but only because of lack of data. As a young Vietnamese American woman, I did beat the odds and fortunately, I was able to get my loan approval in the end. But, I worried that the mortgage process might be stacked against me the entire time.

Boston's future will be diverse and homeownership should be accessible for those who do not fit the archaic model profile of what lenders consider desirable. In fact, if things don't change, future homes will be predominantly owned by large companies, White families, or those of immense generational wealth. Thus, financial institutions and home loan providers need to start adjusting to changing demographics. Furthermore, why shouldn't preference be given to local homebuyers who want to remain in their communities? This would help reduce gentrification and displacement that is rapidly taking place in Boston and beyond.

As many cities and towns in the United States are undergoing rapid development and the housing crisis is growing, more practices need to be in place to support individuals and families who do not fit the typical profile of the "ideal" homebuyer. According to the Creative Count Survey³ conducted by the New England Foundation for the Arts (NEFA), "Creative workers are much more likely to be self-employed. A quarter of all creative workers and a third of core artist occupations are self-employed compared to only

10% of all workers.” This finding is further supported by the 2018 *By Artists, for Artists Report*,⁴ which states that 19.4% have freelance income. Does that mean that many creative and freelance workers will be left out of the home buying process if they do not fit the ideal profile? If so, this is unacceptable when so many cities tout

Creative workers are much more likely to be self-employed. A quarter of all creative workers and a third of core artist occupations are self-employed compared to only 10% of all workers.

the fact that the creative industry makes cities attractive to residents and visitors and brings in substation revenue.

Buying a house is a major decision but it is intensely more difficult than it needs to be. And it bodes poorly for the future. If a significant percentage of millennials' employment is within the gig economy — whether freelancers, artists, or otherwise — making us unfit for homeownership based on the characteristics of previous generations, options looking ahead are bleak. What will happen to future housing markets and local communities if those who belong to them cannot get loans?

Our economy has been shifting to include more innovation and entrepreneurship, so these loans criteria and programs should be updated to reflect the shift, too. Let's figure out new ways to support those who participate in the gig economy to becoming homeowners instead of holding them to the limited standards of W-2 employees. For financial institutions and home loan providers, I recommend creating guidelines for those who have 1099-MISC incomes and being more opened to those who fall outside of the traditional 9–5 jobs. For cities and towns, I urge officials to put in place more policies and programs to truly support self-employed and freelance workers.

Homebuyer programs should consider those who make their living in the gig economy as viable homebuyers and home loan providers should update their practices to lend to this client-sector. Otherwise many young

entrepreneurs and creatives, including people of color and those from working class communities, will fall through the cracks and not be able to live in places where the cost is continually on the rise.

I am a proud homeowner now, in the neighborhood where I grew up and want to remain. It would not have happened if I hadn't been able to push back against a system that was not properly set up to support people like me, even as I had meticulously tried to prepare myself for success. I can't help but think about other people who have been turned down and denied the opportunity of homeownership. If English is not your first language, how would you go about fighting back? If you don't have advocates, like my loan officer or real estate attorney who will question and hold the financial institutions accountable in their decisions?

Ultimately, we must open more doors to those who work in the growing gig economy instead of closing them if we, as a country, claim to be truly the *land of opportunity*.

Ngoc-Tran Vu (she/her) is a Vietnamese-American interdisciplinary artist whose socially engaged work draws from her experience as an organizer, educator, and lightworker. Ngoc threads her social practice through painting, sculpture, photography, and audio so that her art can resonate and engage audiences with intentionality. Born in Vietnam, Ngoc came to the United States with her family as a political refugee and grew up in Boston's Dorchester and South Boston working-class neighborhoods. Ngoc is currently an artist-in-residence with Stable Ground and a part of resident-led community alliance Dorchester Not 4 Sale. She works across borders and is rooted in the Dorchester community. @TranVuArts

NOTE

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How to Be a Soil Keeper

Regenerative Justice and Whole Systems Care

Kiley Arroyo

Just societies cannot grow in toxic soil. To build regenerative communities, we should look to how life flourishes in the natural world, of which we are an inherent part.

In this critical moment in our shared history, the call for humanity to evolve is growing louder.

But what exactly does this involve? Transformational change emerges from deep beneath that which we can see. Our beliefs shape our identities, just as soil health shapes plant life, and culturally constructed paradigms shape social systems. Realizing the promise of a just society, the aim of desired transformational change, requires us to remediate inequities embedded in

our soils, societies, and selves. However, 'systems change' work often stops short of integrating each of these nested domains, hindering our ability to cultivate conditions conducive to life.

Many people trace the origins of injustice, and need for transformational change, back to colonization. Looking at the root of this term can help us understand these complexities and devise new healing pathways. The term colonization comes from the Latin words *colere*, meaning "to till," and *colonia*, "the soil." The Western imagination tends to associate tilling by mechanical plows as the hallmark of industrial progress and evidence of cultural superiority. However, Indigenous land stewards and a growing movement of natural farming advocates know that tilling soil destroys the very source of its power and regenerative capacity by severing the diverse web of relationships responsible for maintaining its fertility. By tearing soil's social fabric, tilling disrupts life-supporting processes causing vital resources to become concentrated, creating disparities of power, wealth, and well-being. As a result, a destructive spiral of dependency is set into motion.



Photo courtesy of the author.

By tilling the soil of communities, colonization has had an equally damaging effect, severing intimate relationships between people and place, cultural knowledge, and each other, contributing to durable inequities.

The resulting concentration of wealth disrupts life-supporting processes and generates an unnatural dependency on external inputs, such as philanthropy. Soil fertility, like justice, is a dynamic condition that enables life to thrive over time. Maintaining both requires a diverse web of entities to continually recalibrate how they behave in step with shifting circumstances

and led by those most impacted by those changes. Collaborative learning that is context-sensitive enriches this adaptive capacity and supports the equitable distribution of vital resources, enhancing the wellbeing of the whole.

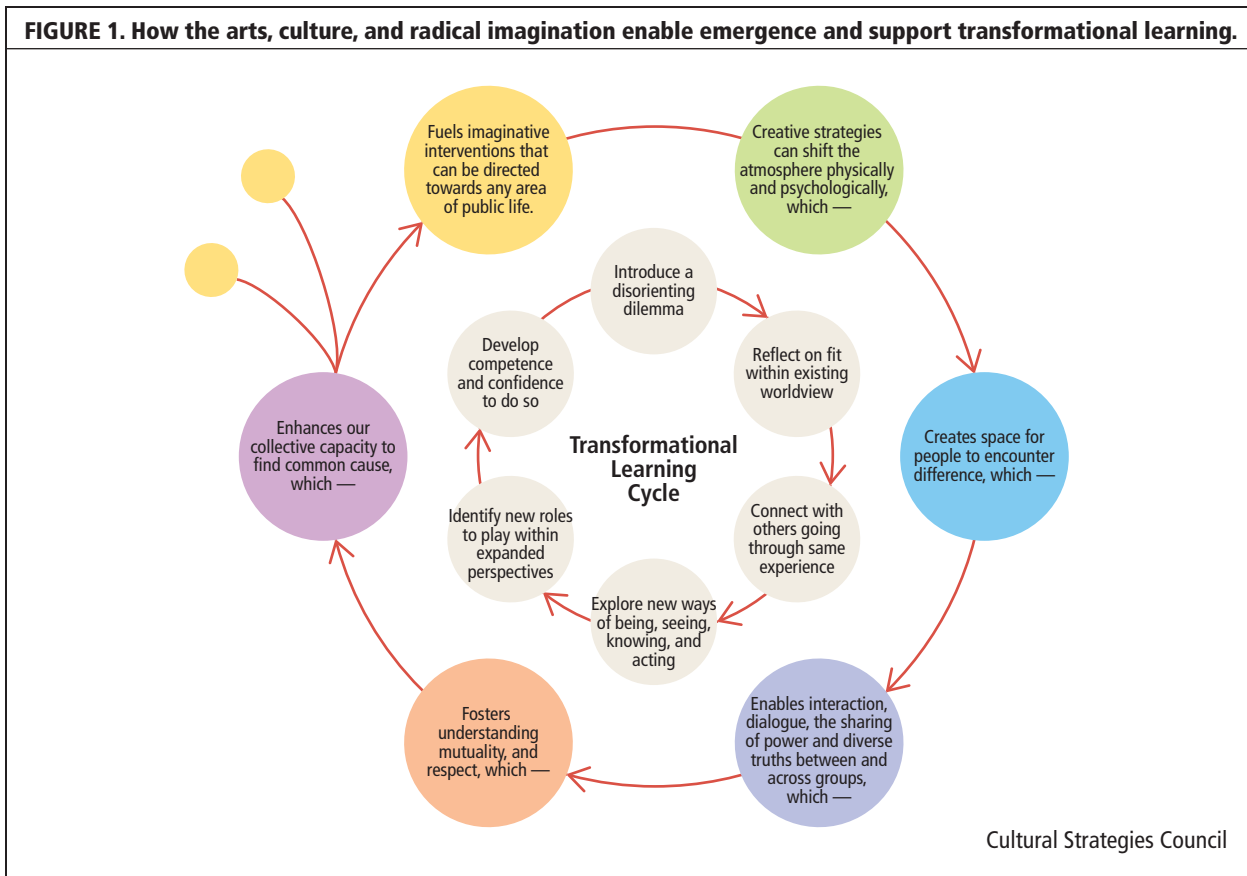
While it's widely understood that a coordinated ecosystem of actions is needed to advance a just society, most sectors, organizations, and initia-

tives tend to work in isolation from one another and, at times, cross-purposes. Well-intentioned as they may be, these measures often stop short of realizing their potential to empower us to see the world, each other, and ourselves in profoundly different ways. The fractured landscape of social change work is a byproduct of a Western understanding of how change happens. This fragmentation underscores the importance of remediating the grounds from which this work emerges through intercultural exchange and collaborative learning experiences.

The practice of soil keeping provides individuals committed to realizing a just society with a compelling basis for imagining their work and recognizing the interdependencies between people, place, and planet. More specifically, the principles used to restore fertility to soil can be extended to heal communities harmed by the same underlying forces — supporting reparative justice, personal development, and collective self-determination.

Nature provides elements and contours of the just society to which we aspire. No one waters a forest or fertilizes a meadow, and yet

FIGURE 1. How the arts, culture, and radical imagination enable emergence and support transformational learning.



abundance is everywhere. Living systems use a set of time-tested principles to share power and collectively maintain fertile conditions in which life can flourish. Healthy ecosystems demonstrate the kind of actors, distinct roles, relationships, exchanges, structures, and behaviors that enable systems to transform to support the vitality of the whole. All of this activity rests upon the fulcrum of soil.

I've been exploring how the characteristics of vibrant ecosystems align to the levers contained in western systems change frameworks to deepen my understanding of how we can foster emergence — for example, trees to enabling institutional structures, nutrient cycling to circular economies, fungi hyphae to mutual aid networks, compost to culture, perennial renewal to liberation, and so on. In doing so, I've come to believe that soil keeping provides a compelling metaphor and practical lessons in how we can nourish radical imagination and facilitate transformative change, within ourselves and in relationship with others.

Soil keeping teaches the values of cooperation, trust, and subsidiarity in and intuitive and pleasurable way. Rather than imposing change

upon the soil, investments focus on cultivating fertile conditions in which the actors closest to the ground collectively determine how best to circulate resources and adapt over time. Applying a soil-keeping ethos can democratize power, wealth, and wellbeing. Doing so generates a fertile environment in which new relationships, ideas, and ways to maintain justice can continually emerge. To date, however, this approach's potential to transform philanthropy and socially motivated investment is not fully realized.

Entering into dialogue with nature, of which humanity is an intrinsic part, reveals insights those committed to actualizing justice seek. Many Indigenous cultures and wisdom traditions embody this knowledge, suggesting that a soil-keeping ethos can facilitate the deep cultural and social healing necessary for our collective liberation. By embracing a more expansive perspective that recognizes the power of diverse ways of knowing and being, the practice of soil keeping begins to remediate the mindsets that hold injustice in place, allowing equitable access to new tools and techniques.

How to be a Soil Keeper

A suite of restorative principles can heal soil and enhance its regenerative capacity by ensuring power, wealth, and wellbeing increase over time. The resulting fertility is the energy that enables complex systems to experiment, learn, adapt, and continually discover how to care for the common good. This aliveness can only be created through diverse cooperation and collective willingness to evolve. I've mapped how these principles can enrich communities' regenerative capacity and restore life-sustaining relationships with the land, culture, and each other. I believe these principles can inform more integrated investments, interconnectedness, and facilitate the just transition to which we are working.



Photo courtesy of the author.

Principle 1: End harmful disturbances

Soil restoration involves deep observation, listening, and honest accounting of the “disturbance regime” or pattern of harm that has impacted a particular place. Limiting harmful practices in community involves productive conflict and truth-telling from the perspective of those most impacted, which begins to reconcile our relationship with the land and each other. Culturally safe responses are rooted in community voice, values, and vision to ensure restorative practices acknowledge past harms, shift power, and mitigate future damage through meaningful accountability mechanisms. Identifying patterns that we wish to amplify and dampen reveals what needs to change to support life and bring a new world into being.

Principle 2: Rest

Colonization permits extractive practices such as industrial agriculture that traumatize soil. Hyper-productivity depletes soil of nutrients and relationships, eventually exhausting its life force completely. For soil to heal, it must rest, disrupting these patterns of harm.

Colonization produces norms and expectations about what constitutes appropriate behavior that often conflates labor with value. Some view habitual productivity as one such artifact of White Supremacy Culture. Tricia Hersey, founder of the Nap Ministry, suggests, “Rest is a form of

resistance because it disrupts and pushes back against capitalism and White supremacy.” Rest provides spaciousness for healing and dreaming of alternative futures. As such, ease provides a critical counternarrative essential to liberation movements, including efforts to advance regenerative societies. By modeling new forms of creativity and care that don't sacrifice our wellbeing, we can undo past harms and preserve the energy needed to realize our vision with pleasure and ease.

Principle 3: Protect

No-till farming techniques protect soil's mutual aid networks and crop roots, providing future plants with easy passage to more distant nutrients, strength-

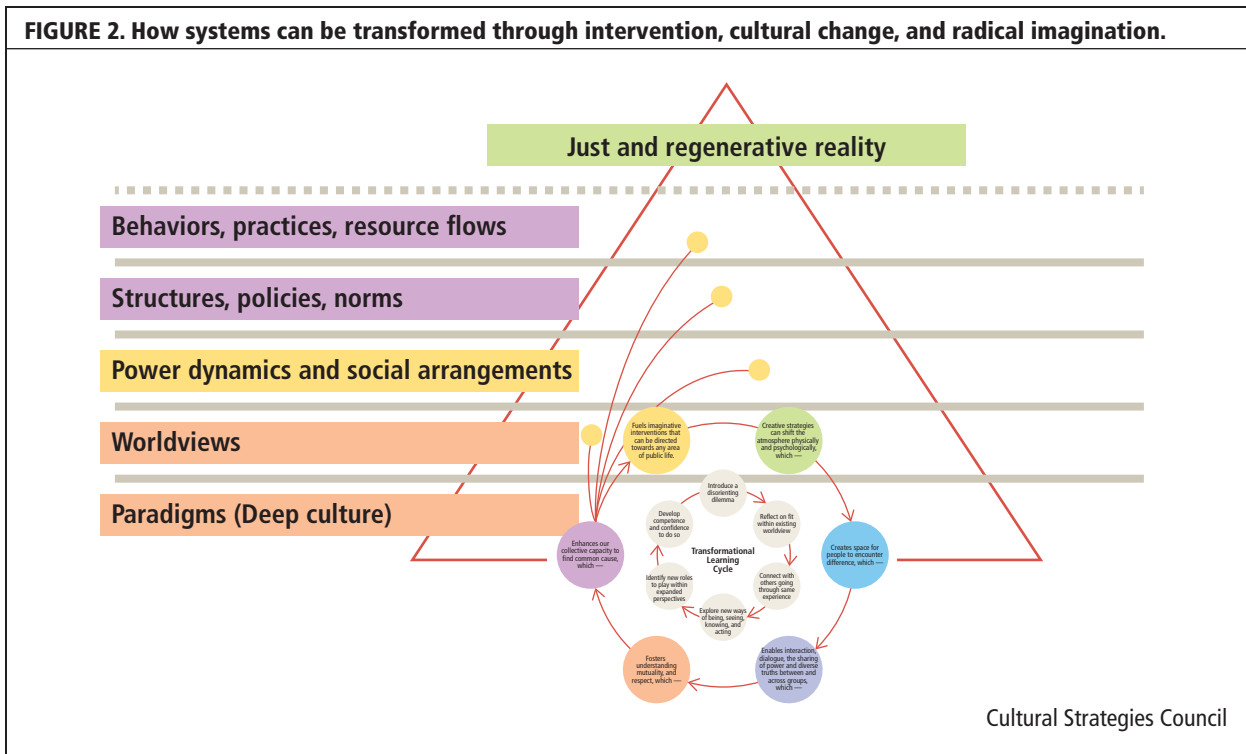
ening soil's structure and fertility. Just societies protect diverse communities, providing safe places to live, dream, grow, and realize their fullest potential through caring relationships and a culture of belonging. Grassroots organizing protects communities; builds power and capacity for local stewardship of diverse forms of wealth – including cultural capital. As with water, we can ensure the equitable circulation of financial investments through structures like community development financial institutions and credit unions that recirculate capital through cooperative and culturally relevant governance. We can cultivate cover crops or entities and activities that intentionally protect vulnerable groups from oppressive systems, facilitate the robust flow of resources, ease mobility, and expand opportunities to enhance communities' regenerative capacity.

Principle 4: Reforest

Trees are keystone species, nature's anchor institutions upon which the health and biodiversity of complex ecosystems depend. Trees, working in unison, facilitate the robust circulation of essential resources and opportunities across diverse systems. Trees offer protection, prevent displacement, balance the climate, ensure we can breathe, promote beauty, and adapt in dialogue with local conditions.

Efforts to advance just societies invite institutions to act more like trees. Dissatisfaction with democratic institutions is shared globally. Many societies express frustration with institutions that

FIGURE 2. How systems can be transformed through intervention, cultural change, and radical imagination.



impose an idea of the future, leaving little room for citizen participation. We need new organizational structures that encourage widespread civic engagement and amplify society's most abundant source of ideas — its people.

Participatory processes that shift power and center subsidiarity enable inclusive governance and the emergence of imaginative interventions. Creating space for a more diverse range of worldviews to inform the shape and substance of public problem-solving helps restore trust and revitalize modern democracies. Future-facing institutions' primary task would be to create fertile conditions that enable diverse entities to exchange ideas (seedlings), experiment, and continually learn how best to distribute vital resources so entire ecosystems thrive. In short, to facilitate whole systems care.

Principle 5: Foster polycultures

Nature rebuilds soil fertility through awesome cooperation, enabling diverse elements to contribute to the whole's wellbeing. This diversity of resources and expertise provides soil, and living systems more broadly, with limitless ways to experiment, learn, and adapt in service of the whole. Conversely, monocultures, like White supremacy, rob their environments of the fertility generated when diverse entities enjoy shared prosperity. Restorative practices for building

community emphasize the cultivation of polycultures and equitable partnerships, particularly at the edges of systems, where dominant patterns are weakest and opportunities for transformation greatest.

In societies marked by division, efforts to advance regenerative cultures must include opportunities to develop meaningful relationships across all lines of difference and right relationship with this profound diversity. However, actualized justice does not end with the forging of new relationships. Rather, diverse relationships provide portals to accessing a more expansive array of worldviews, which can nourish radical visions of the liberated future to which we are working. Different ways of being and knowing offer limitless ways to frame, understand, and respond to the complex challenges that characterize 21st-century life.

Creative interventions that promote cultural rights¹ support these processes by shifting the atmosphere, enabling individuals to encounter difference, engage in intercultural dialogue, develop critical consciousness, and find common cause — the foundation of imaginative collective action and whole-systems care. Cultural practices and radical imagination can also facilitate transformational learning, the means by which individuals can reconstruct their worldviews.

Consequently, space must be preserved, both physically and psychologically, for this virtuous cycle to occur.

Principle 6: Grow and nourish

Building soil fertility involves transforming death into life through decomposition, fermentation, and digestion, making nutrients bioavailable. In *Conflict Resolution for Holy Beings*, Joy Harjo, an elder of the Muscogee Creek Nation, writes, “The land is a being that remembers everything.” Like cultural memory, compost enriches soil with place-based knowledge that supports learning, energizes adaptation, and nourishes future patterns of being. In fertile soil, transformational change does not result in loss, *per se*, but a repurposing of what was to energize what’s to come.

Regenerative communities leverage the evolutionary power of cultural diversity. Seeing the world through this lens can inspire the imagination and ignite the sense of agency necessary to transform one’s beliefs. By shifting our perspectives, we develop the cognitive flexibility needed to accommodate others’ truths and grow, individually and collectively. Embedded artists, designers, and culture bearers can facilitate these exchanges across groups, sectors, and disciplines — inoculating against attitudes and actions that enable patterns of harm to persist.

Principle 7: Impermanence

Finally, restoring soil fertility requires we embrace impermanence and the fallacy of infinite growth in a finite world. Successive interventions provide soil with evolving opportunities to access different types of nourishment throughout its restoration. Decomposition creates a revolving loan fund that enriches what’s emerging. This cycle of renewal presents opportunities to let go of patterns that no longer support the whole system’s vitality. Cultivating fertile conditions enables new relationships, ideas, identities, and behaviors to emerge today and in the future.

Embracing the possibility that solutions may not be permanent encourages curiosity, ongoing dialogue, and co-creation across multiple lines



Photo courtesy of the author.

of difference. Centering community voice enables partners to continually learn how the world is changing and care for the common good. Transcending fixed notions of what’s possible invites us to reimagine our relationship with vulnerability — not as a weakness, but as a malleable space where we can continually reconstruct how we want to show up in the world.

Embracing impermanence allows us to inhabit time more spaciouly and move in sync with nature’s rhythms.

By slowing down, we can expand our consciousness of time and feel continuity with past and future generations. In seeing our impact on the earth and each other, we can begin to appreciate how our fates are intertwined. In recognizing life’s fragility, we can develop the capacity to practice whole systems care in the present and in ways that resonate across time.

Impermanence illuminates what’s been lost, but also what wants to be found. Humanity is on the cusp of recreating how we live in relationship with all life. This liminal space we’re moving through invites us to embody the future to which we aspire — this is the self-work of transformational change, and it’s within reach to all of us. Cultivating fertile conditions enables new relationships, ideas, identities, and behaviors to emerge.

Join me in learning how you, too, can be a soil keeper.

Kiley Arroyo is executive director at Cultural Strategies Council, established in 2007, as a vehicle for interdisciplinary research, collaborative learning, and justice-centered transformation. She would like to offer her eternal gratitude to Ron Ragin whose wise counsel and thought partnership has been essential in developing these ideas and how they are evolving in practice.

Later this year, Arroyo will be officially launching Soil Keepers, LLC, a new adaptive learning venture rooted in regenerative practice and intercultural approaches to transformational change. Watch <http://www.soilkeepers.org/> for updates.

NOTE

1. Cultural rights are enshrined in Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which the US helped create and remains a signatory of. The article states, “Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.”

Reimagining Public Funding to Reflect America's Most Diverse City

Necole S. Irvin and Deidre Thomas

Setting the Stage

With a population of over 2.3 million and one-in-four residents being foreign-born, Houston is the most ethnically diverse metro area in the nation. The city's arts programs and cultural offerings are robust in number and breadth, and its vibrancy unfolds along the numerous bayous and highways. Most years see 11 to 16 million visitors traveling to the city for arts and cultural events. Houston's nonprofit arts and culture sector, a \$1.1 billion industry, employs more than 25,000 people.

Historically the City of Houston has been committed to strong support of the arts, but structural flaws in its grants processes and community positioning resulted in years of funding marked by ambiguity and underrepresentation of BIPOC communities and emerging programs. A new era of public funding for the arts was ushered in by Houston's adoption of the City's Arts & Cultural Plan in 2015 and the election of Mayor Sylvester Turner in 2016.

The Arts & Cultural Plan set a vision to foster an environment in which the city's art and culture flourishes for the sharing and benefit of everyone. Key recommendations called for grants to be more inclusive, accessible, and reflective of the city's diverse artist community. The grant program reconstruction was spearheaded by us, Necole Irvin and Deidre Thomas, two Black women united in their dedication to revamping the existing system through summoning political will and engaging stakeholders from across the community. In this case study, we detail the development of Houston's remarkable public-private partnership that distributes \$12 million annually to over 300 local artists and arts organizations, a collaboration poised to bolster the city's vibrant art community for years to come.

City of Houston and the Arts

The City of Houston, specifically the Mayor's Office of Cultural Affairs (MOCA), employs a number of strategies to invest in arts and culture for the benefit of the City's residents and to attract visitors. One of these strategies

is funding the work of artists and organizations through the Hotel Occupancy Tax (HOT). For decades city leadership has dedicated the maximum percentage of HOT allowed by Texas law (19.3%) to the arts.

In 2016, HOT dollars were contracted to four legacy partners: Theatre District, Museum District, Miller Outdoor Theater, and Houston Arts Alliance (HAA). The four contractors in turn would distribute funds to organizations vetted through diverging processes. Though the partners have for years contributed to the city's reputation as an arts and cultural beacon and produced cutting edge works that reflect the diversity of Houston, their methods for distributing HOT funds reinforced inequities between large and small organizations. The system did not reflect Houston's increasingly international population, the exponential growth of arts and cultural nonprofits, or the city's culturally diverse art offerings.

A culture of confusion around the City's funding of the arts permeated Houston's cultural landscape, further eroding trust in its fairness and dominating the cultural planning process. In the context of Houston's vigorous philanthropic

[Houston's] funding of the arts while more equitable than private philanthropy was cloaked in hazy information around processes and funding structures, under-recognized, and in need of reform.

ethos — Houston is consistently ranked as one of the country's top cities in terms of total philanthropic assets and percentage of income given to charity — the City's funding of the arts while more equitable than private philanthropy was cloaked in hazy information around processes and funding structures, under-recognized, and in need of reform. Houston Arts Alliance, the local arts agency, was also suffering from severe stakeholder critique.

Time for Change: The City Arts & Cultural Plan

In 2014, The City of Houston embarked on an 18-month endeavor to develop the City's Arts & Cultural Plan, an initiative which focused on making public arts funding more accessible,

transparent, and equitable. The effort involved looking at local data and listening to community residents, artists, arts and cultural groups, a community advisory committee, City staff, elected officials, civic leaders, and industry experts. Hundreds of individuals contributed to the Plan through meetings, interviews, and events, and thousands more accessed the

Arts funders have a long history of gatekeeping that undermines the fair and equitable assessment of perspectives from ethnic, racial, and non-Western populations.

project online. By the end of 2015, Houston's City Council adopted the Plan, which identified community concerns, set a vision for the future, and recommended actions to achieve long-term priorities.

Mayor Sylvester Turner, a long-time state legislator dedicated to the arts, with a track record of securing funding for cultural districts, took office in early 2016 and signaled his support by installing the Plan's chief architect, Debbie McNulty, as the director of MOCA. Over the next four years with Necole as the steward, the City of Houston and HAA put the City's Arts & Cultural Plan in motion. The process required a significant investment from both partners, as well as the involvement of an external consultant. MOCA dedicated over 5,000 hours of staff time and HAA underwent extensive organizational restructuring. Together, both organizations conducted internal and external listening sessions, community meetings, interviews, and work sessions with grantees, artists, organizational leaders, public and private funders, staff, and Board members. The sessions were designed to engage the community in a dialogue focusing on the grantmaking functions of HAA.

Internally, HAA Board members and staff took an in-depth look at the grants system — the mechanics, internal processes, external relationships, communication, outreach, support/technical assistance, and application and decision-making processes. With the goal of transparency in mind, reporting processes were clarified, communication through social media and press releases was enhanced, and details around fund distribution were widely released.

Three specific objectives were particularly important to ensure that the City's Arts & Cultural Plan's and HAA's priorities were fully realized.

- **Dismantling Ivory Tower Perceptions:** Starting in 2018, in a departure from HAA's traditional approach of hosting a handful of workshops at its central Houston office, Deidre led an initiative to hit the road, bringing workshops to neighborhoods across Houston's 655 square miles. Less formal gatherings in culturally familiar settings deepened relationships with community members and increased opportunity awareness. The applicant and panelist pools have, as a result, begun to reflect the vibrant cultural patchwork of Houston. There has been a net increase in new applicants submitting and successfully receiving grant awards across five major grant categories. In the last three years, in three of those categories (which represented 72% of the funding distributed), approximately 32% of grants were awarded to first-time applicants.
- **Transforming Gatekeeper Culture:** Arts funders have a long history of gatekeeping that undermines the fair and equitable assessment of perspectives from ethnic, racial, and non-Western populations. Gatekeeping has taken many forms through the years, including favoring European art forms, aesthetics, and structures; perceiving BIPOC artists and organizations as more of an investment risk; and possessing the unspoken expectation for artists of color to make work about their ethnicity, race, and heritage. Funding outcomes have often excluded local traditions, arts, and cultural activities outside the realm of traditional museums, performance halls, and programs that primarily feature white artists.

HAA's improved evaluation process began with an intentional overhaul of the panelist process. The goal was to better integrate relevant expertise and diverse perspectives, and to confront inherent individual bias. HAA brought individual artists into the review process for organizations, inviting every artist applicant to also consider panel service and ensuring a culturally competent panel selection process.

Panelists are now increasingly reflective of Houston's dynamic population. In the 2019 grant cycle, 78% of panelists represented BIPOC

communities with a range of expertise and perspectives. In the same year, more than 50% of the recipient pool reported a primary constituency of a BIPOC community. There has been a direct correlation of who is receiving grant opportunities and who are evaluators from the field and community. There is continued education of panelists against biases and assumptions pertaining to race, culture and aesthetics.

- **Prioritizing Geographic Equity:**

An integral part of the City's Arts & Cultural Plan was to disperse funds to art entities across Houston, easily accessed by residents in a variety of neighborhoods. HAA created a new mechanism to evaluate the geographic distribution of public dollars and prioritize geographic equity. Applicants report the zip codes where their proposed programs will take place. After reviewing applicant data, applications serving areas with fewer proposed arts activities are weighted. As a result, City resources are finding their way into communities that historically have not been funded. Geographic data reported by applicants has also served as a guide in expanding outreach to ensure that funding continues to flow into underrepresented areas of Houston.

- **Reducing Complexity and Perceived and Real Barriers:** Over the last few years, grants processes have been made less onerous for applicants. The first step was to evaluate the language choices, word counts, work samples, grants platform, number of questions in an application, and types of questions in the applications. A review of years of unsuccessful and successful submissions, panelists' comments, scores led to a better understanding of how to begin asking clearer questions to get more responsive answers. There was also a review



Necole S. Irvin and Deidre Thomas, in one of Houston's seven state-designated cultural districts, Arts District Houston. Mural by local artist Jasmine Zelaya. Photo courtesy of the authors.

of what the appropriate workflow is for an application and how much time it takes for someone to complete the application. Through these learnings, several specific steps have been taken to reduce complexity and barriers. HAA built a more comprehensive grant management system that separates application questions from collected identity and demographic data. This helped

to understand outcomes from inequity perspective while shielding the information from panelists. The new applications questions were supported with examples and guiding prompts to help the applicants build a fuller narrative around their work and programming. Previous applications also created specific parameters on what an emerging vs. established artist is by defining years of practice. Through the evaluation, it became clear that time is not an absolute indicator of success and by asking artists to submit to one of these labels, it created a bias in the evaluation process.

Instead, a new question gives artists space to make a statement about their work to distinguish their strengths. Deidre worked in close partnership with SMU DataArts to create greater integration with other application components. Using this system created adequate parity in the assessment of financials across organizations and provided one efficient way for an organization to communicate their financials. These are the types of small but significant adjustments that make the difference in an applicant's trajectory.

The multi-year process of overhauling MOCA's arts funding process through HAA to build a more equitable, inclusive, and transparent system has been difficult, yet rewarding work. With a new, more fair and equitable grants system at HAA, the next step was to make full use of it by migrating all grant seekers under a unified system. The City determined that HAA would be its principal partner and sole

grantmaking arm and a new longer term contract crafted by Necole was executed in 2019.

The City of Houston is deeply invested in fostering an environment in which art and culture can flourish for the benefit of all residents and visitors. Streamlining the grants process through HAA enhances the organization's ability to provide technical assistance and support to artists and qualified emerging, minority, and mid-sized cultural arts organizations and to expand the arts landscape through the development of new initiatives across all disciplines.

The Impact of Covid-19

Natural disasters — and on a greater scale — the current global pandemic reveal the vulnerability and possibility of depressed public funding. Throughout the months of the Covid-19 pandemic, HAA's grant processes continued,

The events of 2020 — the uncertainty, the civil unrest, the calls for equity, the drastic economic impact felt by the arts and cultural sector — have only affirmed the importance of the City Arts & Cultural Plan and its defining values: equity, inclusion, and transparency.

and valuable lessons were learned about the importance of ongoing communication with stakeholders, especially those new to public funding. To support to the community, HAA offered virtual town halls and artists liaisons, and MOCA approved flexibility to redesign projects as needed. A micro-grant program was transitioned to a new rapid response grant to focus solely on virtual offerings, and raised funds for artist relief grants. The Mayor's Office of Cultural Affairs secured \$5 million of federal CARES funding from the City of Houston allocation that was distributed in two grant relief programs of \$2 million (HAA) and \$3 million (Mid-America Arts Alliance).

Conclusion

From 2014 until 2019 a foundation for a more inclusive grants program was built without knowing we would be facing some of the most challenging years in the history of our city

and country. The tangible accomplishments of the remarkable partnership between the City of Houston and HAA — a streamlined grants process through a single organization, a transparent application process adjudicated by an intentionally diverse peer review panel, and improved promotion of grantees to name a few — cannot be understated. Just as important, however, is the advancement of the partnership's worthy priorities on a city-wide level.

The events of 2020 — the uncertainty, the civil unrest, the calls for equity, the drastic economic impact felt by the arts and cultural sector — have only affirmed the importance of the City Arts & Cultural Plan and its defining values: equity, inclusion, and transparency. In the coming months and years, we aim to strengthen our commitment to these values by co-creating enhanced processes and working to improve accountability practices alongside artists and other community members.

Necole S. Irvin, JD, MPH, cultural tourism officer, Mayor's Office of Cultural Affairs, City of Houston

Deidre Thomas, grants director, Houston Arts Alliance — University of Houston, BS Sociology, minor in African American Studies and certificate in Nonprofit Management

While hailing from different generations, Irvin and Thomas share a cultural heritage, gender identity, and goal of being of service to Houston's creative sector to transform our city's arts grant system. Throughout the process of implementing the City Arts & Cultural Plan, they complemented each other in perspectives, skills, and roles. Their relationship, marked by trust and honesty above all, included the internal and external components essential for systems change. In the words of Irvin and Thomas, "We were generous with each other and showed this same generosity to others. This included not accepting assumptions that we couldn't be the decision-makers, ensuring that prejudice didn't deter the work."

Born, raised, and still identifying as a Southerner, Irvin is a transplant who has engaged in systems change work across various sectors including healthcare and environmental justice. She came into this work with experience in initiating, funding, and sometimes forcing systems to change. Irvin joined MOCA with a consumer's love and spectator's perspective of the creative industry; she was prepared for resistance and given the authority to push forward.

Thomas is a Houston native who grew up surrounded by her neighborhood's ethnic diversity. Equipped with program management skills and corporate experience, she began working with local arts agency Houston Arts Alliance as a grant coordinator. Thomas' work as a volunteer with Americans for the Arts and as a fellow with the Cultural Lab Library earned her notoriety at the national level. Creative problem-solving and process improvement have been central to her career advancement and contributions to this project.

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