# National Discussion on Paths Forward for the American Arts and Culture Sector

## SESSION 2: WHAT STRANDS OF WORK DO WE NEED TO DO TO REALIZE THESE VISIONS?

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# GROUP 1

## Group 1 Transcript

**Speaker 1:** In advocacy, I'm thinking it'd be great to have assistance there from the sector as a whole. I think I just read something in the health of nonprofits that only a quarter of nonprofits advocate or feel they safely can advocate and I think that intimidation right now from the administration is keeping people from advocating perhaps as a sector or from the arts feel threatened. But I honestly, I kind of got a side on where I think we need to focus is having a unified message in having kind of our North Star where we can all focus on, here's why the arts are important to the US, I guess, for lack of a better for how the arts are essential to everyone across the country.

- **Speaker 2 (Facilitator):** Am I right in thinking that part of what you're advocating for is almost a communication strategy, a way to articulate the importance of the arts? And that's a key sector or key focus of area of work?
- **Speaker 1:** That a communication strategy and almost an understanding – maybe we need to put aside our differences within the sector itself to find where we can agree to push forward so that everybody rises up together.

**Speaker 3:** Yes, I'm inspired by the work of Austin County Museum (formerly Austin County Jail) and two arts organizations, Rehabilitation Through the Arts and Musicambia, in public programming. I know it's problematic in talking about working with prisons and the whole issue of mass incarceration is a problem that we're also trying to address, but alongside of that, the work of these organizations [that support arts within prison systems], and I know there are others, are really impressive and really show how the arts can be important in working with people who've experienced trauma, who have opportunities to express themselves. I just want to point to that as a point of inspiration.

- **Speaker 2 (Facilitator)**: It sounds like focusing especially on places (and) work where art has been a key tool for healing, maybe, or addressing trauma is something that you think is important that we should try to capture.

**Speaker 4:** I think we need to focus on education. I think most in this room, at this gathering, will not be active in 20 years. And I want to ensure that those that follow us think of art as important to them as sports. I think making art a necessity for education is really important. That's item one. I



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think item two is making sure that technology works for us and not against us, especially in protecting the human dimension of making art.

- **Speaker 2 (Facilitator):** When you talk about arts education, do you mean in schools, like formal education around the arts? Are you thinking informally or all or both? Can you give us a little bit of texture?
- **Speaker 4:** All and both, all of the above. Everybody in this country has access to the arts as a basic human right. The way that most kids get to play soccer or kick around a kickball or play softball, that this is part of how they develop as human beings. And they are going to have to carry this message forward, so they need that exposure.

**Speaker 5:** There are so many visions of a robust ecosystem of arts organizations and of really thriving artists. I think I'll come back to something that [Speaker] was referencing, which is this idea of how we (develop) a shared messaging or a really strong path to everyone feeling like the arts are essential and essential part of our lives. I was really inspired by the work that the theater community particularly did during the pandemic to quickly get (a broad section of the public) and legislators to understand theater is essential. This is a critical moment for theater and therefore we need to robustly fund this sector. I think there's a way in which we, as a broad art sector, could really learn from that and think about how we can get a shared understanding of the importance of the arts and of artists and the need for funding. Related to that, I'm also inspired by the model of the WPA and the idea that when there is crisis, what we need to do as a nation, as a community, is to invest in artists and that they will lead the solutions and the healing.

**Speaker 6:** I'm probably here today because when [Speaker] first did a post over the summer where he said it's time for a national arts owned by the people, I sent him a picture from Madison Square Park from the 1870's with the Statue of Liberty's torch there, where everyone, the public was invited to be part of this. It was a local effort and a national effort. Instead of talking about what [Speaker] said, I guess I'll segue into that. That's something that inspired me, and I thought it was something that was missing during the pandemic when the government responded at all levels surprisingly well, the foundation sector did so, and everybody scrambled after individual giving, but there was never any chance for us to be asked to do it as a community. Related to that, one other example, without going too deep since everyone else needs a chance to speak, is what [Speaker] talked about, the plan that he was part of, that whole process, the people in action, democracy in action. And going back to 2007, 2008, the whole [Organization] reform in New York, however imperfect, but increasingly made more perfect over the years, it went from a situation where you could not get real funding from the city unless you had an earmark from a council member, to something that was peer-based, community-based, it involved your panelists that included both government



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officials, corporate people, individuals, and people from the field. I think we need to be looking at models that we can replicate elsewhere. I don't know how to do that on a national scale, but we can do it statewide, we can do it in core areas and then fill in the gaps with other forms of support nationally.

- Here's the torch photo I mentioned: https://fineartamerica.com/featured/1880s-statue-of-liberty-torch-vintage-images.html?product=art-print

**Speaker 7:** I think we should focus on a really radical expansion of the voices we hear from in the arts. My office did a little survey, not very scientific. We checked two years of what plays were being produced in America across the country. In both of those years, more than 50% of the new plays produced came from the graduates of only four schools, three of them Ivy Leagues. And this is undemocratic and it's also insane because unless we hear from people with different backgrounds, we're not going to understand each other, and you only need to go back to the election of 2016 to realize how little different parts of the country understand each other. I think we need to invest in artists said in the last panel, for 60 years we've been investing in arts institutions who are deeply empowered by their boards, so we've gradually developed not only an institutional-centric but a board-centric situation. I benefited from that for my years at [Organization], but it's not good, it's not healthy, and we need to return to investing and artists, and there are a million ways to do that. I will say my great inspiration in all of this is a playwright who we better known as a president, and that is Vaclav Havel, who in 1977, 20 years before the Soviet Union collapsed, said the most important thing is to live in the truth. You'll probably be punished for it, and in my office, we spend a lot of time saying, well, what price are we willing to pay for speaking the truth? Havel went to prison. I don't think anybody, well, I take it back. I don't think any of us are going to prison for saying what we think. But that guides our thinking at [Organization] every day. Let's just say the truth. It was a good model, this not-for-profit institution model, for 60 years. It doesn't really work anymore. I'm going to put in the chat an assembly we are doing at which, if you're in the [Location] area, you are welcome to attend on the [Date]. Similar today, we're going to invite people to come and say, here's how the arts world in [Location] could be better. I love being with you here today.

**Speaker 8:** How do we get artists working with other sectors to create projects that speak for those sectors, so that we have a range of arts, productions, projects that reflect the diversity of the country, that reflect all the different problems that are faced by this country, and that this administration has put on steroids. I really think that the arts cannot do it by themselves. We've been talking about silos within silos, and it's really important that the artists are there to minister to the population and the arts industry has to be there to support them to do that. How do we do it in a myriad of different ways? I believe we were talking about investment. As we move forward, we need to come up with



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a list of demands for the arts community. I think it's obviously the advocates have to do this because they're the ones that are walking in the of corridors of power to ask, but why are we not saying that the National Endowment for the Arts should be funded at the same per capita head as the Canada Arts Council Why not? It was time to remake that type of thing. Or as my friend [Speaker], another thing my friend [Speaker] said when we were at APAP this week, when it comes to Americans for the Arts, why do we not have all of our audience be able to become members of Americans for the Arts? Even if it's just that they get, they pay $1 extra for a ticket to become a member, a non-privileged member of Americans for the Arts, just so that when Americans for the Arts speaks, they're speaking on behalf of millions of people, not just the people from the arts, but all of our audience members as well. Because they're in every state and every part of the country, and they impact every single elective race. I'm inspired by the work of a volunteer organization from New York. We just had a training in [Location] this weekend. And there's Anjali Deshmukh, who runs Streetworks and Make Justice Normal. They're a volunteer run organization. They have a tiny budget, and yet everything they do is a collaboration with a non-art sector community group or population. And I'm going to put their web address in the chat as well. That's what's inspired me. It's just because it inspired me this weekend.

**Speaker 9:** For me, thinking about where we need to focus, I think a lot about 2045 and the need to focus on a new generation of leaders in the sector, however that gets defined. I think I'm a thousand percent on supporting the artists, but even as we move to different kinds of structures in the arts and different kinds of organizations, there's still going to be a need for smart leaders who are there to support the artists and help bring their work to life and connect them with audiences. I think investing in lowering barriers to make that happen, thinking about [Speaker]'s comment about the students he gets to work with at [Organization] now and recognizing that there's wonderful university programs. I'm (an) adjunct professor in one of them for the next generation of leaders, but there's a lot of folks out there who aren't going to have those opportunities and yet are no doubt going to be some of our brightest voices. What I'm inspired by is, frankly, Gen Z. I'm a dad of one. I live here in [Location], where my kid has been very in the sunrise movement, the climate movement. These kids are fierce and they are ready to change the world, and they will be in charge in 2045. I think it would behoove us as a sector to find ways to give them opportunities to lead.

- **Speaker 2 (Facilitator):** I'm curious whether you have more thoughts about what that looks like. What does it look like to give like to focus on leadership development or leadership opportunities for Gen Z today? Obviously, there's school programs, but I don't know that that's necessarily what you're thinking. I'm curious to hear more about what, how, how you see that, how that might play out. What (are) the strands (of) work that need to happen?



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- **Speaker 9:** I can give you a tiny case study from what we're doing. We're a tech company, but we're nonprofit. One of the things that we do is a program we call the early career development program. It's for arts administrators who are earlier in their careers, they don't have to use our software, from historically excluded populations. It's some training, in this case, it's software training, but it's also mentorship. We assign mentors from our community who come from similar backgrounds. And then it also includes guest speakers from the sector. They become a cohort, it's like a light version of what Sphinx is doing, but this specifically around tech. These are future leaders who have a particular interest in arts and in technology. We've had like 300 graduates now, and it's just amazing to see the cohorts that they have created with one another, but then to see them already moving into bigger and more impactful roles as a result.

**Speaker 10:** A couple practical things that I have learned since transitioning from nonprofit presenting to working for cities. One is the opportunity for the art sector to learn from non-art sectors about how they're being innovative and they're doing stuff way at the forefront in the future. I'm just always in awe of how behind I am or what a relic it is that I'm trying to sustain. Just to give you an example, I learned a lot about how to become an advocate. I can't imagine there's this world of advocates out there advocating on my behalf. What I've learned is that when the community advocates on behalf of itself for the arts, change happens. And I learned that from the bike lobby. The bike lobby is like, we want a bike lane down the street, we press one button, 50,000 emails go out, every council member, the mayor responds, a bike lane happens. The arts community has no tool or capacity, in my town, has no tool or capacity to do that. So really on a local level, what we can learn and just advocacy as a thing. Another thing in terms of the next generation, what I'm really finding is the need for it to develop programs locally for multi-generational relationship building. That isn't about one or the other, but it's about not just the top five directors of any city gets invited to every single meeting. It's everyone along the spectrum. If somebody wants to be an arts leader at this point in their 20s, and all we do is tell them they can't, then there has to be a way of encouraging, mentoring, teaching, and bridge building and relationship building. The last I would say is, develop more programs specifically targeted to get money quickly out the door to artists to self-diagnose how they need, in their own communities, what to do. In our community, they're frontline workers, they know how to understand how to create, heal, repair their own communities, and trust the artists to do that. And the competitive grants process is super debilitating, and to work with institutions, foundations, cities, or whatever, that process is really intimidating. There has to be a way to reduce that labor, really get the money out there so that they can self-generate the innovation and creativity that happens in communities. That's what I've been witness to since I've started this position three years ago.



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**Speaker 11:** I have been really struck by how community arts organizations, even very small community arts organizations, are getting support to artists in ways that are meaningful and are able to take on really risky projects. We are partnering with [Organization], an artist-run community arts space in our community. [Location] has a law that bans 17 institutions from higher learning, banned from using 17 words and 81 related concepts. These words include both heterosexuality and homosexuality, which leaves me with not much space to talk about people. [Organization] wrote and received a grant from the [Organization] that is allowing them to bring artists, train community-based activists, and launch programs related to our exhibitions that we can't do. It's a really great example of how museums and community arts organizations can work together and, in the process, get money directly to artists. Just one idea.

**Speaker 12:** I want to add quickly, as we talk about wanting to hear from everyone, we make sure that everybody includes rural, states from the middle, even places where a kid doesn't find themselves or see themselves reflected in the community where they live. Not everybody feels as passionately as we do about the arts, but the arts continue to happen in those places and in those spaces.

**Speaker 13**: I'm very inspired by another museum program, which celebrated 10 years of their work within the communities, which is the social integration and action program, more extramural than intramural. And for that, we have brought already more than 90 artistic commissions within the communities, all the different activities within. My aspiration, what we really right now need to focus on, is social transformation, community building, and the promotion of social justice through arts and arts education. Saying that is to work in the interdisciplinary ways of offering artistic education which transforms and integrates with all the classes in the school. We have also those programs here in the place within the museum, but it should be available for every kid since early age, and that will be seen when we have the other people talking with us, they don't have value for the arts and culture. Politicians, they don't have value for (the) arts. We really need to work, our Executive Director, every year need(s) to go and talk about the museum because there's no knowledge there, no understanding of the value of the arts and culture very often. That's why I'm advocating for that early stage of arts education and not the, again, looking at interdisciplinary ways of seeing that, not the way of just learning the techniques of the arts and aesthetics of the arts. The other part that I think that we need to really invest a lot is in the well-being of our communities, because they very often are forgotten, they are not visible, only part of our communities are visible, but their problems and the richness of their culture and what they have given to the society development within the country is not so visible. I think that through the arts you can really do a lot of things and you can offer enriching experiences, you can help go over the hardships and right now the communities



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and the displacement, but everything that happens all around, I think that arts are so essential and our work we do for that is very essential.

**Speaker 14:** It'll seem small after the beautiful big picture statement now, but I think it was [Speaker] who said moving money fast is crucial. It's built into the system that we move money slowly. You owe me $200. I don't care if I get it next month. You say to a young person, a young artist, or a working-class artist, you're not going to get that until next year, next month, they can't pay the rent. They can't buy food. It's another reason those people don't participate in our system. It's just not financially viable. As we think about nuts and bolts of how to make things better, I would say being able to get people money in a speedy and appropriate way would be important.

**Speaker 15:** As we're thinking about how we support artists, I also want to encourage us to not think in a dichotomous way about supporting either organizations or artists. We were part of the Literary Arts Emergency Fund, which was a COVID relief project with the Mellon Foundation, Academy of American Poets, and the Community of Literary Magazines and Presses that distributed funds to about 400 organizations around the country. One of the things we learned from that data is that 90% of those organizations have poets and writers on staff. Of them, the majority of their staff are poets and writers. I think until we have a moment where writers can sustain themselves with adequate support, a lot of artists are sustaining themselves through work at arts and culture organizations as a path to making their art. I think sometimes when we're supporting organizations, we are also supporting working artists, and it's important to hold that piece also.

**Speaker 16:** I say this understanding I don't know how to do it well, but I think we need more investment in sector building, building sector awareness of what I will call the arts and cultural sector here. I know that there's all these organizations out there, we're having this meeting today, there was a lot of activity out there dedicated to it. But I think we need more targeted investment toward, for lack of a better way of saying it, better sector building, so that we become a more effective force in policy circles throughout the government.

- **Speaker 2 (Facilitator):** Can I push a little bit on that? When you say, what does that look like, what does it mean to be a better built sector?
- **Speaker 16:** I'm going to talk from the experience of being in state government, so that's not everybody's experience, but what we're trying to do and what I previously did under my former boss, is we're trying to show up and make sure that the arts is represented in every single policy discussion. I show up at energy siting facilities board meetings, at housing groups, at economic development at chamber of commerce meetings because people should always be thinking what is the impact on the arts or on the cultural sector or what does the cultural sector think about this particular issue and if we're not there they don't



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know what we think and they don't care what we think. We were having a meeting in a local community, talking about, complaining about what the school board was doing with arts education and we were all in this meeting and they said, well, they're downtown right now talking about this. And we said, well, why aren't you there at the hearing? Why are we talking to each other complaining about it? And again, that's not criticizing the sector. That's just saying we need a more effective way to organize to get our message to be heard.

**Speaker 17:** I'd like to hear what people think about the placemaking movement, the art murals, festivals, public art, as a focus for the future, because I've been inspired by seeing in many cities, [Location] comes to mind, but many other places that has a real opportunity, I think, for showing the power and impact of the arts.

**Speaker 18:** Thanks for that question. I can just tell you my experience recently, which is the idea for the range of public art to transform how cities think about themselves as they've been decimated by the loss of businesses. The role of public art, to me, is like the 21st century language about how cities teach their communities how to love their communities again and to come back into the communities. For our city, we're really leaning into how the arts and culture will be the center of it within five years versus it was formerly retail or whatever. But I will tell you this, that this conversation really started with business owners who are just more interested in finding new tools to make more money, not business owners, but building owners to make more money off their buildings and not about what was happening artistically and aesthetically in their city. I hosted just recently a two-day think tank called [Organization], where I invited historians, architects, storytellers, and artists to create new language about ways to think about new perspectives about what a city has the potential to be. It was a really healthy and interesting conversation. There will be a lot of next steps, but I think that I don't know where the world of placemaking is or how I think there's some tension around that specifically, but I will say the way that cities are really leaning into sort of the range of public art, immersive environments, recreating welcoming atmospheres through that lens is a really big conversation in cities right now.

**Speaker 19:** Following up on what [Speaker] was saying about public art, I just think, I couldn't agree more, but I think it's the participation in the creation as opposed to the exposure. I didn't adequately articulate that when I was talking about education, but I think it's that actual tactile sensation about picking up a brush or banging on a drum that is what makes arts advocates... organizations like Ork Kids at Baltimore, sponsored by the Baltimore Symphony, and Philadelphia Music Alliance for the Youth, musical instruction. All of those graduates are going to college. They may not become musicians, but they're going to become arts advocates. I really want to hold up that tactile sensation about making art.



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**Speaker 20:** I just wanted to follow up on what [Speaker] was saying in terms of placemaking as it's just a caveat. It's a good thing, but I've seen instances where it's led to gentrification and displacement. It's like the artists are being used to raise the prices of everything. We just have to be careful about that. I'm all for the idea of artists working in communities. I think we have to be careful as to who's initiating it and what their motives are for doing so, and make sure that that's always front and center as well.

**Speaker 21:** In terms of focus, it's funny, as I was listening, I think early on somebody said about the nonprofit model for the arts is worn out. I did say something along the lines of that in the previous session that I was in. I can't seem to get past that as far as there needs to be a focus on leading us out of that and into whatever the next thing is. We've spent a couple of years, and we're now out there trying to start an investment arm. I mean, it's all legal and everything. We just have to get investors, so we're doing it. We're doing something different. It dawns on me that we really are sort of doing this in a vacuum. We're plugged in via [Organization] and so forth, but we're doing it in a vacuum. I want us to find on building whatever this new thing is, because we do know that the traditional nonprofit where we're sort of supplicants to, we partner with the government for seed funding, and then we go as supplicants to philanthropists, and then they remind us that we really ought to be focusing on earned income. We just keep cycling through the earned (revenue), the philanthropy, the government (revenue). What's next? I could be like a sponge on hearing. What's next?

**Speaker 22:** I think we need to look towards the model of the commons and really begin to think about shared resources in the field. Arts organizations, we compete with one. In that old model that we're trying to get rid of, we are competing with one another for that private support, for the government dollars, our whole field is organized around competition. If we could just chuck that and start to think about ourselves collectively, we can really make far better use of resources. We can begin to share audience, share collections in ways that libraries have been doing for a hundred years and more. Libraries are our model. The library has been leaning into the concept of the commons for 50 years. They have figured it out. We just need to follow it. I have an MLS and I worked for years as a research librarian for going into museums. I just wrote an article about this. It's in the pipeline at a journal. We'll see if they publish it. If they do, I'll send you all a link. I don't really care about the credit, I just want it to happen. I think we need to start thinking beyond competition and towards commons.

**Speaker 23:** I'm aware that I sound kumbaya-ish sometimes when I say get it to the arts and not the institutions. Let me offer an example. There's a mid-sized, very distinguished mid-sized, small to mid-sized theater in [Location], where if you write a play that they produce, you get $15,0000 —



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that's not good enough. But now set it against the fact that the Artistic Director of that theater makes $600,000. So five playwrights have $75,000 and this Artistic Director - and this is all on people's Form 990s - is making six times that. This is what I mean about the model is messed up. Why does this Artistic Director make this money? Because the Board is happy with the work. These are real inequities, and they just shouldn't be that hard to address, really.

**Speaker 24:** I'm a graduate student in arts administration in [Location]. I think I bring a unique perspective as a young contributor entering this field. I also went to high school in a remote rural area where, you know, Trump country. There were people in my graduating class. Our government class was military people coming and trying to recruit. So military recruiters and sports. When you think about that, the few opportunities that I had in that rural area to have access to the arts was so important to my trajectory. I challenge everyone in this conversation to consider that you're in an echo chamber and you're talking to a lot of people that have the same viewpoints as you. Lean into discomfort. Try to find empathy, even though it's really challenging, with the people that are putting these cuts on the entire system that we are reliant on for our livelihoods. I think of during the NEA initial cuts in the 80s, and the people that were really responsive, they were outraged by, you know, Andrea Serrano, whose work was, not meant to be blasphemous. He was actually a huge supporter of the Catholic Church. We have to understand how sometimes we are being tone deaf and that infusions of capital with the intent of inspiring economic growth might be projects that are stupid. That people that are living without their basic needs being met see these arts projects as things that are not helpful to them. In [Location] there's a lot of infusions of capital and art projects that are happening in extremely underrepresented communities and they see these things happening and they say that's not for me, that's for the new people, that's for New [Location], that's for affluent people and I don't feel welcome and that's not part of what I can even enter into. Turn it on yourself and think about how you're not in community with people that are opposed to you and that for collaboration to really happen, we have to have difficult conversations with people that we don't like.

**Speaker 25:** Some of what I just heard, I certainly, working from Nebraska to Texas as an advocate, I walk into a lot of offices where they do not feel the power of the arts like I do or love the arts like I do. [Speaker], I know those Trump countries. I drive through those Trump countries. I live in many ways in that part of the world. But it's so interesting how many people think, oh, you live there, so you must think like that. And it's like, no, that is not true. We need to make room for these differences, right? How do we have these conversations? That gets back to communications and definitions. Because in [Location], an organization that can pay an Artistic Director $600,000 is seen as small. Honestly, it is not a small arts organization when you look at the definition of one. Getting, seeing differences in communities, in messaging, in definitions even could be some of the work to



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do. Just using the same language or knowing that in one place it might shift from meaning to another meaning in another place...and the arts may happen in a rural community...they occur. It's just not the same places or with the same vocabulary or even the same words and lyrics that it would happen in a bigger community with more diverse populations.

**Speaker 26:** Absolutely. And I think that also speaks to, I think, within arts and culture, we've had for a long time a lot of rigidity, hierarchy, our own sort of struggles with elitism, right? What kind of art is worthy? What kind of art is excellent? There's some internal work that we likely need to do. This is a very little story, but my cousin works with the WWE folks, and took me to a wrestling match, my first match over the last summer. It was really striking to me because I don't think I had thought about it as an artistic pursuit. Of course, you go there and you see that this is entirely theater, it's really interesting. Then the people that go there and how people conceive of and identify what the arts are, even within the community, I think is a really interesting challenge and maybe also an opportunity for us to break down some of those barriers.

**Speaker 27:** Over the course of my career, there's something that has gone backwards, which is that government is actively hated. I deal with so many libertarian types and people who we have to fight through even the idea that taxation is okay. To me, I think this whole thing started with advocacy. I kind of feel like I could spend a lot of effort, and I do advocating with the local government to fund us. Then when I'm dealing with actual people who have real means who could provide funding, just having to fight around the concept that government is okay, it would be helpful to have resources that can frame the usefulness and importance of the arts as to be integrated into every aspect of society that doesn't make us come off like we're going around with our hands out. I hope that that made sense.

## Group 1 Chat

1. Art museums need an equitable, inclusive professional network. I have an article coming out about this soon. In general, the arts need to be much better networked.

2. On the WPA model front, I encourage folks to review the outcomes from the Arts for EveryBody program of One Nation One Project: https://www.onenationoneproject.com/
    a. Arts For EveryBody: https://www.artsforeverybody.org/

3. We the People: An Assembly of NY Artists. Jan 26 details at https://www.workingclassartists.org/

4. https://www.street-work.org/



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5. Are individual artists eligible for the funding or policy benefits of the Performing Artist Tax Parity Act (PATPA)?
    a. https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/2871

6. To [Speaker's] point: I believe that we need to focus on scaling arts-based wellbeing and social prescribing models through research partnerships, policy alignment, and accessible delivery systems. Because creative participation reduces isolation, strengthens mental health, and builds connection – and those outcomes are increasingly urgent across every community. I continue to be inspired by the work of Dr. Jill Sonke, Art Pharmacy, who (has) a social prescribing partnership for a (college) campus and local community in Winston-Salem, NC and UNCSA, and the system level work that the Mass Cultural Council has been able to implement over the last 5 years in this space.

7. Museums Moving Forward has done great work on this topic.
    a. https://museumsmovingforward.com/

8. There's an excellent book about this called Entering Cultural Communities. https://www.rutgersuniversitypress.org/entering-cultural-communities/9780813578750

9. I'd like to lift up the work that Michael Rohd is currently doing with communities across the country around imagining and facilitating conversations across divides: https://michaelrohd.com/summer-2026-facilitation-workshops/

10. Factoid from Independent Sector: 75% of nonprofits surveyed in 2022 have never lobbied and 69% of nonprofits were unaware they were legally permitted to talk to elected officials about public policy https://healthysector.org/public-policy-advocacy/



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# GROUP 2

## Group 2 Transcript

Not available.

## Group 2 Chat

1. https://philanthropy.blogspot.com/
2. https://philanthropy2173.ghost.io/
3. 110%, and the need to bravely challenge the impact AI is having/can have not only on the rights and economic support of individual creators, but the emerging data on its destructive impact on human capacity for creativity and critical thinking.
4. Not everything has to "scale". As we are dreaming, how do we feel about the 20-year prospects for universal basic income, or guaranteed income for artists?
5. I think we need to be exploring all sides of the A.I. "revolution". We need artists exploring the use of A.I. to heighten certain experiences, and we need artists who run in the direction of technology-free expression and creativity. There are billions of us. We need creativity in every direction and shouldn't in-fight ourselves away from creativity in all its many forms.
6. We can have art + technology. We can have art + humanity. We can have it all.
7. I am very concerned about any policy that separates "artists" from their neighbors – affordable housing for artists only, guaranteed income for artists only. We need to be supporting the creativity and wellbeing of everyone in our communities
8. https://read.dukeupress.edu/books/book/2804/The-Play-in-the-SystemThe-Art-of-Parasitical
9. Prefer UBI (as opposed to limiting to certain classes) because we should support people doing history, science, etc. as well as art.
10. Legally (some) foundations cannot support advocacy or lobbying except for certain circumstances.



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11. https://www.americansforthearts.org/by-program/reports-and-data/legislation-policy/naappd/sales-taxes-for-the-arts-0 In addition to numbers, I think we need a tangible call-to-action at the ballot box that expresses this and is on the ballot in multiple states to start.
12. In our previous group, someone articulated a vision for our organizations thinking and acting more like public libraries.
13. I think [Speaker] points, and the earlier discussion of policy moves are connected in that there is a larger question about how and where we have influence and power. For example, I think it's great that the unions are influencing tech policy in CA, but it also feels "late"- how can we think beyond policy that directly impacts the arts and participate in the bigger picture which ultimately affects our fate as creatives.



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# GROUP 3

## Group 3 Transcript

**Speaker 1:** There are protections for some. There are many who have no protections. I would, in a dream world, like to see some ways in which there could be a sense of responsibility and sort of collegiality across all of these things. I'll just point to one moment during the Golden Globes. I thought it was kind of an interesting thing when George Clooney decided to take on the criticism of Paul Dano by Quentin Tarantino, it was a sort of an interesting moment where on national television, one artist decided to call out another major artist for having criticized someone in a pretty rude way. And it was a moment where someone decided to step forward. There's something there, I think. How does the commercial support the nonprofit better? How does everyone, in fact, see themselves as part of a greater ecology, as opposed to separate pieces, which I think have not been really advancing the field.

**Speaker 2:** My background is really in the technology space. I co-founded [Organization] a few years back, and I'm advising [Company], which has developed I think what will, especially in the music field, be some very, very impactful technology that allows cameras and video capture to happen, automated, triggered by music. But I also have done some consulting with arts organizations over the last few years. When you look towards the future, I think what we really need to do is take deep stock and where we are now, and what constraints the field is facing now. Not on a funding basis and not complaining, oh, funders need to do this, or we need more government funding, and we need less government funding. I think as a sector, we need to look at what real restrictions are impacting arts organizations on a day-to-day basis. In the digital streaming world, we've had a huge amount of issues with union agreements, (being) draft(ed) in a way where unions are basically just making up use cases. You know, for the theater world, the Actors' Equity kind of streaming agreements are a good example of that. The working to focus on skill building and really capacity building with organizations and knowing what good looks like, I mean, my operating assumption in the 15, 20 years I've been doing this has just been, it's not that there's no demand for the arts, it's not that there's demand audiences is that arts organizations and their focus primarily on a live or in-person product and the field support of that has basically caused the arts to disengage from the algorithms that the rest of the world deals with and interacts with and uses for discovery. So, the arts in a lot of ways have just become undiscoverable and so by addressing some of these issues on a base level, there needs to be some real investment back into the fourth estate. This needs to be prioritized because that's also going to feed into that discovery. But listen, "butts in seats" is not a sustainable business. It has never been a sustainable business. You are spending



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more money to reach fewer people. That's a mindset that to get to, I think, where we need to be 20 years from now. That's got to change, and it's got to change sooner rather than later.

One of the use cases that came out during the pandemic, and I was working on a number of theater deals at the time, and what killed all of them, was the actors. Actors' Equity basically sort of stepped on SAG-AFTRA's toes and created this language that allowed for arts organizations or theater companies to stream, and they didn't really consult with, I think, anybody that knew what they were talking about. The agreement that they came up with turned out to be so constrained that the only way any theater company or anybody operating under this agreement could operate was to lose a lot of money and to take a lot of risk. I do think the camera technology that I mentioned before actually has a chance to change that. I see this time and time again, where multiple parties have these conversations. Without, again, in a very, very siloed manner and end up blowing it. That agreement, when you look at it, it's so limiting that it was really, I mean, it was catastrophic. It's catastrophic for a good six years. I don't think a single, I don't want to say a single, but it's really hampered, at least in theater and in the equity theater world, the ability to do meaningful (work) and to reach audiences in a meaningful way digitally.

**Speaker 3:** I believe that we should really focus on a more aggregate accounting of the benefit flows. Those can be monetary or community-based, but I think most of us, we do a lot of this work in [Location], and what I see is that most of us have localized accounting, of what these benefits are, but because they're so localized, it makes it difficult to kind of use that data in order to like leverage that data with public policy or with corporate individuals. If there was a better like national accounting of the benefits of arts and culture, both quantitative and kind of community based, I think we could use those numbers because we know they're huge to really put pressure on the public sector and even the corporate sector. In the previous breakout session that I was in, we were talking about how there's leakage in that the money that's coming out of the creative sector does not flow back into the grassroots of what creates sector. I don't know what that number is, but I think you could pencil it out and say that for every dollar that the creative sector creates, only 20 cents of that goes back into inspiring young people or whatever that is. So, some better like aggregate accounting of the benefits and the power of arts and culture. And then, how do we leverage that with those that control the purse strings?

**Speaker 4:** I believe we need to focus on new business models and community engagement strategies with cross-sector collaborations to get artists a seat at the table wherever community decisions are being made so that arts organizations can thrive and they can help their communities thrive. I have succeeded at doing this with [Organization] with a business model that's been written up in a case study by [Publication] through collaborations with corporations, nonprofits, and



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government agencies in [City]. I think we need to have more business model innovation and new community engagement work nationally.

**Speaker 5:** I've been in the performing arts for over five decades, which means I have a lot of bad habits. I agree with [Speaker]. We need to find a brand new operating model that works for the artists and that actually works for institutions as well. I think what we're seeing right now is all of our pillars, our structures, there's like tonic changes and all the areas that we are actually feeling. So how do we future fit the arts into this brand new world? I believe we need to look at day shared services model because without the ability to have revenue and you simply can't function. I believe that we should pivot from hundreds of isolated nonprofits to collaborative ecosystem so we're really working with each other. We're sharing information. We're understanding the entire sector at large by being involved in those groups. Lastly, I think that we have to look at joint collection commissioning works and co-commissioning works and really do this in tandem with each other in our various disciplines or even cities, because it's no longer, working in isolation, I think it's going to become, I feel is becoming more and more difficult. And that's what I've been thinking about.

**Speaker 6:** I'm currently working on many projects, and I'm evolving an idea around global arts and culture with a tagline of empowered, embedded, unlimited. And in my last session, people kept using embedded. And I thought, yeah, that's part of it. I just wanted to say, I was inspired and continue to be inspired by the coalition that came together during the pandemic to advocate for saving our stages. And the $16 billion that came from the federal government as a result and the thing that was so inspiring about it is that it was Amy Klobuchar and a Texas Senator, whose name I'm forgetting right now, but it was a bipartisan effort. It was across parts of our sector. So, it was performing arts, as most of you probably know, but also it was small music venues in rural areas. It was large opera houses. It was everybody coming together. That was in response to a very specific time and challenge. Plus the nonprofit arts getting funded by the Small Business Administration for the first time through Paycheck Protection Program and so on. I just think about that as a collective response, major collective response during a particular crisis. The other side of it is that sometimes we're dealing with things that are not a very specific crisis. It's what we're talking about right now, the dreams, like what are the things that we hope will be different in five years, 10 years, 20 years, and what I'm thinking, so this goes, I believe we need to focus on, or maybe you need more investment in, how we stay the course, even when it seems like the thing that we are trying to solve for is not as clear. Because sometimes, and our researchers who are facilitators today, so [Speaker], you know this, [Speaker], of course, it's, you know, if you don't do the work, consistently over time. Some things you might think you want to solve in two years or four years, but it actually is going to take 20 years. If people drop off and drop out, or don't continue to collect the data, or the focus shifts and nobody pays attention for five years, and then we all come back to it and have this conversation again, it makes it more difficult to achieve the ultimate Hopefully that was clear. I was



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trying to give an example of something that worked as well as something that I admired that worked as well as not that was without flaws, but as well as kind of more philosophical. How do we move forward and stay the course in a way that's consistent? Because we will achieve our goals.

- **Speaker 7 (Facilitator):** I want to just ask a follow-up question to that: What is it that we should be [doing to] stay the course? What specific things or big juicy topics? What are the things?
- **Speaker 6:** Well, I don't know. I guess what I'm meaning is we're all gathered here today and possibly in the future to talk about our vision for the future. We're also going to be laying out some very specific things and need to be accomplished. It's more an advanced thought about staying the course as we identify those things. When I came into [Organization], people were constantly, we were gathering these intergenerational leaders of color groups at our conferences, [Name] and others at [Organization] were doing that. It was powerful because those groups grew every year, saying, we've been talking about this forever. Nothing changes, nothing changes, nothing changes. And nothing changes in part because there's a focus on it for a short period of time. Everybody's like, we got to do this, and then the focus shifts. Some of these big things that we're talking about in these breakouts are going to take a group of people saying, and not just a group of people, but the larger sector ecology saying, yeah, we're going to focus on these things, whatever these things are that we identify. It's going to be something that we're going to continue on and evolve over a long haul. That's what I meant.

**Speaker 8:** One of the common threads that came out of some of the reasoning in my first group was around recognizing the arts and artists as essential civic infrastructure. I think some of the focus that we need to give toward that that vision is recognizing and kind of illuminating more data-driven value of the arts kind of beyond the economic impact that it has in our communities, but the health benefits, the other kind of social benefits that arts has. Artists are doing so much work in cross-sector initiatives, and they're key to the health of our democracy, as far as I'm concerned. I think that we need to do a better job of having common data to illuminate that. Then I also think that one of the things, and forgive me, the prompt, was like focus and investment. Forgive me, I don't remember the questions. But the other kind of area that I think that we need to think about is some of the civic infrastructure that we have to support workers and the kind of workers that artists are. Somebody mentioned universal healthcare, but I also think talking about portable benefits models and ways that artists can have those key protections that somebody else mentioned, given the kind of work that they do and the way that they work, is something that we could use more investment in. We could also align with other labor movements that are looking into this for other kinds of gig workers that I think would help strengthen the sector.



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**Speaker 9**: One of the key things we've got to focus on, and it's probably been something I've been banging the drum about for a while, is how we communicate the value of the arts. That needs to start at a community level, which the best way to do that is through learning. We still put the arts at the edges instead of central to learning. I would love to see us looking at the research that's already been done and is active. In particular, I am a huge fan of Project Zero at Harvard University and the work they're doing around making thinking visible. This isn't just about us producing the next generation of artists. This is about us producing the next generation of civil leaders, of thinkers, of entrepreneurs, the kind of civil agents we need in a society that right now. I'm not sure school is producing that. So, what role do arts organizations play in that shift? The big thing for me is how can I invest the weight and the bandwidth of an institution like an art museum to demonstrate that huge value of creating critical and creative thinkers for the future. How do we maximize, I think, what you were saying, [Speaker], we need the research, but we also got to communicate the research so that we can change the public perception. For example, Project Zero, most of their major research collaborators, like Lego, schools in Norway, Reggio Emilia schools, I mean, there are places in the world where people value the arts as central to what we need in society. We have not established that yet.

**Speaker 10:** I'm inspired by the ocean towers in Los Angeles, the towers that the graffiti artists have taken over and made into a giant public art experience. There's been a massive resurgence in graffiti all over the country. They're literally rappelling down buildings. I'm inspired by the fan fiction Reddit world. There are people who are rewriting every major novel to make characters fall in love with each other and making backstories for every major pop character. I'm inspired by the tattoo industry, which has doubled in size in the last year and is 59% female employed. I'm inspired by all of the arts that are succeeding in spite of us. I'm inspired by the resilience of people and the inherent understanding that they have of the power of art and creativity and that are often ignored by our institutional arts programs. I think in order for us to move forward, we need to reckon with that. We need to have real honest conversations about arts and culture and how those two things intersect and play. I think we need to have honest conversations about if we are working for the survival and the well-being of institutions or the survival and well-being of arts and culture. And those are two different things and our infrastructures are built for the first and not for the latter.

**Speaker 11 (Facilitator 2):** I actually had a question and I'm only putting this because we're in this workflow or work strands kind of conversation. Because of where I sit in terms of research, since research was mentioned a couple of times, you don't have to speak to this, but this is, I'll throw this in there in this context is research the kind of research you're looking for or that you've articulated. I heard people talk about research, Project Zero was referenced, and research on, if you will, validating some of the things we know about the arts and how they integrate with health or education. But there's also research about delivery of services, right? Not that the two are



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incompatible. I'm just curious, do you all see a need for research within the frame of those workflows? Particularly around not so much just case-making, not that that's not important, but research for something else.

**Speaker 12:** What should we be thinking about in terms of investment? I think, and we talked about this in the first session, new strands of funding, and I apologize if somebody spoke to this already as I was sort of in and out, but new strands of funding to support the arts as a whole, because most arts organizations are at the mercy of state or federal dollars. And when an administration comes in and they decide on a whim, because it's raining one day, we want to take away the arts, or the funding for the arts, and that happens, it crushes a lot of the grassroots organizations who are the lifeline, the lifeblood to this sector. There needs to be new thought around how do we collectively create a co-op of some sort where we are all sort of pooling our money and resources together, or we have established some sort of non-government agency fund that would allow people to continue to do their work. In terms of focus, about what we should be focusing on, and my dear colleague [Speaker] mentioned this around how do we share the information of the data that's been collected. Narrative is so important. And as a sector, we have allowed the narrative of starving artists and arts being an icing on the cake or an extra or another to be the driver of our story, instead of us delivering the narrative that the arts are essential, that they are a part or they should be a part of the social determinants of health, that they establish whole, well-being, successful children that then matriculate into adults that are contributing members to any ecosystem, to any career, to any area that they want to go into. The final thing is that I'm inspired by what Denver is doing, or at least the seven counties in Denver around, I had to look up the name because I couldn't remember, but it's called SCFD, Scientific and Cultural Facilities District. I learned about them. They have a tax for every $10 that's spent in this area within these seven counties. One penny is collected to support the arts, and they have amassed an $80 million annual (fund) that supports the arts and science specifically. If this could happen in Colorado amongst these seven counties, there's no reason why we can't make this happen nationwide.

- **Speaker 7 (Facilitator):** I also want to share that [Speaker] wanted to add something else that the metro-level ecosystem where arts leaders sit with planners, transit officials, school systems, infrastructure, economic development agencies to make decisions so culture is built into zoning, transportation, education, strategy, growth, and growth policy instead of being treated as separate, instead of, and after the fact, an add-on. Connect culture to land use, transit, education, and economic policy.

**Speaker 13:** In the last session, I brought up the idea of trust-based philanthropy and really getting foundations on our side with trusting that we as organizations know how to be good stewards of their funds and them providing, being partners with us in the work that we're doing. One of the



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workgroups that I'm working on, we are working in [Location] as a collective of arts organizations that have formed a workgroup to support the nonprofit arts organizations in [Location] to raise a kind of pooled fund that can be distributed for sustainability. The number that we are targeting is [Amount], and we're trying to do this almost as a model to foundations that they can use this platform as a way to distribute funds. And trust that arts organizations are going to do what they know how to do best. The second thing that is top of mind - and is inspiration because I'm coming out of the classroom right now - is it's hard for me as an educator to advise people to go into this field because I don't know the career trajectory and path. I was a really excited emerging leader when I came into this field and now I am a mid-career arts leader not knowing what the future looks like, so I think that we as a sector also need to think about how to support career growth for people coming into the field and how to support the exiting of the field for older leaders because I don't think there is a lot of retirement planning and funds and things to support people as they are leaving this field as well. So those are just some of the things that are top of mind for me.

**Speaker 14:** The thing that I think that we need to focus on and the work that we need to do is really beginning to look at a holistic approach to art making and sustainability. What I mean by that is really looking at a couple of things to the point that [Speaker] was making that there are so many people who have heard from their family and friends as they were moving into the art sector that is not a place that you want to be, that is not a place that you're going to stay for long. There are lots of people, especially with my work at [Organization], where I was working with a lot of folks who were beginning to exit the industry because of the lack of stability and sustainability. And so the work that I'm thinking of really is three-pronged. It's how do we help artists and arts workers and folks in the sector begin to think about what the career and professional development needs are necessary to exist in the space, coupled with the administrative and infrastructure needs, because those are separate and distinct, as well as the market access and revenue generation needs that are necessary in order to thrive or even attempt to make a living in the sector. For me, once we start to think more strategically about those, and stop siloing them in ways that has, that artists or folks in the sector focus on one and not realize that the others are necessary in order to make things work, I think then we'll be able to reach the visions that we are, the vision that we're looking to get.

**Speaker 15:** We need our foundation. We definitely need our foundation to develop better grant-making practices, like more transparent and trust-based. I really liked that part. Yet on another level, having worked, so I'm in urban planning right now, but I worked in arts nonprofits before, doing marketing communications, et cetera, and working within it really made me see how the sausage is made, and we need to move away from our dependency on nonprofits, I really saw the inner workings of the nonprofit industrial complex, and it is worrisome how it encourages an environment of scarcity. We have artists and small, midsize, large organizations all fighting for the same pots of



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money from the same funders. It sort of furthers the narrative of artists and creative workers being treated like charity. Of course, this is not exclusive to the arts, but I'm just talking about it today because of this conversation.

- **Speaker 7 (Facilitator):** Just to clarify, you said that we should be moving away from nonprofits or we should be moving away from our dependency on foundation
- **Speaker 15:** Well, I think I would like to move away from the dependency on nonprofits.
- **Speaker 7 (Facilitator):** On the structure?
- **Speaker 15:** Yes, on the structure, I think we should still include them. We still need nonprofits, but I think the dependency on the kind of nonprofit system as a whole has a little bit of, has some things that need refinement and improving.

**Speaker 16:** In 2012, I started teaching at [University], where I graduated. I was teaching graduate students about the nonprofit model. One of my students asked if the nonprofit model is so problematic, why do we have to learn it? And from then on, I decided that I would teach alternative models so that students understood the nonprofit was not their only choice. I think sometimes in the arts, what I've heard is that people want to like format themselves as 501c7s, which are like country clubs, but they want the benefits of being 501c3s, but they don't want to do the 501c3 work, which would require them to be charitable. Their charitable taxes and purposes, according to the IRS, includes relief of the poor, the distressed, the underprivileged, the elimination of prejudice and discrimination. It's right there in the language. If that's not the work you want to do, don't be a nonprofit. Go be a for-profit. There are multiple pathways for you to do the work that you want to do and also earn a living if that's what you're trying to do. I think that what has happened is that everyone has parked themselves in the nonprofit and not really wanted to do that work and then get mad at it for not doing what they wanted to do when they probably should have been a B Corporation or L3C or LLC or a partnership or something other than a nonprofit from the get-go.

**Speaker 3:** The research and delivery is important, but I think it needs to be kind of triangulated, or I don't know what's triangulation with two data points with the output. I'm a big fan of trying to quantify whether it's qualitatively or quantitatively the output of the sector, but I think that the delivery methods can either enhance or constrain those outputs. I'm thinking of the quantitative output. So just being careful in the delivery research that we're not overemphasizing a delivery method that potentially is constraining the quantitative output. If we don't put those two things together, we may see areas where we're like, yeah, that delivery method is really strong, or it's really prevalent, or it's really advantageous. But when compared to the output, it is creating bottlenecks. I think it's important as long as it's connected with the output statistics as well.

**Speaker 17:** From our last breakout Group session, we got to the point where we talked about, as a field in a sector, we kind of put the arts up on this pedestal. By continuing that language, how



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we're delivering the information, it is keeping people from engaging with us. I think that data and research has the same potential. Academic scholars who just love the data but never wanted to talk to an audience or to deliver that information. That is an opportunity that we have, I think, as a sector and as arts and culture warriors to say what data points are going to be the most compelling instead of emulating that which everyone else is doing, which is the E for each dollar, you know, raised, it's another six or seven dollars in the community. We can get more creative with how we also utilize the data.

**Speaker 6: I** think that young audiences and very young audiences, young people are the most marginalized in our art sector. In our commercial art sector or professional art sector, there's just not a lot that's focused on them. I was the Managing Director of [Organization] for a while. The work that we were doing was pretty amazing. But I just see that there's so little. They are now the digital natives. You might think that young kids only care about being on their phones or being on games or whatever, but that's not true. If you go to a live event, you will see a lot of very engaged young people who appreciate the live experience but also appreciate the digital experience. And so I hope that there will be some more discussion in that realm. Because the young people will become the old people and the middle-aged people and some other generation people. But I do think it's important for us not to lose track of the fact that they are currently underserved. Every new group of kiddos who come into the world are not directly and completely served by arts and culture in our country.

**Speaker 7 (Facilitator):** I just want to share a couple of things that folks have put in the chat. [Speaker] shared, "We need to also think of, scale up our expectations, and think about overall pipelines of access to arts and culture. Our [Program] just passed 400 billion views." Can you just talk a little bit more about what that is?

- **Speaker 10:** About four years ago, we launched something called [Program]. We looked at the fact that young people were sharing animations regularly, specifically animated GIFs. And so, we started making unbranded and free animated GIFs. We hired over 200 artists annually to be full-time creating animated GIFs. We created 80,000 pieces of content and they've been used and viewed 400 billion times and they keep accelerating. Young people are using different forms of communication that are imbued with art and creativity and we can ignore it or we can see it as a pipeline for their creative expression and use it as a way to bring them into and elevate their access to all kinds of forms of art. But if we're not even paying attention to it, then that's at our own peril.



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## Group 3 Chat

1. [Speaker], your statement can also be exemplified by museum worker strikes and various orchestra contract negotiations I've read about the past several years. When will admin and boards understand artists' needs?

2. Most theaters used SAG contracts during [the pandemic].
    a. The only theaters that were able to do anything meaningful were those that used the SAG agreements. Once equity stepped in it became a huge problem to do anything scalable.
    b. Equity was definitely not helpful at all with the possibility of streaming during the pandemic. Such a missed opportunity.
    c. It is hard for me to discuss what Equity did without colorful language. I would have thought they would have taken stock post-pandemic, but nope, it's now embedded in agreements through 2028. Fortunately, I do think there's a solve now.

3. tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10632921.2025.2559995

4. Out of Hand Theater's Harvard Business School case study: https://www.hbs.edu/faculty/Pages/item.aspx?num=65711
    a. And the JAMLS research study: https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/10632921.2025.255999 5

5. I've always hated the talking point that for every $1 spent the arts provides 6-7x economic activity, because that's actually the baseline for almost any local business.

6. If we can identify where it makes the most sense to stay the course, let's also develop a plan to consistently practice that plan (and patience) beyond a flash in the pan so we can also reach the tipping point of progress. All due respect; this is one bad habit among philanthropy that often pulls grantees off course.
    a. Healthcare is so key. Years ago, on a panel I suggested that dance orgs who didn't contribute to their dancers' healthcare expenses should be blocked from grants. It went over… as you would expect. Fundamental.

7. Is this the correct Project Zero that was referenced? https://pz.harvard.edu/
    a. Yes!

8. Regarding metro level eco-system, where arts leaders sit with planners, transit officials, school systems, and economic-development agencies to make decisions together, so culture is built into zoning, transportation, education strategy, and growth policy, instead



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of being treated as separate and after the fact add-on. Connect culture to land use, transit, education, and economic policy.

   a. And what might we learn from how literal infrastructure - roads, etc. - was developed in this country and apply that to arts and culture? What works, what doesn't work, and how might we replicate the good to reimagine mobility and distribution for the arts in this country?

9. https://scfd.org/who-we-are/about-us/

10. Nonprofit is just a tax distinction, not a business model.

11. Years ago, there was an attempt to create a different non-profit structure that allowed for more flexibility, and it ultimately failed (although some elements carried over into B Corp structures). It failed, because ultimately it needed a shift in tax policy to allow for the contribution component which was unrealistic

12. I think we need to be more critical about some of the data that we are seeing – especially from some of these firms pushing data out in support of a grant or funding process. Because I've seen some real garbage data from firms that will remain nameless lead very important programs go astray.

13. I also think we need to scale up our expectations and think about the overall pipelines of access to arts and culture. Our Into Action Lab (into-action.us) just passed 400B views.

14. There's been a lot of great discussion on research, data, need for knowledge and the importance of that narrative being available. Could a national backbone (for lack of a better word) that coordinates research, standards, capital, knowledge etc., be created?



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# GROUP 4

## Group 4 Transcript

**Speaker 1 (Facilitator):** We talked in the last session about what our vision looks like for 2045. If we've all done the best work possible over the next 20 years, what does the arts and sector look like in 2045? This is really a chance for us to talk about what kinds of work we need to be doing over the next 20 years. Maybe someone is really focused on who has regular access to a nonprofit arts and culture organization, and access to arts and culture might be a really important strand of work. Someone else might say having policy that relates to artificial intelligence and intellectual property might be a really important strand of work. Any kind of work that needs to be done over the next 20 years that we're going to be doing.

**Speaker 2 (Co-Facilitator):** It's good to think about responses that might be at odds with one another. We want to make sure everyone's heard, so it's okay to express some differences of opinions as well. Candor is welcome.

**Speaker 3:** I think that there are two things that, in my opinion, are really important or will be really important for us to focus on as a sector. One is advocacy. I think we are not good enough at telling our stories. I the previous group, we had a conversation about how we need to place arts culture at the center and not in the margins of our society. I think that part of it is incumbent upon us to tell a better story and advocate. This goes, of course, all the way up to lobbying our political leaders and whatnot. The second thing I think, which is really important for us, is to focus on collaborations. Resources are tight and getting tighter. We're all striving to do the same thing. I think that working in silos or even as individual organizations should be a thing of the past. I think we can get together and make a bigger pie.

- **Speaker 1 (Facilitator):** Do you have a sense of if you were going to name the top two or three things that folks should be lobbying for, advocating for, over the next few years, what would be top of your advocacy list?
- **Speaker 3:** Respect, the understanding that arts are not peripheral, that arts and culture are central to our democracy and to our existence as a nation. A seat at the table is a seat in the important conversations that shape our society. With that, funding, which obviously right now is being cut left and right, but more and more investment in the arts community as a sign of our place in society.

**Speaker 4**: One of the things that I have learned from years of working in politics and working in the arts is that we always fall back behind the people who are on the offensive. We've seen from



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the regime that's in [Location] now, they go on the offensive from day one and they don't let up, keeping everybody else on the defense. If you've studied military history, that when you're playing defense, you can only lose once, and then you're falling further and further back. When you're on offense, you can lose many battles but still win the war. And the arts are extraordinarily creative. The people have extraordinary talents, and yet they're not used collectively in a way to move the discussion forward. At a time when they're cutting Department of Education, cutting access to health care, working in schools, and working in those kinds of places isn't necessarily an option. We're an LGBTQ organization in [Location]. We can't work in the schools. We can't even have our books. Starting from there, building back up to the dreams that everybody had in the last session for 2045 seems almost… It's nice to have dreams, but if you're not the arrow pushing the line, how are you going to get there? How does this community find the way to go on the offense and stop being on the defense? Begging for money is a way to make progress. Finding the ancillary ways to get income is a good way to make progress. Inserted into the entire system and becoming an integral part of that arc makes sense. But right now, we're still on the outside, and that makes it very difficult.

**Speaker 5:** I'm going to give you a little bit of backstory so that I can share with you where I feel we need to be focused on. Back in the day, my first job out of school, out of college as a history major, was computer programming for Morgan Stanley. Back in the day, I was a part of the [Organization], and we created what we now know to be a 24-hour global trading. I quickly segued after I realized that we were not creating tools, but market makers, possibly capable of crashing world economies. I pursued my interest, which was film and television. I was a motion picture literary agent for over 13 years at [Organization]. I raised a young daughter at age three through her professional capacity as a ballerina. She's a professional ballerina. That experience [made me realize] that there were so many students that were being left behind, not able to pursue their passions, not for lack of talent or interest, but because of the other types of barriers that quickly narrow the pipeline, access, opportunity, funding, et cetera. I segued from film and television into a strategic planning consultancy primarily on behalf and performing arts organizations where my personal passion and purpose was to expand access and opportunity for students and community education programs, especially for those that might not otherwise have any opportunity. I come to this from a business perspective, a person who loves and is very passionate about and supporting artists. I think what we need to focus on is the real threat to the creation of authentic art. That is in all of the rapid changes happening within artificial intelligence. I believe that what we need to focus on is upscaling our workforce of arts organization leaders to master the use of ethical generative AI integration into daily workflows so that we can protect and enable the authentic vision and creation by artists. It's my optimism that (this is the path) to maintain our collective humanity. It is my optimism that as more AI slop is put out there into the world, that people will begin to reject that.



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Therefore, if we as artists and especially those that are in a position of supporting arts institutions and organizations can get a handle on the tools that are rapidly developing, that we can get ahead of marketing and advocacy and cross-cultural arts collaboration and the kinds of messaging that we're talking about as to why the benefits of arts and cultural arts education are fundamentally important to maintain our humanity. As an aside, I just also want you to all know that in my capacity and upskilling, I have been getting my certification as an AI Solutions Architect. In that capacity, I have worked on several independent projects with Meta as well as Microsoft, and I see what's happening and what's being created. I do fear for our artist community that, especially when I think about being a former agent within motion pictures, how screenwriters and filmmakers are truly threatened in their creation of their form. I'm coming at it that way.

**Speaker 6:** I wanted to add in another aspect that I believe we need more investment in. I've recently come out of the public sector and affordability as a frame and as funding priority is something that is very prevalent at all levels of government right now. I think investing in the connecting of arts and culture with the affordability conversations, whether that be specifically around real estate and spaces and access to space and ownership, and also upkeep of older spaces that are related to arts and culture, or whether that mean more broadly and thinking creatively about how we can connect arts and culture needs with the affordability conversations, I think is one that is actionable now and is also one that can continue to be actionable and gather new resources and also put arts and culture within a frame that I think builds more allies. As we think about neighborhood revitalizations, as we think about under-invested neighborhoods and the role that arts and culture and artists can play in those positively, it is a very ripe area that, with some work and with some focus and with some collaboration, that we can garner resources and support. One way or another, the affordability conversation is going to continue to gather support from both public and private resources.

- **Speaker 1 (Facilitator):** You're talking primarily about how expensive it is to be an artist; how expensive it is to be an arts organization. And how we bring down the cost, how we increase affordability for artists and organizations. Is that right? Perfect.

**Speaker 7:** I believe we need to focus on the fundraising model. We need to focus on testing new financial models and less reliance on the old school philanthropic model. It could exist. It should exist. There are many others. I just believe we need more investment in experimentation to see which of these models can work best and at different scales. Obviously thinking locally and regionally, but also across the country. I'll just say that I'm inspired by work in other sectors. The arts and culture sector, for the sake of argument, I'll just say sort of failed sometimes at driving home the message and the essentialness of art the urgency of our work. I think now more than ever, we feel that. I'm inspired by UNICEF or these other sectors that have consistently made the



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urgency of their messages so clear to drive, not just the need for support, but that we need to make immediate impact. I think the reason so many of us showed up at this meeting is that we feel that urgency. I would really love to see that urgency met with some more creativity and collaboration specifically about how we can divert or just unlock that there's in this country, plenty of dollar bills, which is not true of a lot of other countries. That of course is not evenly distributed. Contributed, but I think there's more time and energy we could spend on really thinking sort of mechanically about what that might look like and mapping that out and then sort of testing those because short of that, we all know literally nothing happens without money. If we don't have the money, we can't do the advocacy. If we don't have the money, we can't try all these other things. We can't do all the other things. I really focus on that financial model.

**Speaker 8:** I love what [Speaker] just said, and I just want to underscore that. I think a lot about the fundraising side. As a state advocacy organization, of course, advocating for state public investment in arts and culture is part of what I do. But I think it's incredibly important to recognize that if we quadrupled our state arts agency, that doesn't improve wages and benefits in the field, right? We have to be super clear-eyed about what we're looking to do financially in our field in terms of the modeling and the capacities that we have. I think that's super essential. Something I think a lot about is how we talk about things. Looking at other movements for a lot of work, whether they're positive movements like UNICEF or whether they're not positive movements that we're seeing. I think there's no rhetorical force more effective than the common enemy, and that doesn't have to be a person or a group, and it shouldn't be, right? I do think that we need to be willing to play with the idea of when we talk about all of the positives of arts access and the creative economy. Let's not be afraid about what is the common enemy. Maybe it's a population that is completely economically and socially reliant on a device or something that is so universally felt by all people. Nobody wants their child to have no skills, aside from typing and texting. I know that sounds a little bit hokey and simplistic, but I think sometimes starting there, and then using that to open a door and build some early buy-in in our conversations and our advocacy and then build towards the solutions that we're offering to this completely universally plain speak. Like the things that we feel in the middle of the night, how are we building off of that when we're doing our case making, not just the aspirational case of being the best we can be and saving our communities and democracy and all of that, because those are very loaded visions. And there's incredibly divisive ideas about solutions. I'd be interested in, as a sector, what are we saving ourselves from that's universally felt in this industrial revolution moment, in this moment of incredible change and uncertainty that is driving people towards some kind of toxic conclusions?

**Speaker 9:** I'm [Name] with [Organization]. With that kind of lens, looking at these first two bullets in terms of investing our focus, our energy, our time, and our financial resources, I think we really need to focus on the role of the arts in our changing climate. That takes so many different aspects.



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It's making our own work and our own processes and our own entities more adaptive, more resilient. It's recognizing the role of the arts in helping communities become more resilient and be able to recover and respond. It's recognizing that climate change is threatening cultural traditions and resources and that we're going to see climate migration and climate refugees and the changes in bringing new people, new cultures into communities and needing to be able to welcome that, manage that in this very diverse and fractured society. I'm just looking at all of that as something that needs our attention. I would say I'm inspired by the work of World Central Kitchen, just as an entity with this very charismatic leader, but this incredibly broad base of support. They also are just able to operationalize so well, so fast, so quickly, anywhere, that just as a nonprofit, they're a model for me.

**Speaker 10:** So many things that are contradictory to the notion of focus. I'm shocked to realize it's harder to talk about. My mind is spinning, but I'm going to try to share a few thoughts. One, I think we need to focus on being able to look beyond our current reality. Something that comes to mind is the three horizons framework. This first horizon is stay where we're comfortable. Second horizon is wrench on what we're doing now to improve it. The third horizon is really being able to envision beyond the current moment and build towards that. That also brings to mind a book by Jane McGonigal called *Imaginable*, who's also thinking about how you model and think even just 10 years out. We're talking about 20 years in this conversation. While I am a complete fan of, and I'm segueing into my second focus in a way, of what somebody really referred to in the first session as analog experience and being in the room and feeling the vibration. I feel it's really important. I feel being together literally is important and sitting in a room with music or dance or whatever is very different from a virtual experience. However, I also think we need to have a way of better understanding than we do that the current crop of 40-year-olds and younger who have created a whole reality around social virtual worlds and that being on screens and on games is far more than playing games. It's building international relationships and bridges. In the arts, as we might conceive of ourselves, we do have to know more about that, not just the AI piece, but the reality of that. The third thing is that participatory, and what we call informal arts, is very different from some of the things we try to protect as a class of art. I would argue that money is only a part of what resourcing is about. I've mentioned Jane McGonigal, I've mentioned the Three Horizon Framework. I would also add a now 20-year-old paper by Maribel Alvarez called "Nothing Informal About It," done about the San Jose regional cultural sector. I think it's useful reference. That speaks to some of the climate and migrant culture that was just in the last one. Finally, early on, the first or second Speaker spoke about collaboration. I would like to make a distinction, if it's not too fine a point, because I was working in the field when collaboration began trending in the foundation world. They thought, let's put people together and their back of the house can be combined infrastructure and then specialists can do their thing. As that trend came about, I spent five years originally, and then



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another three years part-time, working with the [Organization]. I got to do a lot of unpacking of this mythology around the money to be saved by collaboration. The fact is that no one had robust enough infrastructures where there would be a savings by combining the infrastructure. There was a backlog of necessary investment. I do think collaboration is important, but I think we need to be cautious about seeing it as a money saver or solution. At the very same time, when I was the [Title] of [Organization] in particular, I really saw how fragmented our field is. We need to be hyperlocal. I think that's important. I think people really well-connected to the community is important. But that entrepreneurial effort of programmatic genius and community spirit does need a system that could support it so that we're not asking social scientists and artists and teachers and educators to have proficiencies that are really not theirs, but they don't have the money to secure in other ways. I'm a yes/no on the collaboration thing. Those are some of the focus areas that are coming up for me right now.

**Speaker 11:** There are three things that are really important to me. I am a data queen, and the way that we report creative economy data undersells the impact of the creative economy. I think there's a lot of work that could be done to improve how arts data can be parsed out and captured. The industry and occupation codes, as they're currently reported, arts are just falling through the cracks. We are not capturing the impact of arts and culture, particularly in jobs, because most of our jobs are gig workers, which are extended proprietors, and all of that is not reported in most jobs data. And so really underselling ourselves in data. Working to change industry and occupation codes to better capture arts and culture, I think, would be really helpful. The nonprofit model is changing, as has been mentioned multiple times today already, and the line between for-profit and nonprofit is really blurring. As a local arts agency, we are exploring how we better support for-profit businesses, because traditionally we support nonprofits and artists, and even shifting our focus in how we think about artists as micro businesses and small businesses instead of an artist, I think is really helpful when you're talking advocacy work and really communicating impact. The third piece, I'm so [Location] was impacted a little over a year ago by Hurricane Helene. [Speaker]'s been an amazing partner as we have worked to recover as well. But we as a field are not prepared for disaster. Going through COVID as a leader of a local arts agency and now going through this hurricane event in [Location], we are not prepared for this and we're going to see a lot more of it. Working on disaster preparedness and recovery as a field is also really important.

**Speaker 12:** I wanted to just thread a few things together, certainly around funding, which has come up several times and advocacy as well, which is also an understandably important hot topic. There is a huge transfer of wealth from one generation to the next, and not just a transfer of wealth and an accumulation of wealth through primarily technology and a new kind of scary technocracy that is being created over time, but also in terms of how people look at funding perhaps as a shift from the old school style of philanthropy that we're all very familiar with to kind of a new social



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impact investment and what that looks like to young people who have a lot of wealth. They're looking to solve big individual problems and attach their ego and their names to that solving of that problem. Whether it's in health and wellness, whether it's in climate, climate change, technology, AI. I think adaptation is the name of the game for all of us as well. We really do need to adapt to the way people are thinking about funding, thinking about wealth, thinking about solutions. I agree very much that we can and should do more. We've done some, but we can and should do more as far as putting arts , culture, and creativity at the center of society as an important instrument in addressing things like climate change, health, equity and belonging, and democracy that is under threat, very much under threat right now. There are a lot of solutions in creativity that can help with that. I think that adapting how we talk about ourselves, how we talk about this as a solution. I also think that as we move into the future, AI is a big point of conversation here. I feel very strongly that arts and culture and creativity can position itself as an alternative to AI. Not as we're clinging to the past, but as a kind of artisan, original approach. There's no substitute for the human mind and for human creativity. As people become more playful and used to deploying AI as a way to generate content for themselves, whether it's written content, whether it's visual content, it's going to become more and more important than ever for the human-made premium. Arts and culture and creativity, visual arts, performing arts, these will all continue to perhaps become more important in this AI world that we're going to be living in. Perhaps from a funding standpoint, there could be a computer tax on AI-generated content, and those funds could be diverted into a national endowment for physical, real-life visual and performing arts. I think all of those things are doable and possible, but I do think that adaptation to kind of get towards that world is going to be the name of the game for all of us here today.

**Speaker 13:** I've been focusing lately on talking to people out of my comfort zone. I think we talk to each other, and we convince each other a lot, and it's true how important the arts are. But as you know very well, historically, especially in political levels, people are still afraid to champion the arts. Even because of what happened in the 70s and the 80s and the 90s, right? They think you're radicals. I think there's this miasma over the arts, not on the ground level, but a larger political level. What I've been doing is really trying to understand in the programs that I've worked on, which are within government, what are the decision makers thinking? How do they think? Whether they champion and create an art program, what were they thinking at the [Organization]? If they did not do that, and I've spoken to some people who didn't, was it not even in their wheelhouse? Could they not even focus on that? I'm really trying to understand the thinking of the decision makers outside the art world in terms of either supporting, creating, or not art in that public sector.

**Speaker 14:** Something that really struck me on the collaboration front is that, yes, there are upsides and downsides and things we need to work on collaborating within our industry. I think it's most important right now to focus on collaborating outside of the industry. As a sector, it can feel



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like a sinking ship, but also we're consultants who travel, and every single organization is too focused on saving themselves. We don't have enough money, we just need to keep the lights on, and then it's just a cycle of never-ending burnout. There are other industries and sectors that have figured this out better. Why not reach out and collaborate with them? I think it's easier for us to upscale in business entrepreneurial skills than it is for those business people to upscale in creativity, emotional intelligence, and the things that we have within our sector. I think just focusing on upscaling and collaborating and making connections outside of the arts to kind of see what we know how to borrow and reinvent and make better and iterate. Let's do that with people who figured it out in other sectors.

**Speaker 15:** I'm thinking about our field of leaders and administrators and recruitment and membership and training and education. I appreciate the comments about adaptation because I don't necessarily see that happening quickly. Across our field, and when I say field, I mean administration or its administration, advocacy, education, I can't tell you how many times I've been on an airplane meeting someone for the first time. They asked me what I do, and they asked me if it's a full-time job. Even here at [University], people telling me that my job sounds so fun, which it is. It is very fun, but it's not a joke. I've spent the last 25 years working 40 to 80 hours a week, including weekends, as I'm sure you have too. Mostly because I'm so passionate about it and I want it to be better integrated into our society. Thankfully, [Program] recently became tuition free. I think that is such an important factor in attracting people to graduate degree programs in arts business. Why would you want to be saddled with $50,000 to $100,000 of debt and then try to enter the field, I don't know. That's huge progress. I'm a graduate of the [Program] that thankfully was tuition free and has been a lifeline this field. I'm a huge advocate for our field and also for mentorship in the field.

**Speaker 16:** I'm thinking about the need to acknowledge not knowing and go back to some fundamentals. Climate's been mentioned. We don't actually know 20 years since. Will we be living in a white supremacist authoritarian government that was taken over by force or will we have the structures of democracy in place and be able to move what happens in the public sector. The main thing that needs to be focused on is readiness, preparedness, looking at all of the possible scenarios, the alarming ones as well as the hopeful ones that people expressed in the last session when they gave their vision, and asking, how can we be flexible? How can we be humble and not assuming that the structures and systems that have been in place are the best possible thing and what we need to do is find a way to protect them and shore them up. Right now, for example, if you look at arts philanthropy, it's a total competition-based system. It fosters competition between people who could and should and the resources of the agencies that disseminate funds, if you just look at hours and dollars, are spent far more culling and rejecting people than on accepting them. In most places, it's 10, even 20, 100 applications that come forward for everyone that receives full funding. Within



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that, many of the people who are successful are successful because they know the lingo, they have the resources to make the videos, they get the review. It's not a good system going forward into a potentially chaotic society where we don't know what the outcomes are. We need to completely rethink that as far as I'm concerned. The other thing to think about is who is the work for? If I drew a line down the middle of people at any arts gathering, this one, or virtually anyone that wasn't based on culture, democracy that I've attended to, I'd say half the people would answer that question by saying, everyone, the public, and we're in dialogue with people, we're trying to respond to what's up for them, what they want, what they need, what's conceivably constructive in their communities at this moment. The other half would say it's for professional artists and organizations, and what we really need to do is keep intact the structures and the funding that sustain those people in their work. The people I've been talking about are beneficiaries potentially, but the reality is most of the public are not beneficiaries of the current system. The current system is infused with a level of snobbery that comes through loud and clear to most members of the public. People know when they open the door, if this is for me or not, and a lot of times people turn around and go right out again. So, to rethink, what is it? Who is it for? To whom should it be accountable? And how can we create systems of sustenance that don't primarily spend their energy disappointing people and making enemies?

**Speaker 17:** As we're thinking about where to focus to draw some attention to, part of the challenge that a lot of folks are feeling in this moment is a crisis of trust and people's trust in institutions, systems, and organizations. For me, that makes it extra important that in this moment, we focus on the parts of our broad, however we define it, arts ecosystem that have that community trust. Those are by and large, small local organizations and individual artists and creative workers and community workers. I think often our conversations about the field start in a much more top-down, outside-of-the-country-in way. I think we're in a moment when we need to look to the experts who are running strong local organizations that are dealing with incredibly challenging and urgent issues, but they're not dealing with a lack of trust from their neighbors. They are depended on, and people identify them as, necessary and vital to their communities at the same time that I think a lot of people don't think of them when someone says arts and culture because they're the places that their kids go after school and the places that respond in community crisis and the places that they know they can gather safely with their neighbors or have their stories told, heard, and held. I am anxious (that in) this moment, if there is (to be a) coordinated national strategy, for it to start from the folks in our community that I think are demonstrating what that future looks like already.

**Speaker 2 (Co-Facilitator):** We heard a number of people talk about taking a more proactive approach overall to these streams of work and the idea of being on the offensive. I thought we heard maybe two complementary thoughts about the space of AI, of being adept in its use so that



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we can better understand how to maybe leverage it to support human creativity. But also to use it to promote the unique experience of live art making, while also acknowledging that screens can be legitimate spaces for community making. There were several comments that really connected to building collaboration beyond the arts, whether that's for leveraging solutions other sectors have already found, or revealing what the policy leaders thought leaders or potential participants care about that we're trying to reach, or to embed the arts in other issues and systems, including things like affordability, climate change, wages, and benefits. I also heard a lot of points, both in the vision session and this one too, around these funding structures and the adaptations that are needed for them. Finally, I wanted to lift up some things we heard about building trust that art is for all people and that art is accountable to them. And this point around seeking out hyperlocal examples of organizations that have already built that trust.

**Speaker 1 (Facilitator 1):** As you're thinking about that 20-year to-do list, is there anything that's sitting front of mind for anyone that we haven't talked about?

**Speaker 18:** Perhaps the obvious is taking stock and ownership of the role (of the arts) in preserving or evolving the democracy. Being in [City], I feel as if within the first two weeks, (it was) the Administration's (intention) to take over the Kennedy (Center). I think it signals if that's move number one towards autocracy, the arts have an outsized influence, yet not necessarily an outsized compensation or way to profligate. I don't think it's really a help and focus, but I think we can't lose sight of the influence we can and should be having.

**Speaker 4:** I think that we're not focused enough on where we are and understanding the historic timeline that usually occurs. When a government comes in and cuts, the next government doesn't usually have the ability to come in and replace. It can take years, sometimes decades, or never, that that funding is replaced. We're not looking at where we are. In NEA, unless you're doing the 250th anniversary of the United States, you're unlikely to get much funding, if any. There are a whole bunch of things that we're not looking at. There's not going to be a fully funded Department of Education in the next administration. Our membership in international organizations isn't going to happen at the drop of a hat. 2045 or whatever we're looking at, it has to be colored by where we are and where we may be going over the next couple of years. The fact is, we see the leadership lining up on that side of the aisle to cut more, to take away more. We don't really see powerful leadership on the other side that is suggesting how those things that have been removed could be easily replaced, or even why they're fundamentally important. When you're taking away health care, when you're taking away housing, when you're taking away food, yes, the arts may be important, but I know that I have a mentally ill son who uses SNAP. I'm much more concerned about how we're going to put food on his table than I am if he's going to go to the movies.



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**Speaker 19:** I wanted to touch on what was just said but really question or ask the role of the arts in the current political economy. I also wonder how much we can realistically do, especially if we do not have cabinet level leadership for the arts in the US. Asking a question around what structurally would need to happen in order to empower the sector to make this kind of change.

**Speaker 10:** [Speaker] was talking about transfer of wealth. I would talk about new tech entrepreneurs. I've met a lot of people in the 26 to 35 range that have a lot of money and are spinning up ways to give it away. Two, I think we need it to be a viable profession.

## Group 4 Chat

1. [AI] is such a valid area of need for focus. To ignore the reality of where AI stands, and will continue to rapidly dominate our lives, will be at the absolute peril of artists' endeavors and the sustainability of nonprofit orgs. The ethical deployment of generative AI tools to support workflows will help leadership protect artists' vision and creation across all art forms.
    a. I agree – corporations are investing in understanding our deepest hopes, fears, and what the "emotional payoff" is from digital platform experiences. We don't invest in understanding that from the perspective of fostering creativity, connection, and ideas (and earning revenues to sustain the same).

2. The collaboration I was talking about was not in terms of infrastructure but programmatic/serving the public/telling our story/advocating.

3. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Three_Horizons

4. https://janemcgonigal.com/2021/12/17/imaginable-how-to-see-the-future-coming-and-feel-ready-for-anything-even-things-that-seem-impossible-today/

5. https://issuelab.org/resources/11393/11393.pdf

6. I think our field has a huge role to play in preparing our communities for disaster. A dinner theater production had a VT community already prepped to coordinate and communicate when they had flooding: https://www.rumblestripvermont.com/episodes/the-civic-standard-in-the-100-year-flood
    a. Overcoming disasters is a way to team the arts community with the general community. All go through that same experience. By unifying efforts, it opens doors and offers opportunities.



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7. Arts and culture should be putting itself on the frontlines, where and when it is possible. There is no mainstream leadership on the most important issues of our time. What is history, what is science, what is community...the arts can take that on and offer a voice to the people who don't have a voice. We need to be out front, not sweeping up the rear.
    a. Right - "human scale dialogue" is increasingly important to people, I think, as trust in the digital and legacy media landscape sinks.

8. I think there is a lot of good framing for what [Speaker] is talking about in the National Canadian Tourism Strategy around "regenerative tourism" https://archives.destinationcanada.com/sites/default/files/archive/1872-A%20Regenerative%20Approach%20to%20Tourism%20in%20Canada/A-Regenerative-Approach-to-Tourism-in-Canada_EN.pdf
    a. Would love to see a "regenerative cultural policy vision" for the US!

9. The current system is like all other systems. We might think we are different, but even cornflakes (have their) lovers and haters. The USA is competitive, we are a Wall Street and sports driven society. To change that, we have to find a way to lead the discussion through film, theater, music, art...and touch the heartstrings of people, who look to fall in love (with) and idolize their "stars".

10. What [Speaker] said re: the next generation of leaders resonated b/c it also connects w/the notion of questioning assumptions and systems. Letting the next generation do the questioning may help us advance a bit faster.

11. Lots of talk about artists making a living wage. Fewer and fewer make that in the USA and the corporate and government kingpins want to see that reduced. Teachers, nurses, white collar workers are all struggling. We are not likely to get out of the rut unless we find the way to end the rut.

12. We seem to have primarily staff members here (though I could be wrong). What are the conversations happening within the boards of arts organizations and foundations? Issues around grantmaking/gatekeeping/elitism – live as much there as anywhere.
    a. I hear a lot of Fdn/Funding boards worried about “growing need” and “limited resources” and actually in some ways holding off on bold moves. I’ve also heard some funding leaders wanting more direction from artists/orgs on highest/most impactful needs.

13. While I love future-forward conversations, I imagine an opportunity in this very space to create an “Arts Blueprint for America” that can go directly to the next President or



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presidential candidate when they ask for an arts, culture, and creativity plan to add to their platform. Because, the current network of cultural federal agencies — while never perfect — was a known quantity, but will never be the same.

   a. In the first breakout there was a lot of sharing of existing policy documents, writings, etc. both from the US and internationally - and that we don't need to start from scratch. Can we work towards coming to agreement on existing statements/policies and move with urgency rather than spending months trying to create/come to consensus?

14. [Speaker], good point. I lived in a dictatorship as a child, and the script is the same. The arts become propaganda for the regime, by force if necessary.

15. Just to state one very basic but I think impactful fact: we are organizing a labor sector that are not considered swing voters to "Tell the “National” ..." with ❤️



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# GROUP 5

## Group 5 Transcript

**Speaker 1:** I am inspired by the wealth of work led by people like Susan Magasamin and Jill Sonke in the area of arts and healthcare and healing and particularly creative aging. I know we have a world-changing win there. So, I believe we need more investment specifically in workforce development to train our creative folks into those healing environments, meeting all the metrics and standards and then pushing them around our metrics and standards for being humane. Then I believe we need to focus on that because demographics are on our side, boy, we are getting so old right now. We also have so many kids right now and then the rest of us in between can do something about our health situation in the meantime. So, we're really good fodder. I really believe that with the medical technologies that are coming forward and some of our access problems in that huger sector, that we can be defining critical factor in reforming health care.

- **Speaker 2:** The demographic reality is that we're getting old. There's going to be more old people than young people in about five years. This is a huge possibility. We need to work on how we adapt to this reality in terms of older artists, in terms of workplaces that include older adults, and especially in terms of meeting the needs of these older populations, which, quite frankly, I'm a museum strategist above all. I mean, it's completely impossible, the revamp from programming to infrastructure of our institutions. If we take this seriously, it's also a huge opportunity which comes to the second thing we need to work on, which is in a parallel lane to this, which is fundamentally building out the case with factual data, with science about the health benefits of the arts. That is not just, you know, la-di-da stuff, but real hard science, because that will open up a gusher of resources for our field. But that will require us to really work much more closely with scientific research. There's wonderful progress in this space. Let me just say, I think a third work stream is we need a cross-sectoral data strategy for our field. The future is about data and we can't have a world where every single arts organization has its own way with data. We need to team up and establish standards and so on and so forth. I'll stop there, but I'm so glad [Speaker] raised it. I think this is the sleeping giant of our field is creative aging.
- **Speaker 3 (Facilitator 1):** Could I ask you to share maybe some work that you've seen that you're inspired by?
- **Speaker 2:** [Name] has supported [and partnered with] 25 museums to offer creative aging classes. Some of you might have seen the Jane Fonda video that ended up on CBS Sunday morning about this, and next week, you'll see Ted Danson. There's been a lot of awareness raising. [Similar work focuses on] spaces in museums that are adapted to older adults, which



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is early stuff. A special focus on creative aging at the AAM conference. This is actually a big and fertile space. But [Name], who keeps a very low profile, is a very inspirational figure. She's sort of the philanthropist nobody knows but actually has been pushing this forward.

**Speaker 4: [Speaker 2],** think there is so much that we learned in what happened to arts journalism and you were on the job that whole time watching that. If we paid close attention to those dynamics that we became familiar with during that time, we might find some interesting, like micro-journalism has absolutely taken off, and I would argue that you predicted it. I'll stop there, but it's a very energizing conversation.

**Speaker 5: I** think we really need to focus on building longer and deeper relationships with community. I think in my experience working with a lot of arts organizations is that we have lots of different relationships, which is sometimes really beneficial, but I think it helps us to go deeper with fewer people, right? And that it takes a lot of time to build trust, right? With organizations, with communities, and that can't happen, I think, when we have just like, oh, we're going to do this one show with you once a year, and then we'll see you next year. I think finding multiple ways of engaging with organizations across time, leaning into a more co-producing, co-collaborative work, where we yield a little bit of our power as institutions. I think where we aren't so selfish as institutions, understanding that, especially as organizations, maybe we have more either fiscal or positional power, that partnering with another organization might mean that in this relationship, they get more out of it than we do. And that as institutions who have maybe more resources, space, and power, that that's okay. And with artists too, not just organizations, but directly with artists.

- **Speaker 6:** I think the way that we do what my friend [Speaker] was just saying is that we focus more on the practice and the work of organizing. Yes, as arts workers, but also as communities of neighbors, audiences, donors, and members, even elected officials. We need to invest in those relationships because it brings principles of direct democracy into art spaces in ways that offer all stakeholders of arts organizations a meaningful seat at the table to determine how we do this work together. And I am inspired in this kind of vision of how we do our work by the late labor organizer, Jane McAlevey, when I think about how we might consider going about that.

**Speaker 7:** Going back to what [Speaker] said at the beginning about demographics, I was instantly triggered in a good way about demographics and have been thinking a lot about what our country is going to look like from this perspective in 2045, and how are we going to bring that community together and going back to what [Speaker] and [Speaker] were talking about. I think it's very important that we keep that at the forefront of these conversations too. What did those communities look, what are they going to look like, and how can we benefit from those, these conversations continuing well into the future and for us to galvanize these communities together,



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and to find those spaces where we are more alike than we are different, which is what we are experiencing right now. It's not announced yet. The ink is not dry, but I will be returning to [Location] as [Title] of an arts nonprofit. I'm thinking about [Location] right now, which is 43% Hispanic. That's huge. And that's probably not an accurate number. That's probably a really inaccurate number when you think about undocumented workers, illegal immigrants that are in Dallas. I'm just inspired by all of these conversations about community and what we can achieve at thinking about these different kinds of communities that we bring together to strengthen the arts sector and for us to keep in mind what are they going to look like in 2045.

**Speaker 8:** I work in the local arts agency space and thinking about community and what we invest in, really highlighting both data and the data you can get from lived experience. How do we invest more in co-creation and participation and valuing the lived experience that our artists and our community are willing to share to build infrastructure, to build readiness, to move forward? How are we doing so in a way that still allows us to be flexible and agile and representative? One of the things that I'm constantly trying to chew through is we have so much value in our communities and I don't want to be extractive, right? What is that authenticity and co-creation? And how do we value that properly as we're working through these tough questions and conversations?

**Speaker 9:** I come at this from a little bit of a different angle than probably a lot of folks on the call because I am a lawyer. I am very inspired by everything that people are saying, particularly the way that we need to focus on our communities, that we need to continue to build out how art is going to be experienced by people. At the same time, I think we cannot ignore the effect that technology is going to have on all of us. It's going to have a profound effect on how people experience art moving forward. It's going to have a profound effect on how people are going to create art in the future. In fact, within the next 20 years, I think we're really going to be considering – I mean, we're already seeing it happen - what actually is art in a world in which it's no longer clear what is created by a human and what is created by a machine? I think that the sector is, in addition to all of these other meaning of life and survival questions, one of the things that we're really going to have to think about is what does that mean? I'm obviously looking at this from a legal perspective, from a copyright perspective. How do we actually do this? It's something we all have to be thinking about.

**Speaker 10:** I come to this space as a former federal official. I was in the [President's] administration and the [Council], where I had the honor of implementing [President's] art and culture (agenda). A lot of the things that we know were really important about the last few years and the integration of the arts across sectors, the recovery during the pandemic, et cetera. Just as friends and colleagues, thank you for your work and your service. This is a critical sector that we need to preserve and fight for and grow and make sure that it thrives. I, most recently in government, but also formerly in my professional life, at one time a recovering investment banker, I hear hear to [the] attorneys and



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other folks on the line who understand the power of institutions, systems that we have to operate within. I want the arts to be as scrappy and durable and have all the gusto that our other anti-democratic forces have, because we know that these are really important infrastructure to our country and our democracy. I would love the arts to focus on where those systems can be exploited, repurposed, designed so that the governance, the entities that determine winners and losers in the sector, the underpinnings of how arts operationally works in nonprofit entities versus other kinds of structures. I really want us to think about what the opportunities there are to really have paradigm shift in the structure and durability of the sector itself and individual institutions and those integrations that help protect the work.

**Speaker 11:** I want to keep on [Speaker's] lawyer drum here as a lawyer who works a lot in the international cultural space, working on international cultural policy with [Organization]. I love everything that's being said today, and I am certainly aware of the vast limitations on what government can do for the cultural sector. We're seeing that right now. But I think that a lot of the things I'm hearing people saying today are asking us in the arts to do things that shouldn't be our job. They should be government's job. Whether you see the arts as a right or a social good or a mechanism for sustainable development, no matter what in 25 years want to live in a country that is part of a world that where the arts are supported, whether we're talking local initiatives that are scrappy or major initiatives is that our global trade policy, whatever it might be, that we need to be in a place where the role of the arts is respected, protected, and funded by government. It's what we are paying taxes for. It's part of how a civilized society should be working. And so, I'm inspired by a lot of the work that I see in the EU. I'm inspired by a lot of the work I see in UNESCO. It's hard to envision in this current geopolitical moment, but we need to be focusing on a time when our advocacy moves toward a place where the role of culture is valued as it is, at least as it is in a lot of other countries. We can't do what we're trying to do in the scarcity mindset that we live in now. We have to live in an abundance mindset, which has to be supported by our country.

- **Speaker 3 (Facilitator 1):** I'm wondering if there are a couple of countries in particular that you're looking at in terms in the EU or in Europe?
- **Speaker 11:** I think what UNESCO has done in theory, a lot of implementation issues could be pointed at in terms of the 2005 Convention on Cultural Diversity, in terms of the 1980 Convention or Recommendation on Status of the Artist. These are incredibly recent years, but certainly what Germany has managed in terms of having a data-based community approach to thinking about the arts. And obviously, what's happening in Spain right now. I think Spain is also some incredible examples of how to think about the relationship between rural and urban arts and how all of this gets integrated into a powerful social good and also a means of development.



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**Speaker 12:** I think we need to focus on a couple of things. One of them, mostly right now, including with an eye on what we want the world to look like in 2045, is we need to fight fascism and we need to work with people that are actually courageously standing up to that, including within our sector, our field in the arts. There are a lot of people in the arts that are capitulating and trying to figure out how to make work that is pleasing of this current administration and how to continue to negotiate through that, and that is actually a losing scenario. We will actually lose some cultural people and sectors and people, but if we don't fight for what's right, we've already lost. [For example, (Artist's) work is being] excluded from a show that is done at a very good institution that's focusing on African-American artists that use the American flag. [Institution representatives] feel they can't show that work. In fact, they also feel they can't talk about that work and they feel they can't include (that) work. I think we need to actually look to the people that are going to stand up to the censors and actually have the courage to be willing to risk a lot. Even if we don't win in this round, if we do that, we will be in a much stronger position in the future. I do think we actually need to rally the people who are going to stand up to the fascists and people that are destroying much of what we, I think, collectively would like to see in the world. One last thing I will say is focus on bringing the vision of the artists into rooms like this, because there are not enough artists here, and I think as a whole, artists are much more willing to take risks than many people in the rest of the cultural sectors.

- **Speaker 3 (Facilitator 1):** Just to follow up with you in terms of what is inspiring to you? Maybe a couple of things that you've seen that are inspiring.
- **Speaker 12:** Well, a couple of things are inspiring to me. One are the people that are standing up in Minnesota. in Chicago, in Los Angeles, in North Carolina that are actually, when they see their neighbors being disappeared, they stop them. Renee Good is inspiring to me. Not the fact that she was murdered, but the fact that she said, I'm not going to let ICE terrorists come in and kidnap, and slave catchers come in and kidnap people. Those ordinary Americans and ordinary people around the country are inspiring to me. The people of Iran right now are inspiring to me. And also, in the arts, coming back to Fall of Freedom, the people all across the country, over 700 people participated in a call that said people and culture should stand up to fascism and censorship. All sorts of people and artists and institutions stood up. [That event was accomplished] in three months with no money. It was basically a $25,000 budget in three months [and] no organization. [There were] 700 people participating. It was because of people all across the country who wanted to stand up. That was really inspiring to me.

**Speaker 13:** I'm going to talk about connected strategy, which might be the biggest buzzkill you could have following what [Speaker] just said, but I'm going to go there. I feel like we need to focus on having a connected strategy to broaden the narrative of the arts. In our last conversation, we talked a lot about how we want people to value the arts as essential, but we have to recognize that



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as previous elections and our current shows us people value things very differently in our country. We need to understand that. I have heard so often people talk about the arts as a universal language, but I think as a sector, we have not learned to speak the languages of other sectors effectively. I think that begins with education. It begins in higher education. It begins in community-based learning, out-of-school time learning, to the arts and health piece. The Mass Cultural Council's budget is the 0.0459% of the state budget in Massachusetts. And we celebrate the arts here, right? Healthcare is more than 40%. And so, I think we need to focus on being in rooms where the arts are not represented. We need to focus on being in rooms where decisions are made about healthcare, about economic development, about infrastructure, about community, that we're not there. And we're not there because we chose not to show up. Or we didn't have the courage. We don't need an invitation to show up. We need to assert ourselves. We need to sit in the front row, and we need to make sure that we're part of that decision-making process, and the data exists to help us do that. We have data. From the World Health Organization's 2019 study to some of the data that's coming out of our arts prescription work, I am inspired by the people who've had the courage to go and do that arts prescription work in Massachusetts. We have two health insurance companies that are paying for arts experiences as part of patient treatment plans in behavioral health and in mental health. Mass General Brigham is studying the impact on hypertension. In one cohort of a national health insurance company, we've seen a 40% reduction in emergency room visits. And an adherence rate, then you get an arts prescription, people are going 77% of the time. When you get when you get prescribed a frontline SSRI, like a Prozac or fluoxetine or something, people take it about 33% of the time, women at a slightly higher rate. People are taking our medicine more, but we have not been at those tables. When we get to those tables, what I've found is the chief medical officers, executives at healthcare companies, all of these places, the question we're trying to address so often is the wrong one. Where we go in there and are ready to say, "Here's why you should use the arts." The question is not why. All of them say, "No, no, we get it." The question is how. How do we integrate the arts into our field? How do we integrate the arts into our practice? How do we integrate it in transportation, into housing, into these other spaces? I think we need to spend less time focusing on the why question and more time focusing on the how question.

- **Speaker 3 (Facilitator):** Are there specific examples maybe not in arts and health that have been inspiring to you?
- **Speaker 13:** The Department of Homeland Security...this is weird to be inspired by the Department of Homeland Security. I was inspired by a guy who worked at the Department of Homeland Security who no longer does – so let me specify that – was looking at the arts as a domestic terrorism mitigation strategy because radicalization happens in isolation. This guy had this notion that the arts are inherently social, that when we come together and we



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experience something together, it brings us out of our homes, it brings us into public spaces, and that it was a tool with a lot of potential to mitigate domestic terrorism. That grant program was cut as part of DOGE, but that guy started his own consulting firm, I highly recommend spending some time with them.

**Speaker 14:** Arts and health is something that's been coming up here because I think it's a great example of something that opened up in the pandemic and certainly the White House's support around how we talk about the work of arts in ways that we all feel and know. And I think with what [Speaker] is saying, too, at least locally here in Rhode Island, there's starting to be more of a conversation and an effectiveness around communicating arts in the ways that we know it's effective in terms of civic engagement and community cohesion. Thinking ahead to the future, ways in which that kind of code switching can be supported. I think, too, and I speak about this from the [Organization] universe, that the degree to which I'm seeing in state government that when we have private-public partnerships, that's really effective, because certain private philanthropy can and should have a role in this, given what those of us within government are facing right now. And there is a leveraging process that can happen there that's really proved to be truly effective. The last thing that occurred to me, and this goes back to, I think, something others were saying about evaluation and data collection. I'm saying this knowing it's really complicated. But I know working with small organizations and with artists, let's just take the arts and health space, for example. But it's true across the board. Having easy-to-use tools so there's a unified way of talking about the impact and effectiveness of work more broadly is something that is always needed and desired and could be really helpful. Again, that might be a private philanthropy space too at well in this given moment. Within Rhode Island, the Grant Makers Council of Rhode Island is trying to convene the funders around the topic of civic health. And that's exciting to see that kind of shared language developing. I think we're seeing the rise of civic health indexes and indices in some places. Which also gives us a utility in terms of language to use. Again, [Speaker] and others have brought up being in different spaces and showing up there. I think we're all starting to get to that point, which is great of saying that. We've been talking to each other. How do we talk to others? And what are the supports we need to effectively do that?

**Speaker 1:** It's one of my major frustrations and it's been brewing for decades. We make ourselves subject to a fight frame that is strategic and political. I have watched it over decades and generations of leadership now. We do that at the opportunity cost of these other things we're talking about: real effect on healthcare policy, real effect on education policy. The reason I have held it as attention all this time is because I respect and admire and belong to the team of people and did you know, serve formally on that team of folks who are supposed to fight when the stakes are on the table. I've been through a number of experiences in my career where I was on the front line and nobody backed me, or few people backed me, and I have been in the other role where I



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had to get down and dirty with someone to help them understand the consequences of messing with an arts leader. For example, we showed an [Artist] in [Location] one time when a guy didn't want to because he and I had a chat. I'm looking for that bold, full-throated, how many times do we need to watch them pick an artist out of our grant pool, run them up the media. Sorry, I'm trying to get rid of my violent metaphors, but they do this, and we know it, and we can track it by political cycles. Here, I'm going to get to my solution. The way I understand it now is it itself is a both-and frame. We have to have that capacity to be very defensive and bark when it's time to do that and also to use the deep inside political influences that we have shot through DC and other places. At the same time, we have to be the same people, or a bunch of us have to get up and say, "Folks, time to stop fighting." We've got to get together. We've got sick kids. We've got aging parents. We've got stuff to do. And it was our lobbies that Blues and Reds got together in and talked things out in the era when they did do the talking, when they did do the sausage making, and when they did come up with solutions for American people. There's a mindset shift in DC that I've been trying to piece my way through and really inviting other people to get into. Come on, we're the arts. We're ancient. We're the most powerful forces on the planet. We can take down some pretty awful leadership.

- **Speaker 10:** The arts, everything that [Speaker] just said, the arts need to be as unyielding as capitalism itself, as late-stage American capitalism itself, and a fragile democracy. I think the layers of governance, like the counterbalance, I want our arts institutions to have the best lawyers in the world, the sharks too. I want mutual aid and pooled resources and evaluation and defensive strategies and all the things that we know other competitive industries gird themselves for, for duration. Arts needs all of those things too. plus, to the other comment before that some of this is the role of government, we've just determined that perhaps these systems are too interdependent and are not flexible under certain conditions.

**Speaker 15:** There's no one thing. There are no 20 things. It's a lot of things. Another piece of those things is always relationships and relatability and talking to people like people, both artists and leaders, governmental, legislative leaders, municipal leaders, organizational leaders, and finding that commonality and that through line and then embedding that language, as I mentioned this in the last room, as standard in policy and curriculum. It's normalizing it. It's integrating it. I do think in 20 years, we can make a little progress on that. It's taken about three to try to get A into the STEM, but we're still pushing to normalize that, and embedding ourselves into those spaces, which I think it sounds like a lot of us are pretty good at. So, working with others to do the same.

**Speaker 2:** Since we're here, I think we're here to do practical things. one very easy area of adaptation is actually in the foundation sector. It's really nice to be back in a kind of cultural policy



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conversation. there are several people here with sort of gray hairs. But you all know that in the 90s, the Pew Charitable Trust, the Rockefeller Foundation, a bunch of other foundations got together and said, "Why isn't there a cultural policy sector in the United States, which could advocate for the arts, which could pool data, run the research, just as there's education policy, health policy, drug policy, crime policy, et cetera, et cetera?" That entire infrastructure was eradicated, basically. There was a great center at [University]. I ran this thing at [University]. I would respectfully suggest that the foundation sector, which is sitting on an incredible amount of money, given market conditions, could dedicate more resources to reestablishing some of this capacity so that there is data collection. We can't just keep making this stuff up and starting from scratch. I think while we can all sit here and hope for the best from government, where there is immediate action possible within the sector is among the cultural founders. There's also a lot of new foundations, including artist foundations. [Organization] foundation is about to start up, sadly, soon. These are big foundations starting from scratch. yet, I think almost everybody here would agree that our funding mechanisms leave very little for this sort of interstitial, cross-sectoral, not sexy work that actually would be very helpful and which government institutions are not providing. I think I would suggest that perhaps one of these mechanisms for discussion is, what can the philanthropy sector that even cares about the arts do, so that we have this toolkit at our disposal, and this data, and these forms in a way that many advanced countries do?

**Speaker 16:** I think as a sector, we focus a lot on our national and federal agencies, and that is incredibly important. It is a symbol of values, right? I think we can all agree to that. I also just want to make the case for the importance of investments and advancements at the local levels. I've been in local arts agency work for a couple of decades now, and we are on the front lines, right? We are working people-to-people, with our constituents, with our residents. That is really where I think a lot of the work [takes place] in terms of how do you transform culture and how do you transform people and how they perceive experiences? It is in the people-to-people space. I would also like to submit the argument that collectively, all of the local arts agencies, their collective budgets are probably – I don't know the stats offhand – but it's probably a hundred times the size of the National Endowment for the Arts, right? That is where I think a lot of focus and emphasis should be placed. I just wanted to put that out there. I also want to end on some things that one of my colleagues shared with me last week, who was an activist alongside Cesar Chavez in San Jose. She said, "Stay optimistic because everything is temporary." And she said, "Stay vigilant and stay strong." I just want to share those words with you because I feel like they're very relevant to this conversation.

**Speaker 17:** As they say, all politics is local and local is where we're going to be able to reach people. I think the things I was talking about, there can be mandates and encouragement on the federal level, but its action happens at the local level. And I think that looking at people who are working on municipal or county plans, it's easier to think about how do we enhance creativity in



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[Location]? How do we increase creativity in [Location] where I live, right? I think there are some specific things that can be done. The other session talked about the future. I think that our future work should focus on the work we can do locally, not that national isn't important, but I think the local is probably more important right now.

**Speaker 18:** As I brought up in the first session too, I hear people talking about the center, right? Centers of power, centers of thinking, and then the fringe. And I think there's times when we should rightly invest more in the center and times that we should rightly invest more in the fringe. From a perspective, from an energy, from where we're putting our time and attention. Sometimes if the center is really trying to crush you, maybe spend more effort and counterbalance at the fringe. To know when you're doing which, and to have an awareness of what's center and what's fringe. The center feels very dangerous right now. They make some powerful systems, like very, very powerful systems. And right now, technology is being put forward to us as a, perhaps a transformatively powerful system. We do have to keep our eye on that, or the fringe could be overwhelmed. But I think also knowing that during times when the center is a little dangerous, that you can put a lot of energy into the fringe, it doesn't need to be showy, it doesn't need to be visible, but that keeping those smaller fires burning at the fringe and really knowing that you're doing that and network, build stronger networks. That there's the scales of justice, that we need to make sure we're putting more small kernels in the fringe scales right now so that as things do change, we haven't just abandoned our resources.

**Speaker 6:** I just wanted to add, this conversation is about the future, and I think it would be negligent not to think about the next generation of people who will be having these spaces and that we as folks who are working right now won't be working forever. We need to think about who are the people coming in to lead these organizations? Are we creating a sector that is desirable for people to have a career in? I'm sure I'm not alone in the type of people who have gone through these pre-career accelerator programs and fellowships and all that sort of thing. We need a lot more of that. We need a lot more mentors. We need a lot more spaces for people to feel that they want to come in and not just consume culture, but help create culture. Because as great as these ideas are, we need generations of people to continue them. It takes a second to get a burn, but a long time to heal from it. We need people who are ready to be on that healing journey.

- **Speaker 3 (Facilitator):** Can you offer a couple of inspirational places?
- **Speaker 6:** Absolutely. The program at Arena Stage that was fantastic, the Alan Lee Hughes Fellowship. The Association of Arts Administration of Educators was their EDI fellowship. That was a great program. And then there's a lot of residency programs. The Project Row Houses in Houston has really strong community mentorship programs for not just people working in the cultural sector, but artists themselves specifically. I think we need more of



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those types of programs, a lot more commitment to the people to come in and want to stay working in this space, I think is what's going to be required to actually make this change happen, because it will take years, generations, and we need to keep refilling the coffers.

**Speaker 19:** As a leader in a C3 firmly entrenched in a private industry that's profit generation is hurtling us towards an uncertain oblivion, it's an interesting time to think about what we should be focusing on in our little, small space of gender equity around filmed entertainment. I think really continuing to convince people that everyone's voices matter and the creation of art and story and narrative and then having that increasingly told that's not true and that not everyone matters in that creation is – I think to [Speaker's] words around fascism and the fear of what our values continue to be – so urgent. Thinking about who gets to make art and tell stories in this moment will need concrete policy and protections, instituted yesterday. Again, sitting from the Hollywood angle, trying to figure out how to speak to conglomerate heads about this in a real way, in a tangible way. Obviously, we'll do that through our dollars, we'll do that through our audiences, but it is a very nerve-wracking time. I think having coalitional spaces like this is so important. But we also need to be thinking about what our messaging is to everyone in this moment. How are we organizing our communities – which many people have said – but to reflect that they want to be in a society where this is still possible. So just really sincere gratitude for everyone in this space, but also deep concern at the public private intersections, because I don't think they're talking significantly enough to each other.

- **Speaker 3 (Facilitator):** What's inspiring to you? Where are you seeing some inspirational practice?
- **Speaker 19:** At the moment, it's deeply grassroots. I don't think people will ever stop making theater, film, art, literature, dance, music. It's never going to stop. As I watch filmmakers in [Location], many of whom have to leave because of sustainability issues, many are coming together to simply make films and without budget, without compensation. That's not okay, it's not the world that I want, but to see the resilience and the resistance in artists who will just continue to create despite the contractions, despite the challenges, and despite this harrowing context we find ourselves in, you know, it makes me understand that we will continue to have institutions and organization even if it looks darker than it has.

**Speaker 20:** What I'm wrestling with is in envisioning the future, can we just step past the present? I mean, I think that's what [Speaker] was saying. I think what is happening is much more pervasive and profound than we had thought in every single segment of this country and about everything we thought. I want to posit these things. I have written down many ideas, many of these ideas I completely agree with. How can we, as an arts group, how can we face today so that there will be something in 2045? Because I used to think, in 2016, in 2020, "Oh, well, we're on to the next. That



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was an aberration." I don't know if it is. I don't think it is. That's maybe one of the most shocking things, is the 30% who agree with what's happening. Timothy Snyder inspires me. I think his book on tyranny is essential. And there's a graphic book by Timothy Snyder and an artist whose name I can't recall. It's interesting to read about the history of fascism and how people can't face that, that's what they're in. But I think we're in it. I would love that for us to talk more about that. Although I don't want it to be a fear fest or a complaint.

## Group 5 Chat

1. I think we need to focus more on organizing! Yes, as arts workers, but also as communities of neighbors, audiences, donors/members, elected officials, etc. I think we need to invest in these relationships because it brings principles of direct democracy into arts spaces in a way that could offer all stakeholders of arts organizations a meaningful seat at the table to determine how we do this work together. I am so inspired by the work of the late labor organizer Jane McAlevey when considering how we might go about this work.
2. Our sector should absolutely own 'qualitative data' with all mayors, and lots of others.
3. 1) From "services + projects" to "power + stewardship"

   Shift: Stop defining success as plans delivered or hours donated and define it as power transferred and maintained (who decides, who controls land/data, who benefits over time).

   2) From engagement as input to engagement as governance.

   Shift: replace "community feedback" with community decision-making.

   3) From pro-bono heroics to paid, ethical, sustainable practice.

   Shift: Pro-bono remains valuable, but it can't be the engine. Build a compensated, repeatable model that doesn't burn people out or underwrite inequity.

   4) From "translate community to institutions" to "re-design institutions"

   Shift: not just helping communities navigate broken systems—use your leverage to push for change in procurement, timelines, and accountability.

   5) From extractive storytelling to cultural ownership and data dignity.



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Shift: Move from treating stories, images, and cultural knowledge as "content." Treat them as owned assets.

6) From "one size fits all equity" to place-specific cultural practice.

Shift: Embed local cultural systems (faith networks, mutual aid, tradition-bearers, youth scenes) as co-design infrastructure.

7) From neutral facilitation to values-backed, conflict-capable leadership.

Shift: today's polarization and displacement pressures require you to be comfortable naming tradeoffs and holding conflict without retreating to neutrality.

8) From outputs to proof: measure what the sector claims to value.

Shift: Funders and policymakers increasingly want evidence; communities want accountability.

4. Also want to add the notion of arts participation as precedent-setting practice for broader civic engagement. We do a job by getting folks to know each other's names before we show up at city council. Look at the leadership training in the UK that started with Clore program. They have come a long way in developing infrastructural leadership.

5. Quebec and Taiwan give 1% of the annual govt. budgets to the arts, does anyone know if anyone has aggregated a spreadsheet of all countries and or governments and their giving to the arts?

6. The advocates need to lawyer up and back the folks who are obviously being targeted.

7. I absolutely agree with [Speaker] that arts representatives need to push into rooms where the arts have not been traditionally represented. I would argue that instead of learning to speak the language of other sectors, we need to teach other sectors how to speak the universal language of arts. If anything, the corporatization and centralization of large arts organizations reflects an overreliance on the language of other sectors to the detriment of the arts community overall.

8. Building on what I said, these are two UNESCO instruments that I am suggesting provide an international legal framework for many (but not all!) of the ideas you are all expressing here.



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   a. 1980 Recommendation concerning the Status of the Artist: https://www.unesco.org/creativity/en/1980-recommendation-concerning=status-artist
   b. Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions: https://www.unesco.org/en/legal-affairs/convention-protection-and-promotion-diversity-culturalexpressions
   c. I also think that the German Commission for UNESCO's 2024 project, the Fair Culture Charter, is a fascinating and extremely useful way to envision the intersectionality of issues related to the mission for fairness in the global cultural sector: https:// www.fair-culture.org/

9. This meeting is very clearly built on the work that Center for Cultural Policy did back then. I am so excited to be here remotely and with no formal position. Those rooms back then were cool but extremely exclusive. The fact that we are here together on zoom with this kind of qualitative capture ability is a really significant advance in sectoral capacity!!

10. Forgot to add, currently inspired by The Othering & Belonging Institute (OBI) who considers the whole community in planning, with arts and creative strategy as a significant component, and also the Percent for Place Coalition, a national group advocating for bi-partisan support and funds for community development and public spaces.

11. [Speaker] pinned down the metaphor for how our work influences society. It's the ripple effect. Our ability to get to people 1:1 is the center and then understand the mechanisms of the ripple.
   a. This is organizing.

12. To [Speaker's] points, workforce development is crucial to attract and retain talent for the next generation of leadership in the arts-including better salary standards. An opportunity is to develop relationships with Workforce Investment Boards.
   a. I think workforce development is going to be part of the new cultural plan for [Location].



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# GROUP 6

## Group 6 Transcript

**Speaker 1 (Facilitator):** What strands of work do we need to do to realize the visions that you heard about or advocated for yourself in your earlier conversation? Thinking about all of the different kinds of visions that you've heard for 2045, including your own, what kinds of work are we going to need to do to get to that point? It may be particular areas of work that we need to focus on as a collective sector. It could be where we need to have greater investment. What types of things do we need to invest more in? Could be examples of work that you already see happening around you that are inspiring you today. Or it could be anything else that comes up for you in response to that question

**Speaker 2:** [So many changes going on now, including in my state] so we have a great opportunity to think differently and do better. I'm inspired right now by the work happening in Belgium. There's a really successful co-op model and something that I've gleaned from our constituents here in the arts and culture community is a need for back-end office support, purchasing power, professional and board development and training, and legal support. We're studying what's happening in Belgium, which is really cool. And it's a proven success, I think. There's also talk here about the political dynamic. I am inspired by past efforts to advocate for national issues on the ground in early primary states, while the media circus is around, while the candidates and campaigns are developing their policies and connecting with real people. I want to lean into that and figure out how a national effort can be impactful through the presidential primary.

**Speaker 3:** I'm troubled slightly by the prompt because I don't think everything is monolithic. I think we need to focus on our own worlds. I work in the labor movement, inherently political and legislative, and so that's the lens that I'm taking in this space. The arts, entertainment, and media industry unions include the for-profit sector, film and television, and the nonprofit sector, as well as news and media. So here, I'm primarily talking about the nonprofit arts sector. We help those unions in a lot of different ways, but one thing we've been talking a lot about lately is bringing workers and employers together to advocate on Capitol Hill, to actually develop a policy agenda. We want to focus on building a policy agenda, we want to align our messaging, and we're really focused on trying to get, starting at the federal level, a greater investment in the non-profit art sector, so that's more money for the NEA, NEH, and then try to, you know, revive public broadcasting funding, and maybe even thinking re-envisioning the size of those grants, what those grants are allowed to be used for, you know, operating funds, not just productions. On the film and television side, if you look at the unions there, SAG-AFTRA is probably the one that most people know, but also the IATSE,



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which is very large, with about the same number of members as SAG-AFTRA, and then the Writers Guild and Directors Guild. Those unions work really closely with employers, the producers. They work together on tax credits at the national level, at the state level. They work together on copyright and intellectual property. We've seen the effectiveness of employers and unions working together, having a message that is aligned, having strategy and resources that are aligned, and they're far more effective than the nonprofit sector. Can we take that model and apply it to the nonprofit sector so that we can build towards something that's far more effective than what we have in terms of spending per capita?

**Speaker 4:** [I am an artist who works a lot with government] so that has me thinking about systems and governance in all kinds of ways but really centering beauty and joy as part of the equation and as essential to making the work function. I think when I look at these questions, I really started with the notion that I believe we need to focus on defining what the sector is, because even as I hear someone speaking about unions and other aspects of people who we think to be of the system, my engagement and my work with unions is so foreign and so far from me, and how hard it is for me to find insurance and health insurance specifically, and a bunch of other elements of systems. I think it's really important for us to think about graphic designers as artists, but also Oprah singing and you know what I mean, like the comparables of all the different kinds of folks doing creative work. I think mapping it out would be compelling and interesting because then we get to understand which part of the map is covered by unions and which ones aren't. Then how do we learn from the sectors that do have unions to support the well-being of their members? I think mapping it out allows us to understand where we belong in the system, and therefore, what does that mean. I think about the idea that art and culture are a sector or a segment, when in fact, we are part of every part of life. We're a part of all industries. Who we are and how we are creating value across industries becomes essential because then we can codify that. If we can codify the creative ecosystem, we can identify the value across all of society for what we're bringing to the table, and the mapping exercise allows us to understand that we're a part of everything. And therefore, naming and understanding the categories allows us to evolve how those folks are treated and what they deserve for the studies and the expertise they bring to the table.

**Speaker 5:** Building on the conversation we had in the first workshop in terms of the vision of the future, creativity versus arts and culture, but creativity in general, innovation, imagination, is valued, supported, and available to all. Picking up some of the comments about government support, I do think we need to find ways to find support for the arts as a line item in local, state, federal budgets. We obviously have private support, great private foundations. And [some communities have been able to create dedicated revenue for the arts, like] a sales tax for the arts. If it's a tax we're all contributing (towards), we're all accountable, and it also can be renewed. Those kinds of local efforts



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[can generate millions and support hundreds of organizations and can be] new funding models. Making them democratic and broadly based is an important step.

**Speaker 6:** I am interested in the kind of future of economics and technology and AI that we're facing. How do we situate arts and culture to respond and shape those big sorts of dilemmas rather than just thinking about our sector? Where I'm finding hope is in sort of the models coming out of the Doughnut Economics Lab, where they're really trying to think about how do we reprioritize economic models that exist within planetary boundaries, how is that something that can be owned by individuals, organizations, and local cities? So many of the national and global attempts at policymaking to move us into better climate and planetary alignment have not been working, so I get a lot of inspiration from there. I also am part of [national arts policy conversations] where we think about winning economic rights for all, especially sort of in an algorithmic age where artists are merely a part of the same sort of maelstrom that we're all going to be facing as we sort of are dumping more and more people into contingent work and sort of shifting from service-based culture into whatever's coming next. I think that that's been a good organizing group for me to think about what are the economic outcomes that we all want and need? Then how do art and artists play a role in coming alongside that? I also think that we have a really good example of what a European-wide policy looks like around artificial intelligence that is being pressured enormously by our government to fold in the face of our tech companies' intensive lobbying. But if you want to look at something that is both anticipatory and pretty progressive, but also is trying to make sure that we gain the benefits from AI, it's a good solid foundation. Not enough of us are like getting our head around the fact that, you know, day by day, our government is actively using all means of pressure to chip away at this. I'm really interested in the way that arts and culture get into and stay in those conversations in a sustained way. I think we've had the data on climate change for a long time, and we've had the data on why like economics has been failing ordinary people for a very long time, and we certainly have evidence that leaving technology to a hyper free market has not been working. So, I'm really interested in reclaiming the power of culture to shift public norms and attitudes around those things. I think we will get taken care of by people if we are taking care of society. So that's my push as an artist and former nonprofit person.

**Speaker 7:** To name the kind of AI labor dynamics here, I am of the belief that we're inside of a major tectonic rupture right now that can be felt viscerally in the cultural sector. But of course, it's not limited to us. I'm thinking about artificial intelligence and changing economics and contraction of institutional funding, the decimation of creative labor markets. So many of the responses that we observe either in the press or in our conferences are either accelerationist – like we should be embracing the disruption and move fast and break things - or preservationist, like let's protect the 501c3 at all costs. Do we need to save existing structures, slow the change? What are we racing towards? I think we need to look carefully at historical moments of cataclysmic disruption to cultural



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production. I think they reveal something about what we're living through right now. I'm thinking about the Black Death, decimating guild structures that created the conditions for artists to be named as individuals. I'm thinking about the Middle Passage, severing people from instruments and languages and ceremonial contexts. And forcing the invention of new forms of body as instrument, of the French Revolution, collapsing patronage and inventing the art market as an afterthought. None of these things were designed exactly, but their survival adaptations were later narrated as progress. I think what we're seeing here is that there's a lot of artists and technologists building their own tools and creating their own means of production. I think that's great, to a point. It feels like there's a lesson in history here that artists shouldn't have to be engineers. I think we need to recognize this labor as infrastructure building and invest in that accordingly so that the burden doesn't fall only on the people who are making work under duress.

**Speaker 8:** So many years of this. Going back a moment just to pull forward something from our previous conversation, I really do wonder about the nonprofit structure in because it does seem to cement this competitive environment among institutions that are doing this work. I wonder what a reimagined NEA might look like, that took into consideration the idea of the arts ecosystem, from the individual level to the institutional level, grassroots organizations, big organizations, some of these other parts of the field like the unions that are an enormous voice is often not present in these conversations. What might it look like for an NEA to evolve in support of a larger ecosystem approach to supporting arts and culture? I think there's a lot of learning to be done and sharing in the building of more trust understanding across the enormous variety of individuals and institutions who are part of that ecosystem. There needs to be learning around what the needs are, what the threats are, what investments would actually transform people's capacity to participate and contribute to this future that we're imagining together.

**Speaker 9:** I feel like at some point in the future, not tomorrow, but maybe in a few years or a decade, we look back and things have gone a little bit back to normal. How do we do everything we can to protect the assets which are once gone or gone forever? There are things that, while sad if they get crunched in this moment, will come back. But there are some things where if they're lost, they're lost forever. A nonprofit or a cultural space in a gentrifying New York, if it's gone, it's gone forever because the condos go up and you never get it back. I think we need to think about structures that can help protect those things in this time, because it's going to be much harder to get to the 2045 we all want if there's been unnecessary destruction during this period. And obviously, the last thing I'll say is, in other situations like this, where the shit hits the fan in an important sector, the government, often the Fed, steps in and tries to help, like the Resolution Trust Corps in the 80s, or the Troubled Asset Relief Program. Here, of course, there's no one to save us, because the people who might help are exactly the ones causing the problem. So how do institutional actors with power at the local level or state level come together and make some



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"Sophie's Choice" decisions about what if gone will never come back and how do we save it? This question obsesses me. But I don't have any ideas. It's just that's what keeps me up at night.

**Speaker 10:** On the subject of "going back" to the way it was, I had a conversation back during the pandemic with a pretty well-known musical director, an older gentleman. I asked how are we going to go back? Is this all going to crumble? He said something which I thought was very wise. He said we're not going back, but we will go on. He said, as an example, look at how long theater has been around, hundreds, thousands of years, and it's had to keep changing, but it's still there. We're still here. I don't think we should give up. Yes, in terms of relying on the government, obviously, we just can't do that anymore. I came from a for-profit world, so I'm fairly new, about eight years now in the non-profit world. To rely on this one source, it just doesn't make sense anymore. We've got to find new ways to be self-sustainable and that's going to require nonprofits and for-profits. I think we need to invite them in and work with them as well. We've got to work together. I don't think there's a way forward without us seriously coming together, like we are here today. I'm so thrilled about this and figuring out how we can work together to make sure that we will go on.

**Speaker 11:** I think we truly need a national coalition, very much like what others have proposed. I do agree that maybe the NEA seems like the obvious institution. I just wonder, you know, how could we make such an institution nonpartisan and independent, which I believe are essential ingredients? How could we also engage the ecosystem represented by the NEH? I know a lot of us maybe are more engaged with the NEA, but the NEH I think is equally representative of our ecosystem. We have great local examples of what's possible when artists and art administrators come together. [Coalitions have joined forces and saved local and state arts agencies, funding, and positions.] So independent coalitions are powerful. I love the idea of finding a way to protect assets, even intangible assets, that can be destroyed. There is kind of a model with the national historic landmarks, right? Could there be national artistic treasures, a kind of program that really protects institutions. We could even think, you know, performances or, you know, traditions and celebrations, but I feel like we're really onto something with these thoughts.

**Speaker 1 (Facilitator):** While people are gathering their thoughts, I want to bring on some things that came up in our previous conversation. There was a lot of discussion about power and who's had it traditionally in this country, and movements outside the arts that are building power in different ways that we could learn a lot from. What would we build to try to address where the country is going to be in 2045? Are the current systems the right ones, or do we need something totally different? Is there a singular Americans for the Arts or NEA entity that will come and save us versus a pluralistic support system and mutual aid?

**Speaker 12:** I really feel like we would benefit from a collective impact or a group that is nonpartisan coming together very similar to this, that we can be advocates for the arts as artists and in all arts



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disciplines, because we have not been great advocates. We have been late coming to the table as advocates. Some of the discussion in our last breakout is that there are lots of forms of the arts and we need to be open to, and make sure that we're inclusive. Many Americans that are artists don't believe they're artists. Imagine if we harnessed that energy as advocates, what we could do to move things forward in the arts. I just think for the future to look towards 2045, we have to think of a new way of supporting and advocating for ourselves. The NEA has done a great job, but there are only certain things that they can do. I am the director of a nonprofit, and I have to be very careful politically, that I am nonpartisan and not speaking out against a political field. But if we had a group like this we could all move forward in the same direction. No matter where our politics lie, we all want the same thing. One thing that I kept thinking in our last breakout is [that] I am really concerned about the nonprofit model moving forward.

**Speaker 13:** I want to throw up for grabs the idea that we need to be nonpartisan in this moment. I say that with the utmost respect of people who have to really think about safety and security and endurance and sustainability of their organizations, of the people they serve and work to protect. But I also think that as a field, this all too often makes us safe. Are we not taking the risks on behalf of culture and society that we need to take those risks for. I think we are in some of these moments precisely because we've been nonpartisan in the sense that if we just keep our heads down, we just are kind, then they won't come for us, and they always do. I'm challenging the notion of nonpartisan because I want to challenge the notion of what makes us safe and secure and sustainable as a field, because we're not safe, sustainable as a field now. I wonder if we use nonpartisan in a way that robs us of our voice. I want to find ways that we can embolden ourselves to think about what is the agency we need that will make us thrive? That might not be to be nonpartisan.

**Speaker 14:** I am sure we're going to find something to disagree on eventually but today is not that day. I completely concur that nonpartisanship in this context is a trap. It is a trap along the lines that professionalization and professionalism was a trap 70 plus years ago. I'm thinking here about the 501c3, the history of the 501c3, of course, in this context, and all of the pressures that have routed advocates and organizers, coalition, radical coalitions into professionalized and therefore acceptable political organizations that suffer the consequences of doing what they were founded to do. I'm thinking a lot about Insight, Women of Color Against Violence and The Revolution Will Not Be Funded. It's a text that, of course, has a challenging history, but the analysis there is frickin ever true and radical and utterly kick butt.

**Speaker 15:** I think we need to focus on things that are the antidote to dominance. I've been thinking a lot about how this time is so shaped by dominance, and we're not going to survive authoritarian dominance through other forms of domination. Thinking about network-based resource sharing and rigorous solidarity, mutual aid networks, things rooted in reciprocity, really



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decentralized and human-centered kind of work, and a real commitment to the kind of collective work that brings us into loving accountability with each other. Thinking about how we invest in whatever we're investing in that there's an infrastructure of care within that investment. For example, within artist labor, a lot of the work at National Performance Network is around ethical treatment riders and conflict resolution practices and budget transparency and just how to be in relationships (with) each other with respect and deep care. Yes, money matters. Yes, paying artists is critical, but how we are in relationship to each other really matters. If artists are destroying themselves trying to survive, no matter how much money they have, it's not okay. I think a lot of these conversations that we're having around what institutions will survive and not, I think we need to invest in some real honest, adaptive strategy conversations and real analysis so that we can help institutions radically transform, including dissolve, and to have honest conversations that doesn't presume the current infrastructure is savable or should be saved. I will say I'm inspired by the work of Cezanne and RootofTwo and every conversation we are in, and groups like Project South that are doing really badass movement building that's rooted in Southern organizing. I say this from the Deep South, that whenever I'm in a national conversation, I carry with the folks that have been, are doing, and have always done really badass organizing here in the South. These kind of trans-local strategies and approaches are important.

**Speaker 16**: I believe we must be political. I believe that whatever we create has to be an organization that can speak out against current affairs and things like that, maybe in a way that we can't within a 501c3 organization. Just to confirm that I wholeheartedly agree that we've kind of gotten into this situation by not speaking out as much as we should. Maybe that's where the 501c3 becomes an issue for some of us.

**Speaker 17:** I believe we need to focus on youth. I think that we all know this, but we've done a very bad job as a country of handing power off politically, culturally, and all kinds of capital. I believe in that focus on youth for obvious reasons because they're going to be the ones shaping the future. I'll just note that there aren't many of us here in this conversation that are under 40. I always need to think about it. Because we are in such a moment of transition, if we want to think about a future that is a different political order that will last beyond 2028, this is not about a candidate, it's that the world is changing. We're always at risk of trying to [and I don't mean to dismiss efforts to preserve culture, like in archives] justify and build social contracts and make cases for our work in ways that relate to the ways that we were doing it when people like me grew up. That's just why I want to remind ourselves that we don't want to be those people that aren't passing off and sharing and listening in the way others have.

**Speaker 18:** I have a question given that some have spoken around the notion of this work being political and the aim to be bipartisan. In my spirit, I want everyone to be included. Even in that



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thought, I wonder if inclusion is something that Republicans are against. So how can the work be bipartisan, is my question. If the work is values-driven and our values are about inclusion, does that mean that it cannot be bipartisan?

**Speaker 25:** Back to the political chaos every four years with the presidential primary process, I worked with Americans for the Arts on the ground, talking to all the Republican presidential candidates in the past, getting on the record. It's very nice. Feels good. And we get good social media content. At the state level, it's important to try to gain bipartisan support on legislation. Today, there's a hearing led by a Republican in a rural part of the state who received enough constituent concern about the lack of financial support moving forward to arts organizations, to small theaters, to music and school, et cetera, that he was compelled to co-sponsor a bill to study economic impact of art and culture in our state. And I want to champion that, right? I want to signal, hey, the Republicans here are supporting the arts. Now, not all of them and not very well, but it's sort of a Jedi mind trick for some of these people to say, you're doing it, you're great. And then they will maybe grow into that. So that's one tactic. We're a small state, so we kind of know each other and we can shame people into things maybe easier. But I do think that there is a bigger place for people who recognize common humanity. And I do think that if we push people into a corner too far, it'll be harder to pull them back into support.

**Speaker 26:** I now run an organization in the South where we are an interesting conglomerate because we own a radio station, a museum, a community center, a music festival, and a school. But before I came here, I was with a large city cultural office in the North, so I have that perspective as well. My comment is that it IS political. I don't see it as partisan, but I do see it as political. For instance, we do a lot of advocacy work. I find it extremely political, but not necessarily partisan. We work with the Chamber of Commerce. [President and CEO] is a staunch Republican, and she helps me get a lot of Republicans on some important bills. We pull from any black, blue, brown, red, blue. We don't care about the partisan part, but it is very political. I just wanted to clarify my comments in there. It's very political, but not necessarily partisan.

**Speaker 27:** I'll just respond briefly that I think about it as more than the politics of the day. Yes, I know, as we're dealing with the days that we have and even the next series of tomorrows that we're going to have. We're in this political system and we must make trade-offs and we have to make accommodations. But if we're in this exercise being liberated from that to think about what we would build if we could, then I want to see more pluralistic trans local organizing movements outside of the arts. I want us to decentralize our gaze on ourselves and think about what are the shifts in society that we need to make and how does culture get involved in those larger shifts? I want to come at that work with joy and abundance. I want us to not feel silent in any of the big structural shifts that we're going to have to go through. We're going through them both because



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of the political moment we're in, but we're also going through them because of political moments from a hundred years ago, right? Climate change didn't start last week or last election. Technological shifts brought us into the century of progress in 1934, and we haven't looked back on technological determinism. We're in the wake stream of decisions that came before us. So how does culture just get and stay in those games? How do we thrive and endure while doing it? It's a looser definition of culture that isn't thinking about the individual organization. Sometimes it's not even thinking about the individual artist, albeit I am both and have been both of those. But I feel like our advocacy is so limited when we only talk about our own survival. I think in and of itself that has led to our deep depowering in a society that is desperate for what we have to offer in terms of sense making, in terms of how we navigate all these big, big shifts. They're desperate for us to be in that game. But we still want to talk about our buildings. That's why we're poorer off for it.

**Speaker 1 (Facilitator):** So that is a perfect segue to the next segment. If you have envisioned something else, how would you do it? What kind of resources would you need? What are some steps it would take to get there? What would the form of it be? If you're talking about a society of mutual aid and mutual support, that involves other organizations and connects to others. What does that look like? The point of this is not to come to any kind of agreement today, but to try to put some form around the things that you care about so that that can be data that we might hand to somebody who wants to work on this or that, you know, there's going to be a lot of folks that are working on stuff on the ground that have access to the data that comes from today. Any final comments?

**Speaker 28:** I want to say thank you to the speaker who introduced the word pluralism. I think about that a lot, and I think about wanting bridges. To me, we've been talking about this political versus partisan. I think the arts are political. It can't not be political, but personally I think pluralism points us to a direction of Inclusion, and I think pluralism is a better word right now for it. It means we do need to welcome people of different partisanships, and that's the strength of the arts in that it's not for everybody, but it can be for anybody. I think that pluralism has always been one of the most perpetual counterbalances to nationalism and we are in an era of a global upswing of nationalism in our country and it's not going to go away for a while and it's not about one election cycle and so if we can anchor ourselves that pluralism wins. We have to recognize that even when we're in opposition to [Nationalism] we are swimming in the waters of our political order and we have been in and that's when you talk about what do we celebrate? I'm in the museum world, and we celebrate a bigger, newer building, celebrate bigger collections. We don't tend to celebrate deeper connections with our communities. How do we shift from that order, and make a new order, find new ways to talk. That's why I talk about youth because I don't know those ways, right? They weren't my ways. Someone is going to show us those ways to talk about our social contract, if you will, in a way that will speak to a new era.



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## Group 6 Chat

1. https://smartbe.be/en/
2. https://www.serpentinegalleries.org/whats-on/future-art-ecosystems-5-art-x-creative-rd/
3. https://doughnuteconomics.org/
4. https://sites.google.com/unitedstatesartists.org/napa/home
5. https://artificialintelligenceact.eu/the-act /
6. I wanted to share what inspired my recommendations:
    a. Mierle Laderman Ukeles is a New York City-based artist known for her feminist and service-oriented artworks, which relate the idea of process in conceptual art to domestic and civic "maintenance". Since 1977, she has been the Artist in Residence of the New York City Department of Sanitation.
    b. I am inspired by Adrienne Maree Brown's Emergent Strategy: a framework for navigating constant change by learning from natural systems, using simple interactions to build complex, resilient, and desirable futures.
    c. Social Prescription: a healthcare approach where doctors and other health professionals formally "prescribe" non-clinical community activities, resources, or groups to patients to improve their overall health and well-being, addressing social determinants like loneliness, isolation, or lack of purpose, rather than just symptoms. Instead of medicine, patients are connected to things like art classes, gardening, sports clubs, volunteering, or social groups to tackle the root causes of their health issues and build stronger community ties.
7. Inspired by the work of artists and arts-worker led efforts like art.coop, WAGE, Museums Moving Forward and Readying The Museum
8. Thinking a lot about “The Revolution Will Not Be Funded” by INCITE! Women of Color against Violence. https://incite-national.org/books/
9. An Archive is ESSENTIAL. We are being erased.
    a. National Arts Archive
    b. Including an oral history component
10. I lovingly disagree that we have not been advocates. Artists are and have been THE BEST advocates and always have been.



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11. I believe we need to focus on building an independent, nonpartisan national coalition with a clear agenda, and local chapters in each region, to drive narrative change in favor of the arts ecosystem, provide guidance to policymakers and hold them accountable, represent individual artists, advance arts education, and support cultural institutions.

12. Being an artist is innately political because art challenges and transcends the boundaries set by society, allowing individuals to explore and express their identities and perceptions of the world in ways that defy conventional norms. Through art, individuals create something from nothing, reimagining worlds and offering new contexts that question the status quo and inspire change.

13. This act of creation and reimagination fosters a heightened degree of self-awareness and expression. When artists share their unique perspectives, they often address issues of identity, power, and social justice, implicitly or explicitly engaging in political discourse. Art has the power to illuminate truths, evoke emotions, and provoke thought, making it a potent vehicle for

14. By asserting their vision and voice, artists inherently engage in political acts, using their creativity to explore and expose the complexities of the human experience beyond the constraints imposed by societal norms.

15. In the book The Geography of Bliss, Iceland is described as one of the happiest places on Earth—perhaps because in Reykjavík, nearly 90% of people identify as "poets" first, and only afterward by the work they do to make money.

16. https://projectsouth.org/

17. 501 (c)(4)

18. I'd like to see us move away from politics and look to our fellow citizens to vote for arts funding.

19. I agree that we must be bipartisan and inclusive. It is also true that we must name what's happening. Florida's (Republican) governor vetoed the state arts budget in 2024; Miami Dade County's Mayor (Democrat) is who put forth an agenda to cut arts funding and merge the department into libraries. One of our (Republican) county commissioners stood by us in our advocacy efforts. Many things (can be) true at once. We are working on building consensus around a common cause.



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20. Thank you for introducing the word pluralism, which I think is key to success for culture in the era to come. Among other things, pluralism is a perpetual contradiction to nationalism, and we are in a global upswing of nationalism. But it is more than that and offers an opportunity for the arts to be (in my terms) political while welcoming partisans of all sides.



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# GROUP 7

## Group 7 Transcript

**Speaker 1:** I believe we need to focus on mapping the systems, the cultural ecosystem, where networks can be accessed, and where resources are available. One, to make the national calibration of the cultural framework transparent and accessible, not only so we can work better together, but so artists and creative workers have a clear pathway into opportunities for influencing change and contributing to the work that's needed ahead.

**Speaker 2:** I had mentioned in the earlier room, my vision for 2045 was an arts and culture that really reflects earth systems and natural systems instead of our society that goes against the natural rhythms of the earth. Also, a society and arts and culture sector where it's not just institutions, but art being integrated into everything. I think one thing that's a real sort of idea that I've had and I think might sound a little silly, but to me an art and farm integration, both things are seasonal. We talk about seasons in performing arts and the art world, and also farms have seasons. I also heard a farmer say we need to put the culture back in agriculture. Those are two ingredients to a good party, the arts, music, and food. The third piece being gathering.

**Speaker 3:** I would say so as [Title], I have to be honest and selfish in saying that I care very deeply about the student experience. The students who major in the arts are students who have in many ways gone against what their families hope that they do. These are brave students. These are students that come to the School of Music or Theater, Dance and Performance Studies or even Creative Writing, Filmmaking with hopes that they will have a career in the future. My hope is that we do some work to really shore up the career pathways. I also would want to say that because I'm arts and humanities, I'm an ethnomusicologist, so I straddle the arts and the humanities, and I believe deeply that we cannot have the arts without the humanities. You cannot be a good artist if you don't understand history and culture and cultural studies and communication and all of that. I would want to also put a word in, a shout out to the humanities as well. I hear a lot in the first session and in this one, I'm sure we'll be talking about the arts and culture, but the humanities is critical and is side by side in terms of how it's viewed in academia in this country. So, I'm going to put in a plug for the humanities as well.

- **Speaker 4 (Facilitator):** Thank you for reminding us to include the humanities. They are a part of our sector. And to your point, what does our ecosystem look like if every single person getting a degree in arts and culture had to study business and had to take a policy



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class, that anyone going into the workforce is better prepared for the realities of the world that we live in. What do we look like in 10 years when that happens?

**Speaker 5:** Speaking to the humanities question, I think we also need to focus on clearly defining who we are. We go between the creative economy, we go between our culture, we go between film, TV, and entertainment, particularly here in [State]. I think for me, looking at who's in the space today, for example, this is very much an arts and culture conversation. I think it would be interesting and important for us to clearly say, this is who we're talking about and who we're representing. I also think a database of cultural policies would be a great thing for us to focus on. I know there have been attempts at that. I think there should be an international database of this because there's so much going on in other countries that is far beyond what we're doing here in the United States. Then, of course, I'm going to put in the plug for advocacy infrastructure and investment in that, both at the local, state, and federal level, including grassroots mobilization of artists, cultural bearers, and creative workers.

- **Speaker 4 (Facilitator):** Yeah, how do you start creating more cultural policy if there's no definition for who is in the creative economy. Transportation, we know what that is. Tech, we know what that is. Gun lobby, we know what that is, right? But if we don't have a definition, it's hard to write legislation and think about advocacy.

**Speaker 6:** I'll plus one [Speaker's] comment about advocacy being woven throughout this and figuring out exactly who the partners are. And building on some of the other conversations, I think what we need is a series of strategic partnerships that are sector-wide that address different areas of cross-sector collaboration, be they arts and climate, arts and health and wellness. Then I think within that, to really drive that, I'm inspired by a lot of the work of funder collaboratives or collaborative funds. I know some of y'all have been really involved in some of that. I've seen some people, some familiar faces, and names on this call, but I think that regional or national funder collaboratives could really drive progress on cross-sector initiatives, and that can really broaden the impact and provide the funding. That can be private funding, that can be public funding, hopefully public funding. That's why the advocacy piece is important.

- **Speaker 4 (Facilitator):** What if the growth of the sector comes from sectors we have outcomes in? Like in [Location], this arts prescribing program where people are getting tickets to arts events and being paid for by insurance and managed care plans and opioid settlement money and housing. What if we double down on that?

**Speaker 7:** We're humanities heavy, but I'm also a folklorist. I'm very grounded in community-based arts. And I love having a foot in both camps, because I think that it gives a perspective and an understanding of the relationship between public humanities work in particular and community



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that's very deep. But I wanted to also follow up on, I know we've all been in our own conversations and now we're back here in a different conversation, but I have been very inspired by and been thinking about the conversation that I just came out of to come into this one. One of the things that we talked about were new systems and especially new systems of issues related to 501c3 nonprofits not working for us anymore and trying to think about creative ways of thinking. I'm still jazzed on this idea and rolling forward. This is something that I've been working on for a long time as well. My fantasy is a think tank that really distills and invites ideas around new models of thinking, new models and structures for our field, with a very broad understanding of how we understand cultural and creative engagement in communities and personally. That, I could totally get behind. I'm very excited about this. I'll just leave us there. Also, I think we need a new vocabulary. I'll drop that on us too.

**Speaker 8:** I am really fascinated by how we can deepen cross-sector practice and embed culture in more facets of public policy and civic life. I really think that culture is what drives civic ecosystems, and it's more than economic impact, and it's more than feelings. It's actually, I think, what drives a community. I really appreciate [Speaker's] point about the database of policies. I think one of the ways we struggle as a sector, and [Speaker], we might be multiple sectors or we might be one sector, but where's the container for the things that reach all of us? There shouldn't be a binary between humanities and arts, or arts and creative economy. Ultimately, we're in pursuit of culture and creative work to drive our communities, I think. How can we have a shared resource or maybe an open source resource that can hold those policies that you're talking about. I love the idea of a think tank. I think the lack of R&D in the creative ecosystem is pretty staggering, given that imagining and storytelling is what we all do for a living. But I've been having this interesting experience over the last month working on the new [Politician's] transition team and engaging with dozens and dozens of creative workers of all types in [Location], where I live, and came to this distillation that we're not facing an arts or culture crisis, we're facing a city building crisis. The creative economy and culture are the fastest way to restore downtown, the cheapest way to increase safety, the strongest engine of belonging, and the most exportable brand any city can have. I think that culture really is what makes a city, and I think that if we can position it as such and then embed cultural practice within other functions of government's work, that that is a hopeful path for the future.

- **Speaker 4 (Facilitator):** There's not a lot of cultural policy on the books in our municipalities, states, and federal government. There's a long list of possibilities if we are creative and organized and that policy is not going to get passed unless we become a massive voting body so that they feel tremendous pressure from us. No one should get elected to a public office without having an arts platform. We can do that.



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**Speaker 9:** We believe that we need to be looking inside systemically before we try to do anything else and really coordinate the work that we're doing. We have a decentralized system that is very fragmented. We need to recognize that it's not only government that is creating cultural policy, we're all creating cultural policy every day with the work that we do. Then we believe we need to focus on structuring a co-creator shared policy agenda. We need to sustain the spaces for local, state, and national dialogue like these ones, but be real and sustain them with real goals. We believe we need to make more investment in coordinated research and data creation and collective data stewardship. I've been using the example that we're facing budget cuts in [Location]. And in order for me to tell the sector and the state how much money we're losing from federal grants from the three agencies, it took 100 hours of a data analyst and $5,000 to figure out what that number is, right? Well, that number should be available to all of us very quickly and simply. Not only inspired, but I want to lift up the work of our arts and artist service organizations intermediaries. Because they're really doing the work, the systemic work that we should all be doing and understand the impact that our systems have on all stakeholders in the system.

- **Speaker 4 (Facilitator):** And as you all are thinking through your ideas, I encourage you to think about all the other things that government can do for a sector, the kinds of things they do for many other sectors, the regulatory actions and the programmatic actions that build the conditions for sectors to thrive. Often, we think of government just as a funder, and they can do so much more.

**Speaker 10:** I have two related ideas. One is thinking about advocacy a little bit differently within our spheres of influence, like how can we normalize healthy, human-centered cultures? Of course, we need funding to back these ideas. But what does it look like, and I'm the worst at this, so it's an idea that I need accountability from others on, but how do we look at our work plans and what we're committing to and maybe cut that in half? How do we invest in the people on our teams to fully provide benefits, provide sabbaticals, or create work environments that we don't need sabbaticals from because they are already balanced and more manageable. Because we know so many people are leaving the arts and culture sector because we're... are we (allowed to curse) in this environment? We're burnt out. But there are things we can be doing if we're honest and willing to let go of work that maybe we don't need to carry by ourselves. That goes to the second idea of how can we systematize radical collaboration and kind of tear down the walls of our institutions and realize a lot of us are doing the same work. What would it look like if we joined forces? Then maybe one person wouldn't have to do seven initiatives. There could be two organizations taking different pieces of initiatives and carrying the work and everyone's getting paid. Everyone has benefits. Everyone goes to sleep at a regular hour. Because I know, even just by us being on this call, I think these are a lot of people who probably wear 50 million hats in one job and then 50



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million other hats in their 50 million side jobs. So how do we make that not economically necessary to pay our bills and lean into just collaboration and right-sizing our work for our actual resources?

- **Speaker 4 (Facilitator):** Is it possible that arts organizations are over-programmed? Also, what would happen to our sector if when we're pursuing careers in arts or getting arts administration degrees to learn about franchises and mergers and acquisitions and joint ventures, would the redundancy go away? Would we find healthier systems and ecosystems?

**Speaker 11:** I'm a big believer that a lot of the challenges that we are living through right now are the results of the lack of investment in arts education for the last 45 years. While I don't actually think the solution is arts education, I do think the thing that is missing is the exposure to arts as a fundamental piece of the experience of growing up in this country. The results is what we are experiencing. I am inspired by the systems that you see specifically in Britain of massive funding of theater, specifically performing arts. But I don't think that's realistic in our society. I'm not suggesting we let go of advocacy, I just feel like that's not realistic. What we do have is a moment where wealth disparity is real. There are a select group of people who have a whole lot of money, and those people are, some of them are looking to change the world with their money. I wonder if this isn't a moment to raise serious money to permanently endow the arts, not through the government. I'm not saying we don't continue to advocate, I'm not saying the government doesn't have a place. I think what is needed is something like if we're talking about all arts you're talking about a hundred billion dollars right, so could we raise a hundred billion dollars for the arts over the next 20 years to permanently endow what we do. I also would love to move away from the cycle that foundations get into of strategic planning and funding an idea for five years and then stepping into a new idea for five years, and create a fund that sustainably funds access for young people to (engage in) the arts forever in our country.

- **Speaker 4 (Facilitator):** Creativity is on the rise as an essential professional development hard skill. If we don't take advantage of that market opportunity, we may miss out on all the cash that could come to us. We're innovative and entrepreneurial about that. We also missed the boat on the STEM to STEAM rise because the STEM community pushed and pushed and pushed for infrastructure and legislation because they needed that workforce development program. We did not join them in that movement and we missed the boat. Now we have the opportunity to correct that, but that's going to require a lot of organizing. Can you imagine what our world looks like if every kid that goes through school has to have creativity in arts and culture and humanities in their curriculum? How many more patrons and donors and legislators would be creative, and business people would be creative? It would be less hard of a sell to get people to engage in the consumption of the work that we do.



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**Speaker 12:** One of the things I think that we really, we've talked about this a bit in [Location], but I think it is something we have to discuss to scale, is the way in which we engage the creative sector within civics, right? A few people have talked about policy development; a few folks have talked about the ways in which we can show up to the public sector and yet not relying on the public sector. But the reality is, I think, so often when these conversations are being had around how money is moved, when we talk about how dollars are moved and how it shapes community and the culture of giving, quite often I don't think our sector is at the table. We do have people who do so well, but I'm saying with the amount of people that we have that are impacting economic development throughout at least [Location], as well as I know some other large states, there should be a lot more power for us to move votes and dollars and actually get policy across the table. For me, I constantly talk about the fact that a city as progressive as [Location] doesn't have percent for the arts initiatives. I'm just like, how does that work, right? How is it that when I look across this commonwealth that is so ahead of the curve on so many things, there aren't public dollars that go to our larger arts organizations, right? I am so tired of people looking for funding and using the starving artist metric, right? Like we have [Organization], which is an amazing institution. If we have nothing but starving artists, then [Organization] is failing, right? I know [Organization] isn't failing. They have amazing leadership. And so, we have to figure out how to redevelop rhetoric to ensure that we're getting people to the table without throwing our community under the bus, because then it's doing the opposite of what we suppose it's doing. I think that that civic conversation is extremely important. Because until then, I think all we'll have is think tanks. I've been a part of numerous conversations like this in my still fairly young career. I'm sure many of you have as well. We need to transition at some point from think tanks to do tanks. But to do that, we're going to have to figure out ways that we can build a solid enough infrastructure that we can all sort of step in line together. I think that that's what I'd like to see over this next, not 20 years, but three to five years. And from there, we can figure out what that next step is going to be together as a sector.

- **Speaker 4 (Facilitator):** "Think thanks to do thanks." That's a quote. That's a tweet. Chatham House rules, everyone. [Speaker], you bring up so many good points and I would love for us to figure out what actions we have to take to shift from the narrative of a starving artist, which sometimes we wear as a badge of honor to the narrative and the actions that we have to take to become well-fed, artists, right? Then to your other point, people do business with people they know, the number of arts organizations that tell me about their housing issues, or their transportation issues, or their climate issues. But when you show up in those rooms, there are no arts people in those rooms. So how are we going to solve those problems if we don't show up in those spaces?

**Speaker 13:** [Speaker] here, artistic leader of a few things. I think now I'm a recovering artistic leader and I was just thinking about what you said: you have to embed the artists where the vision is set.



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It's about embedding artists at the seat of policy, but also philanthropic strategies, climate health, and education planning spaces, not just for communication, but for clarifying where the zeitgeist is, because that's what artists do. I think we need to build public language for cultural change. I think we need to give artists the mic for a moment so that they can say through their essays and talks and long form interviews and move them outside of just artistic discourse to talk about what's happening civically and where they are engaging. I myself moved my Substack from arts and culture to business because most of my conversation was about business and not about arts and culture, although it was about the business of arts and culture. Fund artists as thinkers and not as deliverables. Stop paying just for the work. Give the artists the resource directly so that they can actually do something with it and make the impact that they're trying to make. Pay artists to sit at the table early before decisions are locked so that they're a part of those conversations as well. Protect the artist's artistic independence. Make sure that there are unrestricted resources to make sure the artists can do the work that they do, think what they think, and impact in the way that they impact, and redesign institutions to circulate power. Cap institutional growth, require sunset clauses and leadership rotation and succession planning, incentivize partnerships, resource sharing, exits and not permanence, allow the ideas to travel freely like the artists do, and remove the sort of restrictions by keeping people in place for so long that they are actually no longer plugged into the societal conversation and look to where some of these things are already taking place and look to the impact. The guy who's running the cultural agency in Minneapolis said the bulk of the people who are on the streets right now are the artists. No surprise. No surprise there because we're the ones who actually understand what's happening to the culture, to where it's being the most impactful.

- **Speaker 4 (Facilitator):** Wow. Long-term retention may be a threat to the growth of the sector. Interesting. And what happens if we shift the arts from a common good to a public good, like roads and streets? Government pays for playgrounds and parks. They can pay for and legislate and support arts and culture.

**Speaker 14:** I'm going to go in a slightly different direction, which is I love this idea of a think tank, and I love the idea of a fuel tank, and I want to be employed by both. Keep me in mind when you found those institutions. I think the arts and culture sector has a little bit of a branding problem. I think there are two ways that I can envision getting at that. One is something that we're doing in the music sector. If some of you might be familiar with what was called the Sound Health Network, which was run by the NIH and the NEA and the Kennedy Center with other institutions and academic institutions participating. The idea was marrying up all the outcomes-based research from the academic and scientific field with the practitioners of the musical art and music therapy and those various different things. That has now transitioned to the Sound Health Alliance since it lost all its funding with this current administration. Really the game plan is just, I'm going to read you the



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draft admission statement: "The Sound Health Alliance promotes research, expands public awareness, and shares resources at the intersection of music and health, fostering collaboration among individuals, organizations, communities, to translate knowledge into action." I think that's some of what's needed, is the ability to talk knowledgeably about the outcomes, because I think we sort of talk peripherally about the outcomes, and [Speaker], you were sort of saying this before, what if we actually started to advocate in the sectors in which our outcomes land. Because we know they're there, but I think it's a little hard to talk about. That's one of the things we're going to be working on in the music sector anyway. I just wanted to say something in hearing about the concept of the big United Arts Fund that's going to endow all the arts in the United States, which would be amazing, and more funding from government and all that, what I'd really like to see is us – and I say, us, all of the arts, I don't even know what that means at this point – we need a PR campaign. I'm thinking back to growing up in the 80s, and on television, there would always be these public service announcements from the Latter-day Saints, just all these various different communities. Or drink milk, the "Got Milk?" campaign. These campaigns were meant to raise awareness around, in many cases, a product. What I want to change is not just the public perception of the way the arts function and the importance of them, but the public buy-in, so that we're not always relying on government. In my sector, ticket sales cover 40% of the cost of running an institution. Can we concentrate on that a little bit as well? Can we talk about the public conception and the demand for the arts? And try to work on that while we are also working on our government entities and our private foundations and those other forms of funding.

- **Speaker 4 (Facilitator):** Branding issues is a big thing in the art sector, right? And maybe there's a skills gap. Maybe we don't have the skills and the training like Nike and Starbucks and all those people to shift people away from project and program and show loyalty to organization. But that may be something that can be solved through us deciding to learn more about those things. I was talking to a bunch of opera people in the last three months, and one of the things I kept hearing is opera is so elite, opera is so elite, positioned as a bad thing. I said to them, it is possible that may be a market value, something for us to lean into. I don't know anyone that doesn't like a boutique experience. So maybe there's a way with some help and some training to turn this thing you think is bad into a positive.

**Speaker 15:** I wanted to lift up something that [Speaker] mentioned earlier about the homogeneity of the conversation. I had the opportunity to speak on conservative radio a few years back, and when I went there was a little, it was almost like a fortune cookie roll taped to the place under the microphone. It said, "The purpose of oratory is not truth, it's persuasion." I'm just thinking about we live in a post-truth world sometimes. And what is the role of persuasion with folks who don't think like those of us on the screen? It's a big reality for those of us that come from purple states. This statement of, let's put the culture back in agriculture, how do you lift that up? We've got a very



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conservative state government here. We also have an arts council that has incredible leadership and we're at record funding levels through everything that's going on right now. As we think about these conversations and setting up strands for action into the future, I think we need to make sure that we're including into our conversations, so there's co-ownership, people who may not think and live like us on a daily basis to kind of braid it into broader society. Then it just kind of makes my mind leap to everything. Part of the reason we're here together today is because things are being undone. How are we studying what's being undone so we can more efficiently build forward in the future?

- **Speaker 4 (Facilitator):** Let's look at the successes of those groups that have taken the long-range goal of getting the things they wanted done. Lower taxes, abortion. They did it, right? Long range view. I am interested in your idea of the role of persuasion and how we can do better at persuading them. But I'm also curious what happens if we are more open to being persuaded by them. Many of you probably know about the arts prescribing program that successfully launched in Massachusetts. Arts prescriptions being funded by insurance and managed care plans and opioid settlement money and housing authority. It's awesome. All these people are going to arts organizations and those arts organizations are getting paid full price for their tickets to give people arts medicine. I remember talking about this in several rooms and I say to people, how many of you all believe that arts are good for health? Every hand would go up. And then I would say, how many of you all have been to a healthcare convening in the last year? And almost every hand would go down. We have products that we know work, but we don't show up in those rooms to sell the products. When I asked, people said they don't, they don't understand us. And I go, but whose job is it to get them to understand it? Is it us or is it them? We have the product, they have the money. So just a different perspective. Persuasion, yes, but also let's learn their language too. I think we may have a lot, a lot of success with that.
- **Speaker 13:** I have a question, [Speaker]. Are you saying that the artists were saying that they don't understand us, or the arts institutions were saying that they don't understand us?
- **Speaker 4 (Facilitator):** This idea of showing up into other sectors rooms, knowing that we have something that they value was a bit of a shock to the room. There was a, I guess it was a thought like, if we build it, they will come. And so when I asked, why aren't they showing? The first thing they said was, well, we're not invited. And then I said, well, I don't know of any healthcare convening or people that are like, let's not invite the arts, we don't like them. And I'm not inviting someone to my birthday party that I don't know. People do business with people they know. But there was a fear that if they showed up in the room, they would feel inadequate because they don't understand the language being spoken. But I think those people also feel like they don't know our language. Where's the mutuality in building those



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relationships. And the scaling of the arts prescribing program is coming about because specifically we're pushing arts organizations to get into the room with healthcare.

- **Speaker 5:** There's also been a tremendous amount of research and data that went into all of that and a lot of effort nationally and internationally really that went to prioritize arts and health. I think that that is also what's helpful is that focus. We recognize that the economic impact argument that we've been using forever is not moving the needle in any room that we all are trying to influence. I think so many people went to this argument, particularly because we're in such a crisis around health, to talk about that. I think that's an interesting lesson for us, because I think we're seeing this in so many different spaces.
- **Speaker 4 (Facilitator):** The resources that have come about because of this are coming from sectors we have outcomes in. I don't know how many there are now, but there are 466 arts organizations in network. People are getting prescribed 12 doses of arts and culture with a companion ticket paid for by insurance company, managed care plans, opioid settlement money, a couple of municipalities are adding it to their health plan and talks with DOC about using it as a sentencing tool for parolees, talks with public safety about using it as a tool for first responders. The possibilities of that and new patronage and new money, new revenue streams are grand. But I think we could say the same thing about climate and the same thing about education. And so, we have to investigate and dig into those relationships. Check the chat. Any other big grand ideas? What would happen if we had a big massive arts omnibus? Like all the housing omnibuses and the healthcare omnibuses. What would that take? How would we have to organize to make something like that happen? How do we have to hold each other accountable to show up in the spaces when we are organizing and talking about the kinds of policy we need?

**Speaker 8:** Your omnibus comment made me think of this, but my vision, hope for the future from the first session was a 1% culture across every branch of the federal government, which hopefully will then be adopted by states, counties, and cities. Not 1% for public art tied to capital projects limited by geography and excess, but actually a fund that could do artists-in-residents and government, public programming, activation, fund infrastructure. I always get hung up on WPA nostalgia, but I think the idea of bringing cultural practice and creative practice across all facets of public policy, that's my dream. I'm not sure exactly how to get there, but I think it would be transformative if we could do it.

- **Speaker 4 (Facilitator):** The sectors in our country and in our state that do the best are the ones that have the deepest relationship with government, despite their GDP contributions. Many are not even bringing much to the GDP, and they still have a lot of regulatory and government support. We also know those sectors that are doing the best are the ones that have those deepest relationships. So what are we missing out on by not being as organized



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and not thinking about arts advocacy as a core function of operations, just like finance and HR and fundraising? What are we doing to our sector when people can graduate with a degree and never understand how government works or what's but the benefit is participating in that? I think we lose a lot on the table because of that.

**Speaker 3:** One thing that this may be out from left field or whatever the term is, but something that I think about a lot, which is really based in academia, is the canon. And the fact that the canon, as much as we have to push, to expand, is still, in the arts fields, very, very classical, quote, unquote, very, very, quote, unquote, high art. If that is what is still happening in academia, then what are we saying? What are we saying about what we value? Sure, we'll put the gospel choir up once a year, but what we really put our resources to is the canon. Now, I'm not saying that we need to remove the canon or throw it out, but I do think that we need to expand it, and we need to figure out a way to bring new questions to the old canon. If we're doing Puccini, what are the new questions that we can talk about in terms of imperialism and US foreign policy and so on. There's so many new ways that we can engage the canon, but also how can we bring other works into the canon and just disrupt it a bit. I think there've been ways of trying this and there's been a lot of talk about what the canon is in music and literature and dance and other parts of the arts. But even here as [Title], I get frustrated with the canon being very immovable. I think that that says a lot about what we value. And I know that this is an academic part of the conversation, a strand that will have to flow through academia, but I think we should all be thinking about this.

- **Speaker 4 (Facilitator):** The artists that we canonized were not preservationists. They were entrepreneurs and innovators and creatives. I wonder how they would feel to know that they were taking up so much space, taking work away from artists that could come up with new work about the human experience.

**Speaker 12:** The omnibus bill question has me thinking, and I think that part of it goes back to the pitch that we were discussing prior, but I think that part of it, as weird as it may sound, we almost don't sound like the situation is within our sector, right? When they pass a piece of this bill that includes health and human services or labor or housing, right? We can't develop new housing without this. So, either do that or your cities are going to have some sort of repercussion that comes after it. And people move and mobilize from that, right? The labor unions aren't going to be able to work on X amount of projects. Things are, again, going to sit at a sit still, which is going to impact economic development and you'll have fewer jobs. Okay, well, then we have to get dollars out the door, right? There are energy conversations that are happening that were just passed a few days ago regarding a three-part bill that was passed for energy resources. And it's like, we have to get this out or X. I think that the "or" on the other side of what we may talk about sometimes is the thing that we have to work on, right? What happens if you do or don't enact these policies? The



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reality is, I don't want to pretend like we're all just like, yeah, we're going to do anything. It's tough because you have to be willing to stick to whatever that is. For those that understand the labor negotiations, our BATNA and WATNA has to be in place. I just think that it's difficult. It is difficult. There's, of course, going to be recourse and there are, of course, going to be people that in the short term aren't going to have some of the things that they want or need, right? If we have a plan of attack, so to speak, that may be just a necessary step to take to ensure that people understand what we're doing.

- **Speaker 4 (Facilitator):** You saw in [Location] what happened when housing organized and health care organized. They were giving out omnibus bills like Oprah's favorite things. The thing is, it's not going to happen. Even if we create one, it's not going to happen until we show up with our voting power and let them know that we are a large voting body. We have a very famous mayor in [Location] who's an accomplished artist. She has said to me often that she feels no pressure from the arts sector in her municipality. And I've said that to them, and they have not changed their behavior.
- **Speaker 12:** Or even in [Location] in particular where we had a lack of development, and all of a sudden, we started handing out TIFs and DIFs like every other week. Everyone that needed some sort of incremental funding opportunity, we're like, yeah, for sure. If you come to the table, you'll get a TIF, and we'll make it work. We'll develop a new district, and we'll figure some things out. That same sort of tool can be used to benefit arts, cultural sector, cultural communities, cultural districts. But we have to be willing, one, to learn the language, and two, to push in that manner.
- **Speaker 4 (Facilitator):** We all know this, but government can do much more than finance. They have a lot of regulatory power. They have a lot of programmatic power. They can make the conditions for us to be more sustainable and thrive. This is what they do for most other sectors that put enough pressure on them. That's going to require us all to develop skills and show up and organize and put pressure on each other to be in the room. I remember in [State] there was a legislative breakfast, and I was like, ah, I don't have time to go. My phone blew up. People are like, where are you? This is the most important room in [State]. Get here now. If you're in rehearsal, cancel rehearsal and bring all those artists because we need you here. And I was like, got it. I'll be there. But what happens if we did that all over the country? To your point, [Speaker], that TIF and DIF economic development tool most of us have a cultural districts program across the whole country that have no benefits. It's just a cute place to go visit, but there's no tax credit or tax incentive. We were even talking about talking with affordable housing about attaching affordable housing tax credits to the districts where density is not an issue and they want more people there. And so what



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happens if we build housing and cultural districts and carve out some space for artist housing in those districts? Could benefit all.

- **Speaker 5:** We passed legislation here in [State] around that, up to affordable 10% housing in state, county, and local cultural districts are designated for artists... I represent an advocacy organization, so I'm going to be very focused on advocacy infrastructure, which we really don't have for arts and culture to the degree that we need it in the United States as part of a member of Creative States Coalition. And before that, the State Arts Action Network and all those places, most of the advocacy infrastructure in the United States for arts and culture is volunteer led, is one or two person organizations in our state. So, [Speaker], when you're talking about getting people to show up in these rooms, it's about, I think someone said about trust building, I think there's a lot of lack of trust in government and that it can actually do anything for us. I think there's some of that, but it's around training and education and building the systems for that in our communities. I think arts and culture is way behind in creating that infrastructure.
- **Speaker 4 (Facilitator):** It's an adaptive challenge because this is not something we can fix with just a technical fix, because if there was a technical fix, we would have already done it, right? It's an adaptive challenge that we have to change beliefs and our values so that we all behave differently. We have to look at the systems that are creating this devaluation of advocacy as a core function of being an artist, right? Because whatever we dream here, this list of things I have, and all the lists that we're going to create today, they're not going to go anywhere if the sector continues to behave the same way it's behaving now, right?

**Speaker 16:** I've been thinking a lot about what we're losing, what's breaking down, what's under attack right now. I think what I love about today's convening is that we are maybe in the spirit of what [Speaker] talked about, reframing a problem that we are, maybe we're in ideation, that we're not treating it as bemoaning what we are losing, but we're thinking about what's next. I just want to encourage us as arts leaders to continue along that path and along that path of ideation and imagining possibilities, new models. I'm just really encouraged by that. I want to throw out appreciation to the room.

- **Speaker 4 (Facilitator):** Colleagues in the state arts world, I'm sure your life would be better if you had an army of people calling up legislators and saying, do whatever [Speaker] tells you.
- **Speaker 16:** I would love that. I love that, [Speaker]. And luckily, we do have a great advocacy effort here in [Location], but we need to be putting those ideas forward. We just delivered, today's the first day of our General Assembly session, and we just delivered a report filled with ideas on workers' protections, on supporting artists, and supporting artists as the basis of a healthy creative sector in the state so that it can benefit other areas. I think



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just more of that ideation, that creation, and getting those ideas out to and making those connections across sectors, that's going to be so important in the next coming years as we rebuild from what is being destroyed right now.

- **Speaker 4 (Facilitator):** Government can program, regulate, and finance. Our three policy areas are workforce development, economic development, and creative placemaking. There's a mass of rubrics, and each of those intersections can have 30 policy recommendations. Hit every state legislature with recommendations every year; they'll get it.

## Group 7 Chat

Not available.



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# GROUP 8

## Group 8 Transcript

**Speaker 1 (Facilitator)**: This segment is I think a bit more challenging because we were all not in the same room for the first segment. And so, when we talk about realizing these visions, some might be from conversations that were from the first segment. But we'll leave this up on the screen for a couple of minutes so people can look at it and maybe inspire some ideas. What strands of work do we do to realize these visions. And these could be visions that you either have or that you heard about in the first session, or maybe you read about in the chat.

**Speaker 2**: There's been such a huge impact of technology on our sector. I'm often surprised that that conversation doesn't come into focus. I mean, screen time is a competitor for us, you know, the way that people express themselves and what they're sharing. There's literally a creative industry that exists online.

**Speaker 3**: One of the things I noted in our conversation in the first hour was that there were a lot of different thoughts whether we need to change society so that we can have a thriving arts sector, or whether the artists should be creating more work that is going to change our society and lead to a more functional society and political system and things like that. I guess that was just something that I was struck by, whether there's a disconnect or if there are self-reinforcing [aspects]. But there was a bit of a question of what's driving what. I guess some of the work that I have been inspired, building off this third prompt, in recent years is the work of seeing the challenges of being an artist in the larger frame of being a gig worker or just a worker in general. And the housing problem for artists, but also just problems that a lot of people have with access to health insurance and things like that. I guess that's something that I have followed with great interest is that kind of shift towards how are we positioning artists and our sector as being special and needing support because of its uniqueness, versus a lot of these issues or big societal challenges that we need to address. We might be more effective in addressing [these challenges] in a broad coalition with other sectors as well.

**Speaker 4**: I believe we need to focus on reframing our lexicon as a sector as a whole. I think that's part of reframing the argument because frankly I think the people that we're talking to do not have any type of appreciation for the concept of arts. And so, I think we need to change the argument to something such as "creativity" or another type of unified lexicon that enables people to understand it should they choose to be intellectually lazy in that [lexicon]. I also think that we need to make more investment in very tactical things and work with lobbyists for tax incentives. Imagine



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the concept of [receiving] a tax deduction if you take a music lesson or you participate in a community-based theater organization or you produce a piece of art or teach art. I think that funders truly do need to start having hard conversations around collaboration and potential merging of entities and I think there's a lot of entities that could work and reduce overhead to reduce pressure on earned revenue and philanthropy as we have this generation [of Baby Boomers] going through and the wealth transfer is completing. Then finally, I think that this sector truly needs to work on board training. We all have boards of directors and Boards that don't understand the functions of boards creating non-strategic organizations, and that is something we need to focus on in training boards of what it means to be fiduciaries, strategists, or even management boards. But there's unrealistic expectations, and I think we need to revisit that.

**Speaker 5:** I have to echo a lot and sort of build on what [Speaker] was just saying, about really investing in trainings and teachings. I talked a bit about this in the first session in trying to merge a sometimes-fractured cultural sector where we have so many nonprofits that really duplicate services and initiatives, but at the same time are after the same seemingly ever smaller pot of money. I can think of a handful of organizations I would love to incentivize to consolidate and create a better product in the end than a fractured, sort of mediocre one by not working together. I believe we also need to focus on how we're training our arts administrators and how we're training the next generation of leaders because we're really working with an antiquated business model in the nonprofit sector. It's probably lofty on some level to think we're going to change that, but really kind of rethinking that model of how this sector and this ecosystem works and how our arts organizations function and really teaching people to operate organizations as a business. I think the passion and the creativity that arts leaders bring is so important, but they often get to the table with a lack of knowledge of business skills and how to approach the work in that way and operate in a corporate and business environment. I think we tend to shy away from that a bit too much and I suppose if you take a page out of the playbook of conservative politics, they spend a lot of time working on getting their ideologies and their frameworks [absorbed by] as young [of an audience] as possible on college campuses and below, because those are going to be the folks that are in the C-suites, that are running companies, that run for office, that create policies. I think we have to be more, we need more investment in that area, more investment in bringing young people into the fold at such various levels so that value proposition is instilled from such an early age that it sticks with them and becomes a continued value throughout the C-suite as they ascend into that world.

**Speaker 6**: The session that I just came from, there was a large thread around wanting to make the arts seen as being central to human flourishing. I think about what we need to focus on to try and achieve that vision from an infrastructure and systems perspective. One thing that comes to mind is embedding arts in civic planning. Thinking about having a seat at that table so that arts are not just seen as "nice to have" or as amenities, but as essential infrastructure to a thriving community,



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just the way that libraries or parks or other services that serve the community would be considered. Other systems thinking would be around artist career pathways that don't require poverty to participate and be creative, or move to the coasts, creating physical spaces in each community. So not just performance venues of the velvet seat variety, but more maker/ gathering spaces that create opportunity for ambient and participatory arts experiences. And then of course, sustainable funding models that don't rely on the whims of philanthropy would also be great. But I think that that's an outcome of a lot of the things that we're talking about. One other point that came up in the last session is around access and equity. Creating geographic equity, so that arts experiences aren't just concentrated in urban areas that are wealthy, but also how are we impacting the lives of rural communities? I really believe that research, but also the messaging to demonstrate impact to policy makers and funders is a critical piece of work that needs to happen.

**Speaker 7:** I'm thinking a lot about participation in government. I think we need more focus on how to make the arts more a part of our government infrastructure, looking to countries like the UK, you know, where the arts are more a part of the infrastructure with ministers of arts, ministries of culture, who work alongside ministries of health and transportation and finance, and are a part of government infrastructure. Here that parallel might be a cabinet level position. It might be an entity, even the National Endowment for the Arts in government as a structure that allows the arts to be a [more independent] part of government infrastructure, as opposed to, the whim of administrations. The choices of administration to the extent to which the arts are supported or engaged, but just a constant in the conversation of government, which I think would trickle down to the arts really being more a part of civic infrastructure at every level. I think a parallel to that is the work of the US Cultural Policy Fellows Program, which is advancing the demand for artists to work in government. [There are] important examples of artists working in government entities like transportation [departments] to bring art into transportation systems and to create work, which is fantastic. But the work of this program is about bringing artists' thinking and artists' ways of doing into government. I think that's important at every level, at the national, state, and local levels. As we think about the national level today, I think having an embedded infrastructure for arts and cultural leadership and ways of thinking and ways of doing that can be brought to bear in all the national conversations that government leaders and entities are involved in. So, the need to focus on governmental infrastructure in this country necessitates investment, like what's been discussed already, in how to train and prepare and educate artists to engage not only at the local level, but at state and national governmental levels to be a part of policy making at every level. That's what I'm thinking about at this moment.

**Speaker 8:** A lot of my work in the last year has been around AI and its impact on creative industries. I want to build on [Speaker's] observation about technology and the arts, and that we don't focus enough on that. We saw this in the Digital Revolution around the turn of the century, where artists



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were not involved in the conversations about what the new rules of the road were going to be in digital. The [Big] Tech companies basically wrote those rules, and we've had to live with them the last 25 years, and it's been catastrophic. We've seen in the last year, particularly, the hollowing out of the middle class of arts. If you're small, you can be improvisatory and scramble with no resources, but if you're in the middle, you're really kind of stuck. In the conversations that I participated in and observed around AI and what's coming, because we all know that it's going to be a pretty big change, is a misconception that it's not really a new tool set in the way that technology has propelled creative industries in the past. It's a real sort of structural systemic change. Yet I think one of the problems that we've had in these conversations is that we're using 20th century structural thinking to think about 21st century kind of evolution which is we're in the process of, and when you do that, for instance, since I'm thinking about copyright, which has not really worked effectively for decades and decades. But it's the only thing that we've had to protect creative work. And so, we're loathe to give up on it. But when we think about protecting copyright or adapting copyright, when the technology has basically superseded it and we need to think about the transfer of value of culture, in an entirely different way. I think the next 20 years, there's going to be a pretty radical reshaping, not just of the edges, but of sort of the systems that we have set up to support culture. We know that the 50, 60, 70-year-old structures that we've been operating underneath have not worked terribly well for a long time. We need to come up with some new structures, but I worry that we're still mired in the language, the vocabulary of the old structures without the ability to think much, much bigger into how culture gets integrated into the overall civic system in which we live.

**Speaker 9**: I believe we need to focus on creating more shared resources and more infrastructure commons for nonprofits, fiscal sponsorship, real estate trusts, co-ops, other models like this. What are the other forms of stabilization that we can look at given the funding landscape? Thinking, you know, B Corp, combined for-profit, non-profit, what are the ways that we can get out of this dependency on philanthropy? I also believe that we need more investment in arts education and in intergenerational arts, and especially in our elder artists. Something that from the perspective of the folk and traditional arts field is a very common challenge that we face is artists who are older, who have like tremendous legacies of teaching and artistic creation, but who are struggling to age in place and who have often archives or records of artistic creation that are at risk of not being preserved. I'm inspired by the work of the New Kensington Community Development Corporation, which, though it is a CDC in Philadelphia, it is really taking an amazing community-driven, multifaceted approach across health, economic development, preserving green space, housing, and the arts through a really robust long-term process of relationship building and partnership in the Kensington neighborhood of Philadelphia that I think provides a really great model for how we can think about integrating the arts across these different areas of civic infrastructure. And then



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secondly, Friends of the Tanner House, which is an amazing organization that's working on preserving the house of the Tanner family in North Philadelphia, of painter Henry Osawa Tanner. They are, again, using a very deeply community-driven process to stabilize that home as a physical location, but also to figure out how to turn it into a multipurpose hub for arts and humanities and preserving Black cultural heritage in North Philly.

**Speaker 10:** I think we need to focus on the actual definition of the sector, making it more inclusive and not exclusive. For example, it would be to the benefit of the whole when we talk about economic impact and other impacts, to include for-profits with some definition on that, hybrids, and others. Don't limit participation in funding and other programs to institutions and organizations. Make sure that individual artists in particular have access, but also all kinds of other small grassroots art organizations who may not have the wherewithal nor should they need to have the infrastructure of larger organizations and institutions. I think that we need more investment in research to look closely at what other countries do, given how meager our investment per citizen is in arts and culture [in the US] You look at other countries around the world, which invest substantially more per capita in arts and culture. As others have talked about, make sure that it permeates through various government departments, as well as non-governmental entities. I think that there's a lot of opportunity without reinventing the wheel, if we really did a comprehensive study and figured out what elements might work to help us. I'm inspired by the work of our six regional arts organizations, which as one singular group can represent every congressional district in the country. I think that the reach they have and the power that they could have is far greater than what's being utilized right now.

**Speaker 11:** I believe that there needs to be more investment in the South and in the Midwest with organizations and communities who've been doing this work about connecting people, connecting populaces. And actually we need to do more listening in order to see how organizations and artists and culture barriers have been essential to their communities and listening to what their definitions are and recognizing that these organizations where success is not economically driven, where success is actually based upon community, community wellness, success is actually driven upon health and thriving of communities and repair and recovery, and not just crisis. How are we actually thinking in terms of that long-term work and how are we investing in these ideas so that it is not just about short-term investment, but continues to address some of the historic under-resourcing, under-recognition that has been happening for these communities, immigrant communities, as well as communities in the South and Midwest. I'm trying to understand how we can shift these ideas of reports, the ideas of evaluation, but recognizing that these have to be more utilizable by the people and not just by academics or philanthropies. In what ways are we making sure that this education, this investment in research is something our artists, our individuals can lift up and be part of and not just see themselves as objects in this space. The last thing I'd like to say is that I'm



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interested in how we can talk about process and not just outcome in this space because there needs to be a lot more listening and a lot more learning that I would encourage us to invest in and be part of instead of just saying that they need to have already achieved a success.

**Speaker 12**: I believe we should focus on creating structures that are supporting opportunities for deep and meaningful collaboration within all the work that we are all doing, creating more opportunities for gatherings like this, for more collaborative work between our different disciplines and focus areas. I wonder how many of the problems that we're trying to address now are new versus where there are existing solutions within the great minds that are leading the arts and culture space today and whether we can source these ideas from each other when we increase our opportunities for collaboration together. I see that as an opportunity to strengthen the muscle of our interdisciplinary collaboration to then take that work outside of the arts and culture space to bring in collaboration and solutions beyond just the arts and culture space. So, we are flexing those skills together. That's probably just a very broad underline of pretty much what everyone else has already said. But it just strikes me that we often find ourselves kind of heads-down within our own disciplines with not much opportunity structurally to have meaningful gatherings together, to share our challenges and collaborate on solutions together. [There's] real power in that.

- **Speaker 13**: I don't know that we can have a meaningful conversation about this without all of the creative sector participating. We tend to think of the nonprofit arts as "the universe," and a lot of the challenges that we face are the same challenges that commercial culture faces as well. The movie industry, the [newspaper] industry, all of those. Until we start to at least talk with those people and find common cause, I think it's very difficult to sort of think about the larger societal stuff.
- **Speaker 1 (Facilitator):** No, it's a very good point. And obviously, the 300 or so folks that are involved in this conversation today are a small, small, small representation of the creative sector as a whole. Yesterday, we talked a little bit about representation. It's impossible to get this off the ground with 3,000, 4,000 people participating. It was brought up in the earlier session that there needs to be more artists in these conversations. We had some in the first session. So absolutely, this is just the start.

**Speaker 14**: I would love to echo what [Speaker] said about prioritizing the process and not the outcome. I think we could design policy and even funding models that can center the full arc of cultural work, not just its public facing outputs. In the traditional arts, the process for us is a practice. It's about transmission. It's about sustaining the traditions in their place of origin, but also in their places of migration, wherever they move to. And so, for us, it's really important that teaching, gathering, caregiving, it's not peripheral that this part of the practice, that this part of the process is also included in larger scale items like policy. Training artists to be able to move forward in some



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kind of policy and advocacy. I'd like to include in that traditional artists who probably wouldn't see as much as advocates, but I think at that level, it would be really interesting to see how policy can be shaped by people who have lived cultural experience, by culture bearers in different realms, different art forms that include music and dance, but also maybe foodways or traditional crafts, and to see how that can spark a view of how policy can be viewed and even changed at that level. And I also love what [Speaker] said about how we're overdue for a radical reshaping of systems in that realm where traditional arts and community-based practices can live also. Sometimes I feel like artists give more than they receive. They teach, they preserve, they care, they heal. A lot of times this is done in sectors or spaces where they're not entirely recognized, both financially or even socially for the kind of work that they do. There are a lot of resources that are not spread to (those areas), so I'm specifically advocating for traditional arts.

**Speaker 15**: Something I've been thinking about a lot over the last year is really about communication, and how we as a sector communicate our value. And what's our campaign? Where is the clearinghouse? The place where I can go and put everything you just said in my organization's branding and shout it from the rooftops? Or where's our commercial? I've shared this Dick's Sporting Goods commercial with everyone I know that's like this powerful campaign about how sports change lives. You can get all your sporting goods at Dick's Sporting Goods, right? I wonder, where is our art[making] as a vehicle for arts communication? Leveraging all our strengths as artists and creatives to talk about the value of the arts for our humanity, for our connecting across differences, for meaning making, for health, for well-being, for our communities. And so, I think about where's the national campaign that we can all kind of come together and be a part of, that it doesn't just need to be all the nonprofits banding together, that for profits and different industries can see the value in this work too, and leverage the folks that do have money in this space. A few years ago, as a part of the Grammys, there was this "in a perfect world in the future" monologue or vignette, where [the message was], "every school has music education, and doctors will write prescriptions for music." And I was looking at the TV, like, "no, that's [actually] happening." How can we have more of that happen and let people know that that's happening and have more doctors write prescriptions for music or concerts or creative engagement.

**Speaker 16:** I really want to focus on the fundraising model. I think there's just frankly a lack of creativity in such a creative field. We have a lot of, I think, limited imagination for other ways of raising money. But I just feel like if we spent a lot more time and energy thinking creatively about, not just the old models, which we need, and some variations of them, but also just really thinking about what other sectors do to drive immediate impact and make an argument for the urgent need for funds. Just think creatively, mechanically, and structurally about what that means, sort of like in the financial world, it's like these things exist, but the arts have just not tapped into it. I heard others talking about, "we haven't always messaged it," which is true, but we also haven't even tried some



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of the mechanisms that exist for thinking about rerouting capital. So, it's a lot of different things in there, but mostly the fundraising model, something I'm thinking about a lot.

**Speaker 9**: It's just striking me that to talk about process versus product, but also to talk about the way that folk and traditional arts and culture-bearing, culture-keeping, memory work, all of that, people's history, is embedded in the fabric of everyday life within those cultural traditions. I'm hearing a lot of comments in these sessions today about wanting to emphasize, for instance, the connection between arts and wellness, or the connection between arts and these other "sectors," which we think of as being these very separate silos. I think that folk and traditional arts have a unique perspective to offer in this moment of crisis in the arts sector in the US, because for those kinds of practitioners, that division isn't salient, right? It's built into what these practices are, that they're carrying the social life of a community. They're carrying history. They're carrying ethical values and an appreciation for creativity. They're carrying the ability for community to be in conversation around things that people are experiencing. So, there's a lot there. We are also historically, like, the least resourced of the quote-unquote disciplines in the arts in the United States, and that's simply increasing. In Pennsylvania, for example, [the state's] folk and traditional arts partnership program was just cut, one year after the NEA eliminated disciplines in a way that also takes away that designated folk and traditional arts funding. Increasingly I'm just seeing the extent to which our field really has a lot of wisdom to offer about the way that things could look. Then secondly, I just wanted to briefly put out that, you know, something, a comment that I've been thinking about for months, we held a series of artists working groups about the future of our organization over the summer. Something I heard from the artists who were folk and traditional practitioners that I wasn't necessarily expecting was that they want more opportunities for taking risks. There's so much focus on the need to kind of get by, the need to satisfy ideas of impact or outcome according to how funders define those things, or the need to, as people have been saying, justify arts through other means or through other types of outcomes. It was striking to me that some of these practitioners are really seeking more freedom, I think. That's something we should be thinking about how we can facilitate.

**Speaker 8**: I think we need to continue to invest in artists. I mean, I love how art can bring awareness to social problems and civic issues, but I think if we lose sight of "arts for art's sake," we lose the ability to have artists bring their own creative ideas to society and I think we just can't lose that. I think we can be too responsive to art that addresses this problem or this issue and I think artists need a little bit of free reign just to do their own research and development and growth.

**Speaker 17 (Co-Facilitator):** If we look outside the arts and culture sector, are there other examples of scaling social change and dealing with significant headwinds as the sector is now experiencing?



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If you pull up above the cloud level for a second and look outside of the sector, are there any examples that come to mind for you?

**Speaker 18:** Yeah, I went to an HBR [Harvard Business Review] thing a number of years ago, and I think what you're seeing in the church sector, the rise of the megachurch vs. small groups and the decline of these traditional [church] buildings, I think there is a lot to learn, especially when you layer in the governance aspects. I think there's a bit of a canary in a coal mine with what we're seeing there, that the bigger ones are getting bigger. [And] suddenly, there's going to be a tsunami of real estate issues throughout the country [in terms of] what do you do with these facilities. And I think that's an outlier that can really be looked at carefully.

**Speaker 1 (Facilitator):** It's great to have almost an appendix through all the different chats of different organizations or individuals that could guide us in terms of visioning and thinking into the future. I'll just say the Dick's Sporting Goods commercial made me think of a comment I made yesterday, about how youth sports have done such a great job of welcoming everybody into the tent. Everybody feels like they can participate and somehow that has not been the case in the arts world. How can we take some kind of inspiration from youth sports and getting more participation?

## Group 8 Chat

1. Putting notes here that I want to get in circulation (again): Appreciative, Emergent, and Integrative mindset and tactics. Ecology and ecosystem as framing metaphors. Using our strength as distributive networks, especially the power of the informal. Build on what we now have evidence of... thanks research team. [Speaker] is right about each of us having a creative life.
    a. Couple more: think of arts managers as a domestic diplomatic core and unlock real-time training from institutions. Let's get this next round of cultural tourism... much more person-to-person, like Chicago always has done :)

2. I'd love to make sure that the impact of technology (screen time, social media, surveillance, and of course AI) isn't lost as our conversations continue
    a. I believe we need to focus on technology (among other things of course) because it is driving so much change across our society and is fundamentally transforming how people access and experience arts, culture, and creativity. I believe we need more investment in this work from a range of sources. I am inspired by the work of MUD Foundation in this regard: https://www.mud.foundation/. Also B3 Media: https://www.b3media.net/. Also rootoftwo: https://rootoftwo.com/2020/12/28/ccpi-digital-transformation/.



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   b. Here is a framework I've been think about for thinking about how AI will change culture: https://www.artsjournal.com/diacritical/2025/11/not-really-a-manifesto-i-guess-but-perhaps-a-framework-for-thinking-about-ai-and-art.html

3. I'm inspired by the country of Bhutan's wellbeing framework — Gross National Happiness (GNH), introduced in the 70s. The GNH Index measures wellbeing across nine domains, within which artisan skills and cultural participation are included.

4. https://nkcdc.org/

5. https://savethetannerhouse.org/

6. Agree on bridging for profit and nonprofit realities. The examples I shared are all commercial entities (for profit) or hybrid models (related for profit and nonprofit entities) that are exploring new ways of working in technology, "community engagement," and other areas.
   a. Dropping in a for-profit engaging nonprofit orgs and artists to benefit health. Arts Pharmacy.

7. In thinking about bridging nonprofit and for profit sectors, I'm inspired by a local gift shop grounded in SF Chinatown, On Waverly: https://www.onwaverly.com/pages/about-us

8. I think it's not mutually exclusive to amplify the value of the arts in various contexts and arts and artists for art's sake. If we can help society value the arts in all contexts we can help artists have the financial freedom to take risks and explore their creative practice, potentially while facilitating the arts in service of others (i.e. as an artist in residence in a hospital) vs non-arts and culture related gig work....

9. I'm inspired by the amazing work with Arts in Corrections across the US.



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# GROUP 9

## Group 9 Transcript

**Speaker 1 (Facilitator):** I would first ask for just two people, just so that we get a flavor and a spirit of what's happened before, just two people to summarize what happened in your last room where we were talking about vision. There was a question about what you envision when you're thinking 20 years out in 2045. What's the spirit? What's the flavor of that conversation that you just came from?

**Speaker 2:** I think that the bulk of the conversation was about meeting a new model for the nonprofit sector. That this model that was built in the 19th century needs a 21st century overhaul. There was also a lot of conversation about integrating art into urban planning and civic life and access to the arts as a human right. But I think overall there was the feeling that the nonprofit model was built for a 19th century civilization that doesn't exist anymore.

- **Speaker 1 (Facilitator):** What was telling people about the model being relevant to a much different time?
- **Speaker 2:** Well, because it chokes the life out of non-profits and artists by making them bend to the rules of a scarcity model where resources are in the limited hands of a few patrons or a few foundations, and where the mission no longer thrives in an environment where people, where artists and the art presenters are not able to do their best work, because most of their work is pandering for resources.

**Speaker 3:** Our group was focused a little bit more broadly on the perception that the arts and everything else in society and our lives are being separated. Our hope was in this future to more integrate the arts more broadly with the rest of life so that it's not just, "I have this thing going on in my life and then I have the arts." It's that they're integrated together. And then another big theme was basically the financial reality of being an artist. [Speaker] was talking about competing for resources with patrons, but we were talking about the basic necessities of health insurance, making a living wage, things that. Our overall view that we talked about was a future in which artists could be happy and healthy and have a sustainable income.

- **Speaker 1 (Facilitator):** When your room was talking about that integration. If you think on a scale of 1 to 10, where 10 represented that very ideal vision for integration, where would you say the room felt we were at right now?



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- **Speaker 3:** That's a good question. One of the specific things that we talked about was integration of arts and education, especially public education. And it seems it is happening less now. I would personally say, based on our conversation, I would put it at a 2.

**Speaker 1 (Facilitator):** We will now move into a discussion about the work. In particular, the prompt is, what strands of work do we need to do to realize these visions? The visions that you all are coming to this room with from your last chat or the vision that you have newly gotten to your head or something that has long been a vision for you in this field that is important for us to really work toward realizing. What strands of work do we need to do to realize this vision? You might say, "I believe we should focus on X. I believe we should have more investment in Y," as two examples. What's coming to mind for you all? Focus or investment relative to a vision.

**Speaker 3:** I'm here representing public media, public broadcasting in the US. I'm a researcher. I'm currently gathering data about public media as it is dealing with the end of federal funding. There's a lot of pessimism in the industry. When we think about especially public media stations and broadly arts and humanity nonprofits, a lot of our timelines are episodic. Our fiscal timelines are episodic, right? We're getting grants for the next six months. We're getting a grant for the next two years. So, I believe that the arts, humanities, public media, what we need to focus on are longer timelines for funding. I know that we have foundations represented in this meeting who are doing wonderful work. I think something interesting to think about would be to expand the timeline for thinking about major grants and gifts. Instead of even just five years, could it be longer? I think there's probably to create a lot of fiscal stability through an idea like that.

- **Speaker 1 (Facilitator):** What do you think the trade-offs are of the longer timeline? What do you think really is allowed to soar? And what do you think is something else that has some unexpected, maybe negative impact that we should focus on?
- **Speaker 3:** I definitely think there are always trade-offs, right? For a long-term funding solution, you're trading off being able to be more reactive, right? I do think that for a long-term funding solution or rethinking how major gifts and grants are given out, then there does need to be a conversation about preserving flexibility and being in the moment for long-term funding.

**Speaker 4:** I just keep on looking at whatever it is, 30,000 feet view or 60,000 or whatever it is, but not here. Why is it that the United States has never been like Europe? Why doesn't this country, has it ever taken the arts as seriously as it should? In terms of it being essential? And how do we reframe, rebrand, re-envision to make our leadership understand the value of the arts and therefore the value of giving the proper resources to artists and arts organizations? That is just incredibly broad, but it's just what comes to mind.



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- **Speaker 1 (Facilitator):** When you think about folks on that communication of value. Is there a sub focus that comes to mind for you? Is there a way of talking about value? Is there an audience for hearing the value that you think is most important? If you, as your role as [Title], lead champion of an organization, are you already doing this in a certain way that's instructive related to investment or focus?
- **Speaker 4:** It's amazing how emotional I'm getting talking about this or thinking about it. But it's that blank look that you get when you talk about the arts to people. They take it for granted, they know what it means to go to live performance or see something on television that moves them or whatever it is. They understand the value of it in their lives, but nobody understands really what the work that needs to be done or the attention that needs to be paid to make all of that happen. It's just so taken for granted. In the way that, as [Organization] has had to deal with, I think, being taken for granted as a cultural organization and what that means, I think that the entire arts and culture community is taken for granted and I'm not exactly sure how to address that.

**Speaker 5:** To respond briefly to what [Speaker] said, the reason why we've never created a strong sense of tradition towards the arts is because the people, the pilgrims who came over here were actually the Puritans who closed theaters and closed down the Globe and other theaters in England. Their desire for religious freedom was to bring their conservative, elitist attitude about their point of view of Christianity to this country. That's always been running through the veins of this nation by their descendants. Part of that requires them to not see the importance of the arts or fear the arts as another way in which we speak to the public about ideas, about the potential of people to change their status in the world, about becoming more democratic in the small 'd' context, and that exists today. That's what we've been fighting against for over 500 years. If I was to answer the questions that you had posed, believe that we need a focus on establishing trust in this community, not amongst arts organizations and artists in the sector, because we don't have that right now. And because we don't have it, it has really allowed us not to unify around some collective values and collective goals and objectives that we would have. We have a two-tiered arts community where the top 1% receives more than 50% of all the funding, and the rest of us are in a "Hunger Games" type of existence trying to fight one another for the bare minimum that we get to survive. It has caused us to be at a less diverse, a less equitable, and a less valued representative arts community. If I was to ask what more investment we need, we need to invest more in a greater, broader group of organizations, smaller, midsize, to really build back a stronger American arts sector that is truly representative. And by "truly," I mean it is primary voice, first voice artists speaking for first voice communities. Not having it be set in programs or initiatives by predominantly white, large organizations that they do at certain parts of the year because they've got some funder who wants them to look like they're more inclusive. I'm inspired by the work of people who take those



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initiatives and believe strongly in making them possible in this world. Because that to me is the very first step we need to take if we want to affect real change.

**Speaker 1 (Facilitator):** Folks, I wonder if we might take a little bit of inspiration from [Speaker's] comments and just get the temperature of the room. If you think about your community, your arts ecosystem, where you're doing artsy work, where do you see potential for trust building? If you think about two entities, single person, group of people, type of group, organization, type of organization, where do you see a great opportunity for one act of trust building related to [Speaker's] comments. It would be great to have you all share a couple words in the chat each so that we get a sense about that focus and that investment that [Speaker] just shared.

**Speaker 6:** In our previous session, I talked about the need for a full and honest accounting of how we've gotten to where we are right now, because a lot of this is cyclical. The conversations and the fights in the mid to early 60s, when the NEA was being created, if we learned some of the lessons then, the culture wars would have been much easier to navigate or might not have happened if we learned the lessons then. We would not have the same cliff with the financial crises in 2008 if we had learned those. It's Groundhog Day. We will continue to be presented this lesson until we learn. And part of that honest accounting is taking stock of the fact that our field is fractured and we can't keep asking people that we have continuously disenfranchised and traumatized to show up to advocate for the institutions that have disproportionate positional power and authority that could have, in many instances, prevented some of the stuff that's happening now, or at least have learned enough to, I say, make new mistakes. Let's make new mistakes. Tracking that, I think there needs to be an investment in tracking that. A lot of funders and organizations will not fund the research side of things or the actual lay of the land, unless it's tied directly to something else, instead of understanding that that is an end game in and of itself. And working to repair so that we can have a more unified field that we can then use to advocate and protect ourselves and hopefully not wind up back here in another 20 years.

**Speaker 7:** [Speaker] reminded me of a prompt that a, because I'm big on credit that, Mia Khimm from Joyce Foundation shared, we were doing an exercise for the next 30 years what would you want to see as the headline of the Chicago Tribune and she said, "We trust artists." And that was just big for me, because when you think about that being the cover, not of the art section, but of old school above the fold – fold doesn't exist anymore – but what it means if you say we trust artists, we trust artists. If you give a universal basic income, that's what it means that artists will spend the money in ways that are beneficial to our society. If we trust artists, then we'll do the things that will build our society. This is where I'm yes and-ing [Speaker]. If the model is broken, to [Speaker's] point, it was based on a false point in the first place. Since the model is totally broken and dismantled anyway, let's take that as an opportunity to build it in the space where we trust artists



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to build, and creatives – let's use the term creatives in general – we trust to build this world. That's where we start to give the answers to the questions that I think you're asking [Speaker].

- **Speaker 1 (Facilitator):** If you make it real tangible for us, this concept of trusting artists, can you give one example or one ideal act of trusting artists that we can walk away from the room with?
- **Speaker 7:** I hate to repeat myself, but the universal basic income, I really do think that is an important piece that matters. If we can discuss the different ways that that can happen across the country, because it can happen, then I do think that that would be one major thing that would make impactful change.

**Speaker 8:** I think following up a little bit on what [Speaker] had said, the US approach to government is so different to Europe in that I think arts and culture and creativity often get snared in that we love the arts, but we shouldn't be in the business of funding the arts, that kind of narrative. I grew up in the UK where that is not questioned in the same way. The lottery, for example, supports arts and creativity in communities across the United Kingdom. People just don't ask the questions in the same way that here we're often being put up against other things that are perceived as more important or more urgent or whatever it might be. So that is nice to have but not necessary to have narrative, I think, gets in our way all the time. For us working here in [Location], but for other colleagues around the country, I think we have found that, we have more success making our story work and having people be receptive to us when we combined arts and the economy, or arts and tourism, or arts and health and well-being, arts and the military, arts and the needs of the Native American sector. We have a new program in [Location] called [Program] that I was able to get funded through the legislature. Just asking for general arts support, that narrative is very hard to make that case. Where that means we all end up in the next 10 to 15 years, I don't know. But just a thought that the way we story-tell has to be tailor-made for the funding, wherever the fund is coming from, whether it's philanthropy or the government.

**Speaker 9:** Yes to the cross-sector integration. Not solely the cross-sector integration, but yes and to cross-sector integration. What comes to mind for me during this conversation and the prior breakout room is, and I had to go look up the stat, but Americans for the Arts conducted a survey with, I think, Ipsos in 2023 or2024, that 87% of Americans believe that the arts are important to quality of life and to their communities. This is a super majority. Americans do believe that the arts are important. This field that we are in that often lives within very strict structures and organizational models and practice models is narrow and not great at translating to those 87%. I worry not about the 13% that don't believe that arts and culture are essential to American life. I worry that we don't know how to translate in plain terms, where the arts do show up in American life. And to me, that seems like the great opportunity is to talk about in plain language, not as it relates to funding, not



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as it relates to government grants, not as it relates to policy, but where art and artists show up in our lives every day, not to advocate for the arts, but to show where the arts are. And I think that's not the sole ingredient, but an important ingredient to this 2045 vision.

- **Speaker 1 (Facilitator):** I started my time in this field out in hardcore arts education, and I remember there being a plenary session that I was in about the importance of arts teachers making explicit the learning that was happening in their classroom. Because otherwise it just looked like people were running around and having fun and playing and being unfocused. But these art teachers were facilitating really powerful learning. It was really important that that those teachers build skills specifically in that, I'll use your word, translation. Thank you for pulling that out as a focus for us all, whether we're in or out of a classroom.

**Speaker 10:** Reflecting on what [Speaker] was sharing about the other breakout rooms and some of the other things I've heard, it started me thinking that in terms of investment in the future, that what we really need to do is explore this, that the dominant structure of arts organizations for the last 80 years has been the not-for-profit. That's really a tax loophole and that structure was pioneered by some great founders in the middle 20th century. I think there's a lot of thinking that it doesn't really encompass the creative organizations that we want to have or want to have flourish. If there was something that we could do now with an eye towards 20 years from now, we maybe need to invest in the expertise and the panels to conceive of a new tax category for nonprofits. And that's unfortunately, and to [Speaker's] point, that's how the arts are funded in this country. It really is through a tax break. That means the IRS is the primary regulatory body in charge of all our nonprofits. I think exploring that relationship might be a key to unlocking some new possibilities in 2045.

**Speaker 11:** About less of the envisioning, but I think from a tactical standpoint, there's been a lot of talk about the centering of language around arts as a necessity and not as a luxury in our culture and in society and American culture. Hearing that stat about 87% is fantastic. But what we do know, though, is that the reality as it relates not only from funding sources, but how the arts and culture are viewed is that it is very as an add-on, right, as a luxury and sitting over to the side. So, what do we ultimately need is, where is there a robust, a radical reimagining of new language, a robust national marketing campaign, ultimately, around recentering who and what it is that we do at the center of society, as a center of society, and not as something fun to do after school. But actually, this is what unlocks our students when we give them the power of the imagination, right? That this is what unlocks leadership. This is what unlocks policy, is the power of creativity. Look, a national marketing campaign makes me buy $10 coffee every single day. 20 years ago, I wasn't doing that. But now I am. There is power in messaging. There's power in storytelling. How can we as a sector, how can we and we lean into that?



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- **Speaker 1 (Facilitator):** What does national marketing campaign mean to you? Is it about emotion? What does that actually mean? Or what is it not?
- **Speaker 11**: I think it's multi-tiered, right? I'm using a marketing campaign as something that is tactical, but I think it being tied to an infrastructure shift, it being tied to other policy shifts, I think are key and important. But I do think language is power. Look, just in New York City alone, just with [the new mayor], there's a new headline of him passing out free tickets to the theater that says, "Art is not a luxury," literally. That's on the cover of the *New York Times*. There is power in the reframing of language. How can we radically shift the way in which we talk about what is it that we do that doesn't push our work to the margins, but truly highlight our centrality?
- **Speaker 1 (Facilitator):** There's an infrastructure shift that I'm going to say must go along with this because I think about that $10 bougie coffee that you're buying. You can do that on so many blocks in so many different cities in an airport and a bus station at a college campus. You can then act on that pretty easily. That was a real infrastructure investment around making that accessible. So how do you pair those two? You get people worked up, but then they need an outlet.

**Speaker 12:** [Speaker], I was glad you brought up the survey about 87% of people appreciating the arts. That same question was asked now 20-plus years ago as part of the I*nvesting in Create* study, which is a study of support structure for artists. And interestingly, that 87 or similar percent of appreciation for the arts was coupled with another response that was, and I'm not going to get the numbers exactly right, but it was something like only 20 some percent of people actually appreciated artists. So, there is this disconnect. Connection between the product that we all enjoy and have appreciation for, and the people and structures that are necessary to make that available. I think even though that is what I'm sharing with you is 20 plus years old, I think that that still plagues us. I just want to lift that up. Agree 10,000% with [Speaker], the arts needing to be not extra, but needing to be central and integrated and understood as essential, I keep saying preconditions for all of the things that we aspire to, in some ways. I'll just harken back to a comment that [Speaker] made in the previous group, because we were in the previous group together, he reminded us that there is really an opportunity to connect the arts to wellness. I would say wellness in a very universally understood way, right? I think of wellness locally, nationally, globally. There's research that exists now that didn't exist 20, 30 years ago, that allows us to make a case beyond economic development. Although I think economic development impact is still important. There are these other ways of talking about the value of the arts that are robust and compelling. I'm really curious to think more about what would a multi-pronged national campaign look like, a multi-generational, multi-pronged national campaign that really helps us to shift the paradigm on how we think of



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ourselves as creative beings, how we think of the role of artists, how we think of the role of cultural institutions as central and imperative for our survival.

- **Speaker 1 (Facilitator):** [Speaker], [Speaker] invoked your name, and so putting you on the spot for 90 seconds or how much of a floor time you want for this. Would you say something about the investments in that intersection of the arts with health? Based on what you shared before, where you see there could be more of a focus, where there could be more investment?
- **Speaker 13:** My personal experience was going from a couple organizations based in [Location] that were national focused, and then now running a visual arts in a rural part of [Location], where the community is about 30,000 people, and a lot of the towns in this area have less than 200 people in them. I think that one of the ways that we're doing some of this work starting in very early stages locally is just finding the partners that we need to work with, the local medical center, some other social services organizations. We have to make that case and start to define some programs and understand what impact we can have, what the community needs. But I think that that can be really, really reinforcing and backed up by some of the national level initiatives that [Speaker] was talking about and that many people in this group and the last group have been talking about. Policy initiatives that might be able to more clearly link, give us the ability to write prescriptions for art experiences, those kinds of things, and are making national headlines, make it clear that that connection is well-established and it's inextricable, that the link between arts, creativity, and wellness, community wellness, is really something that impacts all of our lives.

**Speaker 9:** Thank you. [Speaker], thank you for sharing that stat. I'm going to get it wrong, but that maybe 20 some percent of Americans, despite valuing the arts, don't value artists. I imagine that that number is quite similar to farm workers. I imagine that that stat is quite similar to people that work in factories. I imagine that that stat is quite similar to our hospitality workers and childcare workers. And this dilemma is not unique to our field. This dilemma is not unique to artists. This dilemma has everything to with the lack of valuing by our systems and institutions workers. And we might be successful in national media campaigns and advocacy campaigns by partnering with other workers in other fields.

**Speaker 5:** We should be finding ourselves aligning our energies with people in education, people in the health care industry, because much like those sectors, we provide a benefit to the general public, the whole point of well-being. The challenge, however, is to get that 20-some-odd percent that [Speaker] pulled out to understand, to build on that. Every child in this country is taught their numbers, their alphabet, and their colors using art. We use song, we use storytelling, we use all of these artistic approaches to teaching. And yet, for some reason, we have detached the importance



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of those experiences at the beginning of their lives from every other way in which they are exposed to knowledge and wisdom and exposed to the general world through artistic means. We've made it a luxury in part, not just by the ticket price, but in part by the way in which we've made it an elitist experience. And those that are attempting to try to touch the people have been forced into a situation where they are challenged to get their message out through the mediums that we use. This is not going to improve unless we take seriously that point of trust and build a movement that actually benefits all. Which means that those that benefit most by this system that we currently have, have to understand the equation that benefits them is going to have to change. That's the first step that we have to take, because we won't get to where we want to be unless there is a complete commitment to us collectively understanding, because there are people who benefit from exactly the way things are right now and they assume that they will continue to benefit in the future because they always have. That illusion has to be broken.

- **Speaker 1 (Facilitator):** Just keeping the alignment going with this room. I think part of it is a demonstration of you all actually listening and responding to one another and being moved and stimulated by each other's comments that we are circling around some of the same ideas. I also think it is quite powerful and the imagined potential of this convening, and that is when we're able to move through ideas together across lots of difference, the sense of possibility of alignment that comes to the surface really seems opportunity rich. So just a real affirmation of why we're here and what we're doing here and you all's generosity of time, energy and thought.
- **Speaker 14 (Co-Facilitator):** Thank you for sharing, for the difference of ideas from different directions. It just means so much for me. It gives me hope just as a local arts agency leader to hear what everybody else is thinking and helping to affirm that we're doing some things well, but also questioning our own actions as well.

## Group 9 Chat

1. Why [are you here?]
    a. I want the arts to thrive, including arts workers.
    b. I'm here as a former artist turned curator turned arts leader who believes that artists see the future and can save the world.
    c. Here to dream of tomorrow.
    d. I care about the future of the arts for all of us, in particular for the youth of our world.
    e. Belief that together more is possible, different is possible, better is possible.
    f. I am here because of the obvious existential threats to arts organizations and the artistic community.



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g. Connecting with colleagues, connecting to hope for the future.
h. Creativity powers/empowers our world.
i. Here because I'm passionate about rebuilding our cultural institutions.
j. I'm here to take the pulse of the national arts sector.
k. Here to plug in to established/evolving cultural networks and infrastructure, while working to build new structures locally.
l. I'm here because public media and arts/humanities go hand in hand!
m. I'm here because the arts and creativity, humanities as part of all aspects of our lives are core to our local, national, and global well-being.

2. Would you use the chat to share 4-8 words that characterized you last vision conversion?
   a. We had similar conversation re envisioning a new model and positing that. Moving creative (speaking larger than arts or sector) from othering to center
   b. Core social infrastructure
   c. The cyclical nature of what we're experiencing. [We are in] the middle of act 1.
   d. Funding structures, sustainability for artists, staff/orgs, technology.
   e. Wanting the arts to be truly embedded in our lives, not just an add-on.
   f. Gaining/using power by joining existing cross-sector advocates vs. staying alone in arts talking to selves
   g. When thinking about corporate investment, moving from corporate CSR grants to essential investments from R&D, marketing, operational, etc.
   h. Health and well-being
   i. We need to listen to the artists more and not just organizations.
   j. Sharing knowledge together. Breaking "silos." especially between arts orgs in the scarcity mentality.
   k. Language (both within the arts industry and outside) was a meaty part of the conversation last round. I know I said the arts brings in more money in NYC than sports, but sports industry does a better job of marketing across the country. All sports fans are authorities on their teams. Not all art lovers can speak about art.

3. What's your favorite statistic about the arts if you have one?
   a. The arts in NYC bring in more revenue than all sports combined.
   b. 56% of all arts funding goes to the top (1)% of arts organizations.
   c. A trillion dollars of undesignated funds are sitting in DAFs – there is no time frame in which the donors have to distribute these.



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   d. Arts-rich communities have 18% less serious crime and 14% fewer reports of child abuse and neglect."

4. Something public media is currently dealing with is a similar polling on public trust, something like 80% of all Americans think PBS is very valuable, but that stat wasn't enough to save the industry's federal funding. The key will be converting that high trust into real action, which public media wasn't necessarily able to do in July.

5. I believe art can be prescribed in Canada and UK for certain medical conditions.
   a. "Arts on Prescription" initiative with the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts (MMFA), allowing physicians to write prescriptions for free museum visits to improve patients' mental and physical health by addressing loneliness and well-being, fitting into a broader trend of "social prescribing" for community activities.
   b. That's true and there is some evidence of interest in that and pilot efforts in the US.
   c. England actively promotes "arts on prescription" through its social prescribing system, where healthcare professionals refer patients to creative activities like art classes, music, dance, and museum visits for mental and physical well-being, addressing social causes of ill health and reducing strain on traditional healthcare by boosting confidence, social connection, and skills. Supported by the NHS and Arts Council England.
   d. [Name], a physician, prescribes the arts to patients and uses the arts as central to an initiative he is working on at NYU about empathy and medicine - The Empathy Project. https://www.empathyproject.com/



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# GROUP 10

## Group 10 Transcript

**Speaker 1 (Facilitator):** In the last discussion, we talked about vision, right? We had a long timeframe, a vision for 2045. Our group talked about, perhaps we want a vision for a year or three years or five years or possibly 2045 too, but that there's also some urgency. But what we're here to talk about now is the work and the strands of work that we need to do in order to realize this vision. Because we weren't all together before, it won't align directly to what we've just said [in the previous session]. Just more broadly thinking about some of the answers to these questions that we have on the slide, thinking about what you think we need to focus on and why, what we need possibly more investment in, and then really thinking through what type of work you're inspired by. Or you can make it about the work you're doing too. But really think about what we, [speaking] broadly as a field, need to do to deliver on some of the visions that you heard in the last session.

**Speaker 2:** I'm going to talk a little bit about some of the work that inspires me, in the framework of work that is hyperlocal and then zooming out to something that is national. Some of the work that really inspires me lately and that has been generative in thinking and that I think aligns with some of the things in your summary, is the work of new pluralists. The framing of this grant opportunity really invited folks to think at the intersections, to think of the ways in which culture can bring communities together to really help visualize and name the kinds of divides that sort of color our present moment. I think that is powerful, and there are threads there that can be really instructive. There is, of course, the work of the National Association of Latino Arts and Culture. I am hoping that this initiative can really do something like aggregate asset mapping for networks, the kinds of networks that are currently active, the kinds of support and the kinds of education they are actively generating and finding ways to learn from each other. I think that's really key. There is, in New York City, a relatively young consortium, LXNY. It focuses on Latinx serving. It's intersectional by definition. It's not intended to bring in only organizations led by Latinx artists or with a Latinx mission, but rather of diverse communities and who is offering engagement in arts and culture. I think that's a really valuable point to draw from and lastly, there are, well, there's two, there's two initiatives that are happening in the Appalachia that I think there's tons to learn from. [The first is] the Letcher Community Culture Hub. And the Waymakers Collective is really looking hyper-local, sector, peer-to-peer, and ways of building resources and sharing community that draw from mutual aid and some of their long traditions. I think the lesson here is that that these forms of working can coexist productively with capitalized forms in which we're already embedded but can also generate new ways of thinking. Of course, I'd be remiss not to mention Creatives Rebuild New York [as



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meriting] reproduction and that in my dialogue with artists that participated in the program, the range of learnings and the way that those experiences continue to inform what they're doing moving forward after their tenure under Creatives Rebuild is impactful.

**Speaker 3:** [I want to raise up] the great conversation that we just had around expanding our frame. There was a lot of talk about expanding to a plural culture. I think to do that, we need to just start saying cultures and start saying culture as plural. Because if we say culture and then plural, we're still entering within a singular frame. That singular frame would be a dominant one we can start to model today. So, I would say we need to start shifting our language. The other thing was also, picking up from what we just heard around drawing from the extraordinary work of Creatives Build New York and the intersectional work that arts cultures and creativity, is actually central to democracy and civil society, and that it should be integrated into every aspect of the work, not necessarily this outdated system that we've all inherited, which is artistic excellence, that our tools or phenomenal artists get to be platformed and showcased, but it's the presenters, the producers, the curators that put the context there. I think we really need a paradigm shift. I believe we need to focus on creating that paradigm because if we don't imagine what that shift is going to be, we won't have a new system that's ready to go. Our old systems are crumbling, so we need to really start to imagine what the new systems are, and it's going to take us some time to do that. I also want to just say I'm super inspired by the work of Dr. Jackson. I think required reading [should be] "Investing in Creativity," we need to dust it off and take a look at it again and re-familiarize ourselves with that work. Creativity and cultures is in the interest of this country surviving the next 250 years. It is essential to who we are as an innovative country and a country that is built upon a lot of myths and lies, but that we have an aspiration that I think we can lean into.

**Speaker 4:** The perspective I've always brought throughout my whole career is how do we center art and artists? How do we see more art everywhere? Because I've worked in and out of the for-profit sector and the nonprofit arts sector, I am always asking questions about how do we bring our work? How do we make our work more central to everyday life? How do we modernize the way that we work? How do we use the tools, all the good tools that everyone else is using? As an art center, [what should be the] operating hours? How do we welcome people in? How do we use technology in a way that creates a space that people want to be a part of and return to? How do we create a space that feels like a home for the local community? And we [do that by] thinking about right from the onset, data hygiene, marketing tools, ticketing, visitor experience. How do people enter recognizing that the virtual is as important as the physical? So how do people enter into our space before they even enter into our space? So for me, in order to make the vision that everyone has spoken about happen, we have to do all of that very hard and important work. And we also need to do the other stuff that's ess glamorous and sexy.



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**Speaker 5:** I believe we need to focus on making the arts financially independent. I feel strongly that being a museum director is an endangered species right now for so many reasons because museum directors are expected to make everybody happy, make everybody comfortable, and yet raise the money to do the programs that are the mission of that particular institution. I think we need to help those who have difficulty in management learn how to do stuff, especially smaller organizations. I think, like you have the Small Business Administration, well, why not try to organize some of the smaller institutions, performing arts centers, or whatever, to work with each other? That hasn't happened. Maybe It is happening. I don't seem to have seen any of it. We need to put more investment into the people that we have these great expectations of. We need to be supportive. Then the third thing was I'm inspired by the work of people who have such strong feelings, which you all do. I have always been impressed by people who feel very strongly and are willing to take a stand. But if we're going to let people be out there on the firing line, people like administrators, fundraisers, they really need to get their act together to really support these folks. That's my thought.

**Speaker 6 (Co-Facilitator):** I'm going to mark a few things that might be some follow-ups, like specific ideas for independent funding of the arts or things like that.

**Speaker 7:** [Speaker] just made me think of a consortium of, I believe, 15 small organizations in New York City, arts organizations, that came together during the COVID period to try to sustain themselves as a group. They've continued doing that post-COVID. I don't know if there's like a name for this group, but anyway, I just wanted to suggest that as a great example in my mind of small organizations banding together for a more secure future. Also, as an arts funder, I feel like we funding organizations should really focus on joining forces and putting our ideas and resources together to support the health of the field. This is relatively rare in the arts funding community and it seems to only happen in moments of crisis. Like for instance, COVID response, responses to the LA fires last year, responses to the revoking of the promised grants to organizations by the current administration. We feel really galvanized to see more collaboration happen in the arts funding community, which I think is essential. Just another random thing, if I have a moment to mention it, something that I'm inspired by, just unrelated to any of what I've just said, is the fact that recently the New York City Mayor, Mamdani, gave out free tickets to theater events in New York City. He handed them out on the street, I believe, to anybody that wanted them. And I thought this was a brilliant way to increase public access to the arts in a sort of highly publicized way that, you know, creates awareness and puts access in the hands of people that might otherwise not, you know, ever have a chance to attend the theater. So that's something that inspired me.

**Speaker 8:** That echoes the thing that's been on my mind if there's any silver lining to the moment that we're in right now. It's organizations across the nonprofit sphere really understanding that our



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future is collective and that we need to really be thinking about us and how we are working together. One of the things that I think is required is a bit of self-examination in arts organizations to not just say how much are we doing, how many concerts, how many shows, how many of this and that, but how well are we doing that, how are we thinking about our spaces and how they're welcoming, how they're accessible, who's in them, who's outside of them, what are the entry points to those, but also our presence in community, which I think leads to this question that is constantly on my mind, which is who is actually better off from our artistic practices, from our engagement, from the way that we decide to allocate resources, and that we really as a sector need to hold ourselves accountable to be thinking about who is better off. It's very important to support artists. It's also equally as important to think about the artistic relationship between communities and art practitioners and to say, what is the quality of that relationship? How are we listening? How are we reflecting local culture, how are we offering experiences for people to tell their own stories in the way that they seek to tell them? So I think that reflective experience, our commitment to trying to find out if people are better off, who's better off from our efforts as an art sector, and most importantly, trying to find a way forward together, which requires us to kind and get out of our self-centered identities and survival mode and really think about what would we give up. So, the thing that has inspired me comes out of the nonprofit sector. The CEO [of a shelter organization] recently said, "we will do anything that is required for these heartbeats." That's how she talks about the families that are living in the shelter. Anything [specific] to [an] organization, any kind of collaboration, any kind of reframing of programming for these heartbeats to be better off. I think as arts organizations, we need to be thinking in a similar way.

**Speaker 9:** At the Arts Presenters Conference APAP in New York City, I was at a meeting of dance presenters coming together for asset mapping. How can we then build and support and make a phone call or take advantage of this, because so often as a producer and presenter, you feel so alone and so siloed. These small service networking groups are small, that I would wish that could be brought together. So often in these meetings, it's all about block booking, and it's all about me doing my own thing over here. Can you help me? This conversation was refreshingly new. I mean, I deeply respect all of my peers there, but it was refreshingly new in saying, how can I help you? Like they're saying, this particular presenter needs help because they're missing, they're not getting this grant. How can we help them as opposed to how can I help myself? And so, I think with these asset maps, we are more able to be supportive of each other in this work.

**Speaker 10:** One of the things that I wanted to pick up on is the value of individual artists as engines of innovation and change. That there's this interesting gap between organizations self-perpetuating, supporting themselves, trying to persist and survive. On the one hand, I'm oversimplifying. On the other hand, artists who are creating new things, who have ideas, who need to try new stuff, who



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can try way more things than large organizations can, and the difficulty in getting the investment to those artists to try those things. So, in answering the question of how we center artists, one of the things I think we need to invest in is how we give lots of artists opportunities to try lots of things and give those things potential to change, to grow, to become new institutions. I believe that we can all see that there is a lot of change coming to the world in the next 20 years, that we can see that the number of institutions we have now is going to be really different than the number of institutions we have in 20 years. I think it behooves us to make sure that the change that's coming is the change that we want. And if we want it to be driven by artists, we need to make them able to drive.

**Speaker 11:** [I'd like to talk about] a cultural asset mapping initiative in South LA, community-based cultural asset mapping. I guess we've learned a lot about the practical applications of this work in terms of working in communities, but it's given me a lot of opportunity to think more holistically around systems and distributed networks and what it means to do asset mapping. One, there's a technological issue, which is that as community-based cultural asset mapping became a thing, there's no uniform tool set or meaningful way to share data. And data is a complicated term in this context because it's really about people and culture and cultures. The other thing is related to knowledge management. [In New York, I'm familiar with a] project called the Brooklyn Commune Project, which is an open participatory artist driven research project into the economics of cultural production and the performing arts. I think there's this challenge of knowledge management [of similar initiatives that have come before]. I think mapping systems, sort of looking at the way, you know, highways in Santa Monica [connect to] Philadelphia, to Chicago, mapping the systems, looking at interoperability, looking at finding real-time ways to assess capacity and need and move capital throughout the system. So, a more holistic approach to systems and integration from the community level to the national level.

**Speaker 12:** A mentor of mine often says there is no arts without arts education. For me, that looks like a focus on the planning for arts education, the staffing, the funding, and the ability of reporting and measuring impact as well. And [Speaker], I very much take what you put in the chat to heart in terms of what does that mean to measure impact? Who is doing that, who it benefits, those are things that then have an implicit bias, unfortunately, to them and how that story is being shared. I think [there needs to be] an accountability mechanism to this as well. When I think of investment, [Speaker mentioned] the idea of the museum director being almost an endangered species. I will say I noticed that within my community as well that we have folks that are leaving the workforce, teaching artists, arts leaders, because of how challenging things are to be able to afford a living, the challenges that folks face in their day to day [lives]. And so, I think about how there can be investment or support for workforce retention and development. Not only workforce development,



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of course, with those early career individuals and giving them visibility to what career but how are we actively supporting those mid-career individuals to help them be able to grow into those next level positions? I think mentorship is an excellent means of that. I know, I think it's WOCA, Women of Color in the Arts has a fabulous program around that. I think about mentorship really as a vehicle for sustainability and advancement within one's career. Just adding some final thoughts in terms of institutions, [Speaker], I'm not sure if it was Culture at Three that you were referring to, but it started as a group of organizations that started meeting during the pandemic in New York City and grew to hundreds of cultural organizations meeting on a daily basis. Those calls still continue. I will say I participate frequently in them just as a means of information sharing at a very grassroots level, hearing more about what's going on in the field. For me, it's a means of also trust and relationship building, which sparked collaboration between my organization and others. And I think, on a totally unrelated note, I'm also inspired by a lot of the organizing that's going on around portable benefits and connecting that across sectors. My community in particular, teaching artists, are really struggling with access to affordable health insurance, and that is something that is causing them to leave the field with only 6% reporting getting health insurance through an employer per our most recent research report, which is pretty wild. And so, I'm really interested in the creative thinking that's happening around that and how people are connecting across different sectors.

**Speaker 13:** I want to go back [to the] mapping analogy because one, I think we need to be able to see [within] the system that we're currently working in, what that theory of change is, and then how that system is altering, right? What's wrong when the system recedes and crashes? I threw in the Berkana 2-Loop model to take a look at that and see what our current arts and cultural system is. If we want to prompt a paradigm shift, then what's the new system that needs to replace the old system? Our government systems are failing. Our infrastructure systems are failing. Our healthcare system is failing. And so, we're not just operating within our own silo. We have to look at this through the entire moment of how the system of this country is failing in some areas, and what do we want to keep from the old system, and what do we want to put into the new system to fertilize, right? There's a tremendous amount of resource capital that could be put into a new system. If we can think about [whether we] want to be able to use the same kind of language so that we actually can communicate together, knowing that our meanings mean the same thing. Because I think language is also getting more ambiguous. Something that I'm really excited about, and you can hear this with my voice, is how do we maintain the remembrance of our human ingenuity? Of our human creativity. I just finished this creative economy plan for [State]. It's so antithetical to why I'm in this work, but I'm playing around with this notion of economies. What do we have in circulation? What's a currency that we want to put into the river? Part of that has to do with our knowledge transfer, right? If we're thinking about an economy, it's what's in circulation. So, what are the ideas that we need to circulate and foster?



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**Speaker 14:** The things I've been thinking about go back to some of the earlier comments around independent funding for the arts. For me, I think the things we really need to focus on are really shifting away from that philanthropic model, both a public and private philanthropic model, and instead think about different ways of funding this work. I think in a public sector [context] that means really focusing on systems of support that go directly to individuals and to individual artists, but not just artists, just to individuals generally, which unlocks creativity among many folks. But pushing for those safety net programs, those guaranteed income programs, whatever those things are that enable economic security more broadly and enable folks to pursue culture and creativity and creative expression. Then on the private side, when I think about the nonprofit models, service models, et cetera, I think, again, trying to think about how to shift away from philanthropic funding and more to other models, whether they are membership dues-based models like service models, whatever those are, I think the important thing is that they shift accountability for the organizations instead of up to funders to down and out to artists. I think that approach to independent funding is a powerful means of putting artists back at the center of the ecosystem.

**Speaker 15:** The Doris Duke Charitable Foundation did a series of programs on creative compensation for artists in, I think, three cities on the East Coast. And one of the things that I took from that is there is an opportunity with all of the challenges that we have with digital technology and AI. I think there's a shift in the culture with regards to arts that is a positive for us, which is that arts are much more a participation sport. And so, I think generations coming up are viewing narrative or visual creativity as something that they can participate in, they can talk back to with, you know, thinking about fan fiction, people creating their own riffs, sampling. Why is it important? It's important, I think, because there's an opportunity both to build out the support we have for the arts, and there are revenue streams. I think that to the point [Speaker] just mentioned, looking at ways for artists to engage with audiences in their creative process in a way that monetizes their creativity and creates revenue streams that are not strictly dependent on philanthropy or government grants.

**Speaker 16:** Both [of those comments] make me think of the current reality of many small and mid-sized organizations. So, these are 501c3s in the traditional model, but they don't really operate like larger organizations in the ecosystem. For me, there is a role for those organizations that are rooted in community and have a commitment to working in community. By that, I mean both the artist and the audience co-design, collaborate, and create forms in which the resources can go out. So, organizations that embrace micro grants or organizations that federate projects and I think that, overall, we underestimate the connective and resourcing power of small and mid-sized 501c3s, certainly [this is] a fact in communities of color [that's] worth mentioning.



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**Speaker 6 (Co-Facilitator):** I'm hearing these clusters, and there's one that's emerging here, (Respondent) put in the chat, what is the support infrastructure needed for human creativity to thrive? Trust-based funding models, this whole idea of thinking about process and not just product, but process as well. That feels like a nice grouping. If we were going to say, here's one thing, one set of things that we really need to work on, that's one. And then [there's this] ongoing desire to be deeply collaborative.

**Speaker 1 (Facilitator):** We were presented with some information from one of the Doris Duke meetings, a stat that I thought was interesting, that art hobbyists outnumber artists by about 10 to one. I've heard a few times from people talking more generally about human creativity within the general public, people using [creative tools] and being creative who are not calling themselves artists. So that piece keeps resonating through a lot of what's been said now.

**Speaker 17:** I think the asset mapping and reimagining systems and the impossibility of leading in this space right now, where leaders are not supported [are major issues]. It comes back to something that I fought for vehemently and couldn't get traction on as an arts funder. I couldn't even get my own organization to get behind this idea that the arts are so disinvested from technology, particularly in the museum space. There are 21st century orgs running on 20th century tech stacks and being blown away, getting left behind. That leaves a lot of money on the table, a lot of opportunity on the table, and just the efficiency of organizing our data. To [Respondent's] point, what do we have? Why are we repeating? Why are we doing this over and over again? Our legacies are not being brought forward. They're not accessible. They're not searchable. We are really good at paper, even collection management systems. I know this doesn't really touch on the performing arts so much, but it may very well be the case in those institutionalized practices as well, that it's really hard to get reliable desktop computers for the back office. This was something I came up against repeatedly. I think to move forward, we have to look at some of that basic stuff. We have to build on a solid foundation. Then the other thing I'll just drop in is Baumol's cost disease theory, if anybody's familiar with that, and just make sure that that's in the conversation, because it's something we constantly have to fight against.

**Speaker 18:** Coming from my particular viewpoint, I think we have to focus on operational sustainability for arts organizations because everyone's vision without viable infrastructure, it just all collapses under the pressure. I think that we need new models for earned and recurring revenue, which everyone has said, better digital capacity building and shared services that help reduce duplicative work and burnout. I think this was mentioned by other people, but I'm just watching so many valuable people leave our field because of that. I also think we need to invest more in cross-sector digital fluency, not just in marketing or tech tools, but in how digital strategy shapes audience



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engagement and equity and accessibility in long-term financial health. I don't really think anyone has talked about this much yet, but AI, which I know is controversial, but AI is emerging very fast. I think as an industry, we risk falling behind or misusing it if we don't build sector-wide readiness around this right now.

**Speaker 19:** [I'm inspired by the] expanded field of art experience. It has been said that an art project or an art experience begins the first moment you hear about it and doesn't end until you stop thinking about it and it creates this recursive loop of experience. When we talk about value and we talk about revenue and we talk about, where along the arc of an experience map does revenue happen? Where's the experience happening? Where's the long tail of it? Where does IP get generated that could be monetized? We have only so much time, and it's a scarce resource. For all of us to physically get together in space and time is increasingly rare and valuable. I think that whether it's going to a museum to sit with a physical painting and have that experience of watching the goldfinch or whatever for four hours to really get into it, or whether it's sitting with a performance over time, there's an extraordinary value to live presence with other human beings in participatory spectatorship and co-experiencing. Spectatorship is a creative act and I think figuring out ways to articulate the value of presence and attention in this wider field where the competition for attention and the value of attention is deliberately extractive and reduced.

**Speaker 20:** I really want to put forward the question of what is the support infrastructure needed for human creativity to thrive in the United States? The biggest issue is for people to make it clear that this is a public good, that this is something that serves everyone and is important to everyone and not just a small portion [of the population]. When we think about it on that fundamental level of human creativity [being able to] thrive, and then say, what support infrastructure is needed for that to happen, is a profound way to frame this entire conversation about what we want for the arts in the future.

**Speaker 1 (Facilitator):** I'll maybe push on concrete ideas for how do we build that infrastructure if we think we don't have it? Or how do we build different capital and funding structures?

**Speaker 4:** A few people earlier talked about partnership and network effects, working cross sector. To me, that feels absolutely essential.

**Speaker 6 (Co-Facilitator):** I was going to throw it back to the tech people on the call, our colleagues who are working or have worked in tech companies. That seems like a really productive opportunity.



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**Speaker 21:** It just occurs to me, even in this room of 350 folks or something, you've got some major foundations represented. Is there any appetite among these mega foundations who do have resources to send large chunks to this new structure we're looking to set up that is not necessarily state art agencies, and I'm not trying to devalue state art agencies. But if we're trying to create something new, the mega foundations perhaps are a source for help.

**Speaker 22:** Just an answer to the question of, oh, computer people come and help. I wanted to say the thing I've seen be most helpful for a lot of organizations is to give up on the dream that computer people are going to come and save us, and to have a couple of trusted advisors that can help you feel in control of the computers that you have to deal with. It's just a box sitting on your desk. You're in charge of it. It's your goal. It's your organization. It needs to serve you. Thinking deeply about those goals can transform your use of any given tool. And that can take some work, it can be a challenge. But it's not mystical, and it doesn't require you to hire a team of seven, six figure tech workers to make the transition. A lot of it is just about simple goal definition and being confident that it is a tool that works for you.

**Speaker 23:** [Speaker's] comment about foundations just reminded me about the New England Foundation for the Arts. And one of NIFA's grant programs called New England States Touring required three presenters from two different states to work together. [This picks] up on [Speaker's] comments about possibly having foundations [provide] the incentive to make us work together. We all benefited from that, and our network is stronger because of that. [If the foundations] encourage us and incentivize us to work together, we'll start organically building some of this asset mapping and networking.

**Speaker 4:** I mentioned earlier this organization I'm working with, [where] we're reconceptualizing visitor experience from the ground up. Part of that is funding. Yes, 100%. They have the money to spend on the problem. But as [Speaker] said, part of that is creativity, imagination, and will. I was [working in AI development] in a previous role. I went to a lot of arts organizations and said, for free, I will do stuff with you. All the people I talked to were too overwhelmed, too busy, too swamped to even conceptualize about, "let's take a leap and do some weird creative technology experiment." And I understood it. I was like, "Okay I'm sorry, I can't help." But I feel like to get to the 2045 vision, we need to figure out a way to equip our teams to have that kind of space in their day, in their lives, in their roles. Otherwise, we can't figure these problems out. Because as [Speaker] said, you don't need the computer people in the room. It's really everything you all have inside of you already.



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## Group 10 Chat

1. https://newpluralists.org
2. https://www.nalac.org
3. https://www.lxnyarts.org
4. https://www.waymakerscollective.org
5. https://www.letcherculture.org
6. https://www.creativesrebuildny.org
7. I am inspired by organizations that bridge art and sciences - The American Academy of Arts and Science (a partner of mine), Arts in Research Universities (A2ru), and Cultural Programs of the National Academies of Science - also Design Schools at UNC, Stanford, UCT, others.
8. Who benefits connects with how we measure impacts, quantitative and qualitative, with the latter lagging in generalized language and understanding? IMO.
9. I wish we would invest more in arts education – not only for the benefits of the young people who experience it but as a long-term strategy for building a future community that appreciates the arts and will support it.
    a. Education will also fundamentally change in the coming years. The change is tilting towards integrated, project-based learning. To me it is a no-brainer that fine arts education is both directly embedded in this new curriculum, but gets a new boost as creative talent is a key piece of a well-rounded community.
10. I think we also need to find ways to connect with those with power to decide, especially within government, how collectively to best support the Arts. "Art independence" is a wonderful goal, but for the now-the usual thoughts on economy and quality of life are not working.
11. A trust-based funding model is very important for the future of the Arts.
12. Ireland just adopted UBI for artists.
13. What is the support infrastructure needed for human creativity to thrive in the United States?



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a. I think that is the key fundamental question. The current and past infrastructures have not served us well. And I think the thriving of human creativity is the important concept, more than "the Arts."

14. Asset Mapping/ Mapping systems and networks
Measuring the work
Workforce development and retention for artists and teaching artists
Planning and building
Communication and meetings (Culture @3)
Creativity and Arts Cultures
Financial independence of the arts - directly to individuals (not just artists)
Setting up safety nets for artists (portable benefits)
Intersections of culture and community
Expand our frame - cultures and non-merit-based/curated
Understand where our system is and where it should be
Address failing infrastructure beyond the arts and culture silo
Fertilize new system
Support 3rd spaces
Consortiums that support - future is collective
Remember human creativity
Give individual artists capital to lots of new things/experiment
Funder collaborations
Models that shift accountability to artists and community as an approach to independent funding
Resource power of small and mid-size orgs

15. I also think that as we talked about, basic human needs need to be taken care of. So not just UBI for a creative class, but legislation like what New Mexico recently passed supporting care takers. The social safety net needs to be there in general.

16. If creativity needs to thrive, and everyone needs to be creative, it's hard not to support broader systemic support for everyone to thrive fully as an arts strategy.

17. So many data sets that are not harvested, much less aggregated.

18. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baumol_effect

19. Thanks for all that have lifted the ideas about our currency and our collaborations. We are thinking about this as our shared humanity and our social capital.



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20. I'm working on AI strategy for arts nonprofits and as I've interviewed people and done research, basic tech, basic data hygiene need to be in place for effective AI adoption.
    a. Data science hierarchy of needs still applies to everything.
21. No capacity building without sustained, durational support.
22. We need to turn the existing system upside down and be able to organize outside of self-interest and in the public's interest.
23. Building structures starts with us – with us getting in relationship together and with our communities.



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# GROUP 11

## Group 11 Transcript

**Speaker 1 (Facilitator):** I just want to express my gratitude to all of you for making the time for this important conversation. This really grew out of a sense that we had both a sort of a crisis, a critical moment in time that required response, but we also had the need to really think about longer term strategies. And think about how we really build the community, the sector, the nation through arts and culture and creativity that we all want to see thrive. You see that this section is now moving from vision to what we've called workflows, basically the type of work that needs to be done to realize those visions. You can have the vision, but then what do you need to do to get to the achievement of that vision? What strands of work do we need to do to realize these visions? Again, we recognize there's not a single vision because we just had a conversation across hundreds of people that included many different visions of where we need to go. And then just prompting the way to frame it, "I believe we need to focus on blank because blank." Or "I believe we need more investment in blank." "I am inspired by the work of blank." And we put those in there also to recognize that it's not just new stuff that we need to do, that there's a lot of work happening all around the country that could be relevant to this. So, while we want to be open to innovation and thinking about things that don't exist or things that need to be done in a different way, we also want to respect and honor the great work that's already happening at the national level and at the local level all around the country. In terms of investment, while certainly financial resources are needed, we also wanted to think beyond that so that it's not just about, well, we need more money. We may need more money, too, but what are the other things that we may need that are not necessarily about new resources?

- **Speaker 2 (Co-facilitator):** I would say for the third bullet point, it says, "I'm inspired by the work of blank." Feel free to uplift your own work in this particular context as well. You can be inspired by the things that you're working on. So don't feel like this has to be that you can't speak about the work that you're doing to advance this stuff as well.

**Speaker 3:** What I see in my work across the nation and across the world is that the conduit towards engagement in the arts and being active and establishing the arts and culture as a value of this society is that the conduit to getting there isn't complete. We aren't starting pre-K and going through K-12 and then into post-secondary, and then into adulthood, and then into advanced adulthood, that there's too many gaps in that line to engage society as a whole and every single member of society in the arts. I think that there has to be investment early on and often and continuously through the entire life cycle of all humans in the United States. I do this specifically



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through the lens of people with disabilities and older adults, and I see that they get left out too frequently, but I think a global investment should float them to the surface. Everybody floats to the surface in that case. I'm inspired by the work of so many people around the country that are doing arts and accessibility, disability-focused cultural access work. There's so many amazing humans I couldn't begin to name them.

**Speaker 4:** I believe we need to focus on how governments – and when I say governments, I mean municipal, regional, or county, or state – how they are prioritizing the art ecosystem, and that means we understand completely where that ecosystem sits in the mayor, the county, executive, or the governor's funding priority list and how it is viewed in relationship to their economic development goals. So often when we're trying to advocate and go have questions, suggestions, ideas, and we're talking to these decision makers, we really are not clear where this world sits on their priority list and how this world is viewed in relationship to what they've already stated their economic development goals will be and this is what they're utilizing to measure success in their own way. That's the one thing. I believe we need more investment in art education. I'm a huge advocate for fully funded art programs in all public schools. That's something that we must invest in and get back to. Then I'm inspired by the work of Sandra Bloodworth. If you've ever ridden the subway in New York City, the art program and the arts that you see there, she is responsible for that program. How it integrated into technology, the singing, the public art, she helped build that, and I'm inspired by that.

**Speaker 5:** I really believe that we need more investment in rural communities. We're about 40 minutes south of [Location]. And [Location] is, I think, one of America's great mid-sized cities. And mid-sized cities certainly don't even get the attention that major metropolitan areas do. I find to my continued chagrin, frustration, as I say, at our peril friends, we forget our rural communities for all kinds of reasons and that is primarily who we're serving in [Location] is rural communities who really get left behind over and over. If we truly believe that arts are part of wellness and part of creating belonging and building bridges and empathy, then again, I don't understand how we can move forward without considering how we invest and get dollars to trusted partners or into public schools or whatever this looks like in rural areas also. Right now, I have been deeply, for the last couple of years, actually inspired by *Your Brain on Art* by Ivy Ross and Susan Magsamen. I'm waiting with bated breath for Daisy Fancourt's book that's coming out, *Art Cure: The Science of How the Arts Save Lives*, because there's just more great data for all of us in that book.

- **Speaker 1 (Facilitator):** I will just say your colleagues from [State] have similar feelings about the importance of honoring rural communities as well as urban communities, because we're a state that really covers the whole gamut, too, and has a mid-sized city as our core city.



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- **Speaker 6:** I live in an exceptionally rural state and in a rural area and it should be part of every conversation. I think we really need to be focused on organizing and civics education and political training for the arts sector. I think there are more of us than we think there are and really engaging this group of committed artists, people who love the arts, arts folks in seeing the important role that they can and should play in the functioning of our democracy from the most local level on up is really crucial. Because if we're not doing that, if we're not encouraging our artists and creative people to be the ones running for those offices, we're not going to be able to the things we want to change.

**Speaker 7:** Even though I'm in [Location], I both agree with our colleagues who talked about rural folks, too. Because I think, ultimately, to play off of what [Speaker] has said, our colleague earlier, around how we need to focus outward, I think that what we end up doing is pendulum swinging. We chase the thing that is of the time rather than taking a step back and really looking at the entire ecosystem. And I think that if we are not fully looking at our entire community, we will continue to be chasing these rabbits and being forced to compete within ourselves versus being able to join arms and move our sector forward writ large, regardless of our own identity, regardless of where we work, regardless of where we live or what we represent. Ultimately, I said, for me, it's important that we need to focus on our humanity as the connecting tissue, if you will, because arts and culture has been stripped from many of our communities. The speaker just before me talked about there are more of us than we recognize. I think that that is writ large. And so, if I were to put urban and rural, for example, right next to each other, there's more in common in those two areas than we have previously seen. If we focus on what is, in my mind, the lowest common denominator of us all, and then we start to invest in those things that impact all of us at the human level. From an educational perspective, yes, we need that also, which is both longitudinal opportunities, but also current. Then I think that ultimately, if we can, from a civic perspective, bring arts and culture back into these civic dialogues, and we're thinking about things like universal basic income for artists, when we're thinking about health care, we're thinking about housing, all of the things that we hear about fully in the larger context. But somehow or another, we have been annexed from those conversations. I think that more people would also fight for us, because right now we seem too rare and too, in many contexts, others in a "nice-to-have" rather than being essential. Ultimately, I believe we need to focus on all of us, but specifically our humanity and how arts and culture, regardless of how it is expressed, is important. When those investments are driven by all of us and not just forcing us to fight against each other (for resources). I'm really inspired by several folks' work, but I'm really inspired right now by the work of our colleagues around the country who have been working on their own cultural plans, who have recently delivered their cultural plans. We are so close to our first ever. We're within 60 days of delivering our first cultural plan, and I'm very excited about that.



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**Speaker 8:** I said in the last session, I've been thinking a lot about Sweden and the Nordic model. And I think that's relevant here when I think about the strands of work and really what's needed to realize if we're thinking ahead to 2045. I do believe we need more investment in systems and systems work, not just program delivery. I think we do need investment in policy and advocacy work – I know that's music to [Speaker's] ears – so that arts funding is built into the public budgets and treated as a public infrastructure, similar to the Nordic models, where artists receive baseline support through government stipends. There's long-term operating funding for institutions and where cultural policy is integrated into education and workforce systems. I also think that we do need to invest in workforce and labor with fair pay standards, benefits. I can't tell you how many artists -- we serve about 150 every year through [Program] – and that comes up a lot where their career pathways for artists, real strong career pathways for artists and cultural workers so they don't have to get a second job. Really learning from countries like Sweden where artists are recognized as workers with labor protections, not just independent contractors chasing gigs. I think we need more investment in community infrastructure. I'm a big proponent of community, community, community. Publicly supported cultural centers, rehearsal spaces, national digital platforms so that artists can create and distribute work without organizations bearing the full financial risk alone. I say that as a [Position] of a nonprofit organization. I think that kind of shared infrastructure is common in Nordic countries and allows smaller communities and folks in rural areas to stay culturally vibrant. I think if we invest in the narrative and data work also that defines our values beyond the economic impact, which we also have heard a lot about so far, which talks about cultural belonging. I know belonging isn't a new word, but it certainly is a word that is fitting. Cultural belonging, health, and civic participation. I think the Nordic countries get it right that culture is justified, is part of our lives, not just the creative economy. So that's my thoughts as I'm thinking about the actual strands and what we invest in.

**Speaker 9:** As a sector, we can make a stronger case for the arts and for the arts being part of the civic infrastructure that supports education, economic vitality, the workforce development, and just protecting artistic freedom. We're very good at telling some stories, but sometimes we need a sector to have stronger data of the impact. I believe we need to focus on centering the artists and prioritizing artists and it starts not only as civic actors, not only as cultural producers, but artists as civic actors. And recognize that they have a role in strengthening democracy, in bringing communities together, in fostering dialogue, and they can support and help with the divide, the red and blue divide. I would also say that we need investments in public narratives that affirm that the access to the arts is a fundamental human right, and that we need a greater investment in long-term support for artists. That means not only financial, but systemic support that they have access to healthcare, access to a place where they can do their work, and more investment in community-based cultural infrastructure. And in terms of models that inspire this work, I'm inspired by models



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within different foundations that have centered supporting artists, and they have benefited artists, the institutions that are participating in the program, and their communities. A recent one that I really loved was one that the Mellon Foundation did recently where the institution would hire an artist, they would receive a job with benefits and everything, time to do their work, a stipend to do their work. And in turn, they serve their communities and they were being supported during their practice. It's called Creators Rebuild.

**Speaker 10:** It's a joy to be with you all today and hear all these amazing thoughts. I'm actually going to second a lot of what [Speake] just shared, but kind of reiterate it a little bit more in that one of the pieces I think we need to focus on more is we have a lot of data about our success in the economic side of the work, but we don't talk about what would 10% more actually achieve? What would the impact be of more when we spend a lot of time talking about the impact of what already is? I think we focus on what an increase in the future could look like and then drive more investment. The second piece is really around the individual artists. I'm with the [Organization]. We've been funding professional development for artists for 25 years and we are still one of the main funders in the country, and not seeing a lot of others add this on as a core grant, but maybe a component of a grant, but professional development is often overlooked, and not just for artists, but the administrators work with artists who often are the lowest person on the totem pole at the organization and learning as they go. The burnout that comes and the lack of knowledge that they have just as their starting their career and things, I think we need to invest and focus more on professional development and that capacity building. If we were to look at it to say every project grant required a percentage of it to be dedicated in some way for growth and professional development, how much that could ripple for in the work and be a permanent addition to that knowledge base and career building for everyone, not just a short-lived project that ends at the end of the grant.

**Speaker 11:** I really appreciate the Mad Libs style prompt for our discussion today. I was really thinking about the investment in not burning out, burning out and burning through the people who are dedicated to trying to make this work possible, right? Our sector is built on trying to make the world a better place, a more beautiful understanding place. One of the dirty secrets is we do it by burning through people. And so, I would love to see an investment in understanding thriving workplace policies and practices that can be implemented in the one-person organization, the 100-person organization. And I'm particularly inspired by the work of colleagues in B Corps who have found a structure that weights different things around workers and governance and communities. And I'm also inspired by the work of colleagues who are doing hospice work. How do we grieve what's been lost? How do we imagine we're human beings in a time that just came out of pandemic, the world's going sideways, and then we show up to do work. How do we hold all these things



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inside the work that we do to acknowledge that to what end if we don't, as I said, in our last session, have joy, fun, and be human beings doing it.

**Speaker 12:** What I think we need to invest in is some strategic communications research and a collaborative approach to using that research. And I say that because I hear from all of you some great ideas, the importance of policy and advocacy to achieve those ideas, totally agree. Very important to thinking about design. However, data – and this is something I learned the hard way working in DC on policy, both in government and outside of government – data, while it should guide, is not persuasive. It might be persuasive in an individual meeting you're having with a legislator, and you might need it there. You might need a bunch of little bullet points with data. But if we want to, and we need to, change the landscape of public understanding about how important the arts are to our success as a nation and as communities and neighborhoods, we have to reach the public. And data does not reach the public. So to do our policy and advocacy well, we need to understand better what people already think about the arts. How are they thinking about the arts now? What is their default thinking? What is the thinking that the public broadly shares that's getting in the way of our having achieved these kinds of goals ever? Why don't we have more funding for the arts? And understanding how people think about the arts, getting past the barriers that finding new ways to talk about the arts can lead to, obviously, more arts money, more arts participation, broader understanding of the role that the arts already play in our communities and that the arts can make us a healthier, stronger, more connected nation. Some of you know, I have been an advocate of this kind of research for a long time. When I worked at a local arts agency, we commissioned research like this, and it is still in use by lots of people. I think it's still valuable because of the kind of research it is. It's called framing science research. It's not like a poll. It doesn't take a snapshot. It really gets to deeply held beliefs of the public, but it could be updated and it should be updated and it should be done nationally. And I have lots of ideas about how we could do that, but I feel like that is necessary to do the policy and add that you all are advocating.

**Speaker 13:** [Speaker], what you said was very much in alignment on what I've been thinking. And in [Location], we've been working hard on capitalizing artists and the arts ecosystem, because the basic belief that I have is when artists and creatives hold money, the power that comes with money, and I think we need to name power in capitalism, right? And let's be honest about this, no matter how we feel about capitalism, we're in it right now. We have no power to change systems until we have money. That seems to be what happens in capitalism. And so that's what we've been exploring. And when I was thinking about what you had to say, [Speaker 12], I think that those data points are important. And I think a way to compliment them too is we hear all the time about all of these CEOs in – we are working now with a tech transfer model. And so we're thinking about how does biotech work? How do all of these different other kinds of sectors develop talent and bring money into the sector? And I think that we need to align more effectively and devise policy in conjunction with



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people who already have power, but who have recognized that their needs are the same as our needs. We hear the leads of Fortune 500 companies say all the time that they will hire the two things they desire the most – I love this – they look for when they're hiring people are 1) Were they an entrepreneur? 2) Do they have college level classes in the arts? Or were they an arts major? Because there's an acknowledgment that people who have had this are creative thinkers. They think outside the box. They imagine. And [Speaker] said this, and I wrote it down, I think it was in our last session, that AI can only interpret what we already know. But these people are creating what we don't already know. And there's a recognition that these Fortune 500 companies need this talent. And so along with the data points, which I agree, I can throw so much data at people and God knows they just can't, they don't believe it. When we show them data that the arts matter, they simply can't believe it because that's not their worldview. Who will they believe? And we need to align with them, and they need to start elevating our message.

**Speaker 14:** I just wanted to follow [Speaker] and [Speaker] with the limits of data outside the professional sphere for people who are making programmatic decisions or other strategic decisions. What I think we need investment in is a moment that can break through to get attention. Because I feel like there is not a complete pipeline of connection points once people want to know more about how to get involved with the arts, access the arts. But there's a lot in place. But what we lack is the eyeballs and getting through the noise. I think about the alignment of – since it's playoff season – the National Football League with the military. There's no reason military should be doing flyovers at football games. Those things aren't really connected. But somehow, they've become united in people's minds. So, thinking of what could be the art moment that would bring that sort of national attachment to people's arts and culture heritage into their own value system.

**Speaker 15:** I'm very encouraged to hear the focus on artist agency and a lot of different ways and conversations because I think we've focused on institutional shoring up for far too long and without the artist agency in that piece of it, our long-term value as a sector is challenged. And Hollywood is, I work a lot with some of the biggest studios in Hollywood, and they're going to the scale of magnitude is foundationally different, but they're having a lot of the same challenges the non-profit arts are right now. But there seems to be this unhelpful firewall between we're non-profit arts, we don't do the for-profit thing. I don't think that's sustainable for anybody anymore. [Speaker], I love what you were talking about. I think there are others who are not even in for-profit arts, but are in other industries who are having the same challenges from the cultural and technical uncertainty that is being introduced because of artificial intelligence and political upheaval. And we are not moving beyond transactions with those industries. We're still looking at them as sponsors and so forth. And I think that's really missing the bigger opportunity here. And this window won't stay open forever. I think that we have to really focus and put a lot of legacy hauling to the side for a while and look at how we shore up the evolution of artists in this nation. What I see is that we're



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going to end up in a situation where we're allowing other systems that are also deeply challenged with education to take on the responsibility for artist development. I've spent a lifetime in arts and health, and I'm going to say something that probably is an unpopular opinion: I'm not sure that's where we need to be focusing our time. Healthcare at its core is a risk-mitigating sector that does not welcome disruption. I believe that arts are at our very best when we are productively disruptive and entering into modes of working that make the old ways of doing things uncomfortable. I think that's where we're at our best. We need to be tightening up relationships where that kind of activity is welcomed. And there's a lot of industries that that is welcomed in right now that are not as risk controlling as areas like health care are.

**Speaker 2 (Co-Facilitator):** There's a lot of conversation about data specifically on this call and then the sort of investment of data. I think, and [Speaker] may have said this, I think we have a ridiculous amount of data that we don't really know what to do with. I just wanted to dig a little deeper about what investment in data could be in terms of some actual work strands or strategies. What do we need to invest in data knowing that there's a lot of data out there currently?

**Speaker 6:** In terms of the data question, what [Speaker] said also made me think about a conversation about who we should be learning from in terms of messaging and the sandboxes we should be in. Sometimes the sandboxes are not natural or comfortable for us. But if you look nationally at the advocates who have the most impact, they're not always aligned with our sector, but they're really good at what they do. So, is there something that we could be learning from hiring their lobbying firms or taking input from them about what they think people want to hear about the arts? We can filter that through our own lenses, of course, like we're not going to just repeat talking points that we don't agree with. But I think there's something important to learn from thinking of ourselves as bigger players, like we should have the same lobbying firm as the tobacco industry and ExxonMobil. That's just a starting point; we need to be playing at that level. And I think it's important framing. I'll just add for data too, though, that is something we're so guilty of – we're constantly bringing spreadsheets to a gunfight, right? It's a bad metaphor, but nobody wants to hear our data points. They don't care. They haven't worked yet. We've been saying them for 40 years. So the conversation about what we do need to be saying I think is much more important right now.

**Speaker 14:** I just wanted to circle back quickly on healthcare, to not maybe close the door on that just yet. Some of the clinical work in [Location] – we have an enormous med center here and having a playlist for patients being removed from ventilators is now the standard of care at the hospital because of the arts coming in and disrupting that standard of care with this new standard. If you're not successful the first time on a ventilator, the odds go down very fast if you ever get off of it. They have done things like that with replacing mood stabilizing drugs with customized playlists and



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things like that that are showing just enormous success. I think relating back to traditional healing methods that are really at the core of arts belonging to us innately, that there may be opportunity there.

**Speaker 16:** I think we need to have this big tent organizing agenda and the ability to implement it in our various communities on this coordinated effort. It may look a little bit different depending upon if we're rural, suburban, urban, and the hyper-local challenges we face, but I think we all have a lot of similarities. So just really thinking about how we all get on the same page, move in the same direction, and really be kind of a powerful force to be reckoned with. I think in my last group, I heard a great conversation that's like, artists and cultural bearers, we have the power to shape society, shape the narrative. And how can we build our collective power in relationship with our communities and really advance change that we desperately need? I think one way of doing it is deeper investment in the artists, like so much has been shared, community-based organizations, but also having the ability to invest in networks in taking the time to show up, right? I feel like this is a privilege. I can take four hours of my day and know my organization's still here where some of my colleagues, where if they're a single staff or shop, don't have that same ability. Or independent artists, they're not working these four hours. So just thinking through how we invest in a way that we can all show up and participate, I think is really critical, and just have really coordinated efforts.

**Speaker 13:** I just keep thinking of the concept of an earworm. What I'm hearing in both sessions is we need to change hearts and minds, and there's a lot of different people who need to hear that message. What's the earworm? What is that that we can throw out that ends up sticking to the most number of people?

**Speaker 1 (Facilitator):** It reminded me, there's a woman named Carri Twigg who was a communication person who was in the Obama White House and was doing a lot of work in Denver around collaborative programming [that] explored the African diaspora in the Americas. So, what are the connections which don't often get made between Mexico, Colombia, Brazil, US that were rooted in slavery and that legacy? But her work now has [become] more [focused] in the commercial media world. And how do we use those platforms of media to tell stories and convey values in the marketplace, but that change hearts and minds? And part of her message, too, is looking not just at making films or TV shows, but how do we really focus on strategies like what we're talking about here on YouTube and TikTok and the kind of short form videos that are increasingly how people are consuming information and media? And we have not been so good at delivering our content in that format. Therefore, we've been losing some of the ability to influence folks, particularly younger people that others have been much better at. I just throw that out there. She has shared recently in the context more of larger advocacy and progressive work, but I think it's relevant also to what we're talking about relative to arts and culture too.



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**Speaker 2 (Co-Facilitator):** I would also say just on the health side of things, I think one of the things that has been most inspirational to me in terms of progressive policy for a field that has both direct benefit, but also opens up a new revenue stream is the social prescribing work that has happened, I think most notably in Massachusetts. I think looking at those types of policies is important for us to look at on a state-by-state and potentially on a federal level how we help to support that work. I would also say along the health side that in terms of messaging and communications, and I think our need, I think to [Speaker's] point, to really understand what types of arguments we need to be making. There is some evidence coming from new research that was specifically done on conservative and Republicans, that the health argument is the most effective. As we think about what is going to be the most relevant to a broad group of people, I do think that the health part of this is something that we need to continue to invest in because I think people of all stripes see the benefit in the arts as a sort of health modality.

**Speaker 1 (Facilitator):** One of the themes that came up earlier, and I know we talked about a little bit here, is also on the data and research side. That so much of the data and research has been focused on data as a lobbying tool, data on economic impact, and not enough on impact on our humanity, data that helps organizations in how they run, how they operate, how they become more stable, how they thrive, how they serve their mission better, because we've been so focused on one type of data. Not that that data is not important, but it's just one piece of the case-making that we need to do. To the point [Speaker] raised, also the need to think beyond quantitative and look at the qualitative, and look at storytelling, and look at messaging. And again, because we kept being told, well, where's the data? Where's the data about the arts? We worked so hard to build that data. I think now we realize that a lot of the data we've gathered is necessary but not sufficient to make the full argument. There's a lot more. I agree there's a lot more that we need to do there.

**Speaker 10:** Often, we say things like art is at the heart of the work we do. But the challenge is how often do we pause to feel our own heartbeat when it's just going on until we have a medical emergency? Then we question what's going on with our own heartbeat. How do we get to that point that we encourage folks to realize how much the arts are core in what we do and just accept it as part of our lives. Back in previous lives, previous jobs, I used to have to do the [Organization's] presentation for the annual fund, and I always had to speak right after the person who did the [Organization] ask. They would get up and they would talk about the homeless people that they helped and the jobs people got and that kind of stuff. And then they would say, okay, great, I'll have [Speaker] come up and talk about why we should fund the arts. And so, the conversation had to become: How did you wake up today? What did you do for entertainment? How do you engage with folks around things? Where's the music in your life? What books have you read lately? And it was only then that you started seeing people go, oh, I do a lot in the arts. I don't just go to the opera. I engage in all these different ways. So often we aren't good at engaging with folks in all the



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different ways arts are so part of what they do if they haven't bought a ticket or gone somewhere to then be tallied into the economic numbers and those kinds of things.

- **Speaker 1 (Facilitator):** There's a kind of definitional challenge what we communicate around what the arts are. And to so many folks, they think about the arts with a capital A, that they must be somehow big or elitist or it's not for me, without really acknowledging that art is a part of their lives because we define it in a way that seems exclusive.

**Speaker 3:** I think part of a national strategy as we move forward has got to be the identification of key partners. We keep talking about the arts as though we're the only ones that do it. [Speaker] just pointed out that we all do it every day, all the time. Without even thinking about it. But there are so many people I've heard mention arts and health, there are people doing work in that field. There are people doing work in social prescription. There are people that are doing work in arts and military. There are people doing work in rural communities. There are people doing this work and we cannot do it by ourselves. The strategy has to involve identifying those critical partnerships and really grabbing a hold of them and engaging with them.

**Speaker 15:** On the arts and health, nobody's going to argue that arts and health is bad. I want to be clear that's not what I was saying. What I was saying for us to grow, we cannot always be making the argument that we're a cheaper version of clinical health care. It would be very easy for us to let ourselves get backed into that corner because it's where a lot of this work (is) punted into an HR (context), even when we go into industry. HR is a cost setter and a risk mitigating part of a company. Those investments are made foundationally different than the growth part of the company. I think we've made the cost-saving (argument) very well over the last 25 years. Where's our growth producing case studies? I think just what I'm suggesting is 10, 20% of our work needs to be about producing those with the same rigor that we've produced the cost saving piece on the outside.

- **Speaker 3:** I have this conversation with artists. Look, I love the arts, but they are not going to cure your cancer. When we as artists and the arts community collaborate with the medical community, we must adopt the same theory, which is that we do no harm. And so, we are definitely a component. There's lots of studies that support that having arts makes communities as well as individuals healthier. But I have a caveat whenever this subject comes up.
- **Speaker 15:** [Speaker], you brought up the ACORP. I think we need to be really careful about things like that. That's platform capitalism. That's the middleman type of organization I'm talking about that takes an arbitrage opportunity, owns the audience relationship, and bears none of the risk for the creation of the art, and still it's the artist that bears that risk. I think we need to be careful to make sure the language and the actual structures and operations of these things that sound good actually increase artist agency. Because at the



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end of the day, that's what my goal is, and that's what I'm after: more power for the artist, less risk.

## Group 11 Chat

1. I believe we need to focus on how Governments (Municipal/county/state) prioritize the Arts Ecosystem (understanding where it sits in the Mayor/County Exec/Governor funding priority list - and how it is viewed in relation to their economic development initiatives). I believe we need more investment in Art Education & a Universal Basic Income for Artists. I am inspired by the work of Sandra Bloodworth
    a. +1 to priority in investing in Arts Education. If we do that, it will affect rural and urban populations and has the power of building not just artists and creative businesses, but a voting block that supports arts and culture.
    b. It feels like an easy lift, compared to some of the things we want to accomplish. We can get the assistance of high-powered business leaders at all kinds of levels to show vocal support. They want to hire kids who have had strong arts education
    c. The data shows that arts = wellness. A crucial tool in our toolkits that we all need and can use. This can look like attending paid performances or events or simply like doodling or humming. This is data we, as arts orgs/artists, can share, amplify, support!

2. I believe we need to focus on who bears the real, multidimensional risk (personal, cultural, economic, etc.) for creating the art – it's still mostly the artists – but artist agency (many drivers here) is decreasing while new layers of "middle-man" type orgs are starting to pop up, capture a financial arbitrage opportunity while reinforcing existing power dynamics of platform capitalism built around audience "ownership" without taking on any of the development risk - need to shift the stance of marketing and presenting orgs not seeing themselves as part of the creation/development process. I believe we need more investment in rethinking how the risk and reward can be more evenly distributed across the creation-marketing-presenting value chain. Though magnitude / scale differs greatly, for profit (e.g., Hollywood) and nonprofit arts both share similar challenges around this. And must continue creating while metabolizing uncertainty, working within managed instability and all the creative loss and innovation grief that comes with this territory. Long term value creation and growth depends on figuring this out. Part of this should also include RADICALLY reimagining the relationship between arts+ industry. This will likely be very uncomfortable work (power dynamics) but the historic transactional nature of industry support has shifted and must be addressed differently than in the past. Especially



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in light of uncertainty from the pace of technological change and instability of governmental support.

3. The research: https://topospartnership.com/portfolio-item/the-arts-as-a-public-good/
4. I believe we need to focus on embedding creativity across all levels of public systems -- education, health, transportation, community development, economic planning and more so that creative work shapes how decisions are made and resources are allocated.
5. I believe we (need) to focus on developing a big tent agenda for our sector that incorporates so much of what has been shared. As part of the process, we need to do power mapping, have the agenda that includes policies, we need to organize, understanding power mapping, and have playbooks that can be implemented in our local communities in a coordinated manner. I believe we need more investments in artists as [Speaker] mentioned, community-based arts and cultural orgs, and networks so we are in relationship with one another.
6. I would love if people called our sector "productively disruptive"! Best thing ever!
7. I'm not sure if we need more data, but we need leaders to create a multi-ecosystem story from the data, so we're all working together telling the same stories. Think about the power of all of our voices, and the voices of our constituents and our allies, sharing stories that have the same ending???
8. Comms framing science research can identify the ear worm. That's what it does - find the big idea that works to move the public to support our policy goals—across ideology and geography.
9. Social prescription scan recently published in the Journal of Applied Gerontology by Sudha Shreeniwas, University of North Carolina.
10. (Highlighting) health and arts comms framing science research - for AFTA. How to communicate about arts and health for broad public support. Here it is: https://topospartnership.com/portfolio-item/the-arts-as-a-public-good/
11. For health and wellness info ... if you want to do some homework is to look at NOAH (National Organization on Arts and Health).
12. If we had all the money we wanted - what would be different for people?
13. We need a big cultural moment. I believe the sector needs a large-scale cultural moment, such as a national concert or collective artistic action, that tells the story of the arts in a



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way people can feel, not just understand. By offering a shared experience and an "earworm" that stays with audiences, artists can help shift hearts and minds, making visible a vision of the arts as essential civic infrastructure and a unifying force across political divides.

14. We need to stop being the "lone ranger" and finding our allies, partners, and collaborators across the nation.

15. I was impressed to learn from Michael Bobbitt about Mass Cultural Council's CultureRx program: https://massculturalcouncil.org/communities/culturerx-initiative/ This makes a direct and tangible connection between arts and wellness!

16. The word Arts is abstract to many and can be a barrier

17. For those who might be interested in sifting through B Corp data, B Lab's database allows you to see the breakdown of Impact Scores across their measurement areas, including Career Development, Engagement & Satisfaction, etc. https://www.bcorporation.net/en-us/find-a-b-corp/company/every-bit-counts/
    a. Have you followed the work around creating a A-Corp structure (Artist Corporation)?



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# GROUP 12

## Group 12 Transcript

**Speaker 1:** I'll just start with something I did share in the last session, which is the way we talk, there's the thinking and the feeling brain and us artists and practitioners of this work, we tend to be big feelers. The challenge with that is our discipline around socialization, around messaging, around sticking to a strategy, playing offense versus defense. I think we need to really focus on that. What is our messaging that is both global and that can be translated into our various geographies, disciplines, all of that? What is the pervading message? Because so far, it's been that our sector is dying and starving. That needs to shift, maybe even shift before it becomes a reality on the ground. Because that's sort of how socialization works. I think that's where we need to focus.

- **Speaker 2 (Facilitator):** Would you like to share any thoughts you might have on?

- **Speaker 1:** I think a big question is, what is the governing body? What are we leveling up to? Or is it guidance from an... I think it's sort of understanding what the overall structure is that is the umbrella that's governing us. I don't have any answers. That's just another question.

**Speaker 3:** Echoing some of what [Speaker] just touched upon, I do think we need a sustained long-term national campaign. In the previous breakout room, someone talked about taking a historically accurate account of our learnings and failures as a field. I just think back to my own experiences 20 years ago as a younger maker, hearing about the culture wars of the 1980s when that was a time when I was being affected by things as a kid in [Location], not necessarily knowing why I didn't necessarily have access to arts education programs. Then someone asked, what sectors have gotten it right? Clearly the sustained narrative investments that have been made by the right and certain factors in this country, which is throwing a lot of spaghetti against the wall, less worried about metrics and data points is something we have not done in our field. So sustained national narrative with some cohesion but understanding that we have to make that investment. Secondly, just to follow the prompts, what we need more of in terms of investment, I would say is artistic research and development and arts education programming. Just access to thinking about and crafting stories, responses that incorporate your local artists or hobbyists who bring a creative edge to a particular room, hall, the like. In that regard, I'm inspired by the work of Sip Culture, which is based in a small town in Mississippi, Utica, Mississippi, which has a population of 900 people to be exact. And as an artistically creatively driven community development center, they take a very slow, deliberate, and hyper-local approach to what they build and how they build it. They're on a pathway



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to sustainability and revitalization in that particular town, which is a microcosm of what us have witnessed or experienced across the country from a place perspective.

**Speaker 4:** I'd like to talk about education in a really broad sense, that we need to focus on educating the infrastructure from school boards to legislators to teachers, artists, so they can sustain themselves for livelihoods to complement their artistic practice as well as furthering their artistic practice. Institutions, so they hire artists and they're trained in roles that complement their core practice, their ownership of their property, and IP rights. The public has to be educated to the role of the arts in society. To accomplish this, I think we need to invest in communicating that importance to both benchmarking it ourselves to agree upon sharing the data to see how we're moving toward this, but also in cost management techniques that span cities and partnerships, advocacy for our mission along the lines of classic things like anti-smoking, but geared towards support of the arts, legal defense, bringing in agencies that help support when we're threatened with censorship or repression. Teachers' unions, university departments must be incorporated to (foreground) the importance of what we're doing and government lobbyists have to be invested in and connections to the world outside the US. So, I see a whole range of education and communication.

**Speaker 5:** I work as an independent artist. I believe we need to focus on accountability to representative publics because that will inherently decentralize cities as the primary focus of where support is moving and allow us to begin working in a more lateralized ecosystem that I think is critical to the health of our nation. I believe we need to focus on cross-sector audiences. I'm particularly pumped personally about thinking about the sports sector and the arts sector. I think I said in the last session, I'm not so interested in the form of democracy we practice. I think there are other forms all over the world that are way more interesting, but the form we practice had sporting arenas and theaters next to each other where people voted, and I think that's critical social infrastructure for the form of democracy that we practice even into today. I'm inspired by the kind of new hyper-local sports advertising platforms that some of the general managers of sports teams have gotten together and started investing in. It could be used beautifully to move information in hyper-local ways while continuing to have kind of global exchange. I believe we need to focus on new financial models to extract ourselves from the development aid, money laundering, 501c3 structure. I think everything needs to be thought of as impact investment. I hope that we can extract from institutional permanence as inherent success and begin defining success in other ways. And I think that if we collectively emphasize impact, we are our richness and the actual bounty of resources that we all work in. Money is one resource in the ecosystem that moves culture in our country. And I would say it's the weakest. I am inspired by the work of guaranteed income models that really think about cultural labor and labor across the country together. I find that work that's going on right now very inspiring. The third thing for me is I believe we need to focus on



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intersections of education, health, and the arts, because I believe in wellness for the many, not the few. And I am inspired by the lobbying work that happened around the science funders, where all these funders who are about hard science got together and on a dime lobbied in government and saved that $50 billion in Congress. It was the one save that happened. I think that it was a bunch of funders who got together who worked together fast in ways that they do not traditionally work and had a triumph. And I think that is wildly inspiring in the times that we're in.

**Speaker 6:** As I think about 20 years in the future, I can't help but continue to focus on the lack of government support that we're experiencing today – and while I don't anticipate there being any shift in the next three years with the current administration – the idea that our government could infuse our industry in ways that it used to infuse the scientific community and the education community to create major change. The comparison of science is the federal government invested in space exploration. We ended up sending people to the moon in the 60s. That would not have happened, the development of the internet would not have happened, for better or for worse, of course, but would not have happened without government investment. Trying to think beyond the current administration, continuing to make that case that the arts are an essential part of our, not just our country, but of the culture in our world, and is worthy of becoming an actual hard cost and not an optional cost within our budget. Again, pie in the sky thinking, I get it, but the luxury of thinking 20 years down the road of what would we like to see, that's what I'd like to see. I believe we need to focus on changing that perspective from government, which starts local, you know, local communities, into state, into federal, and trying to continue that lobbying. For years, we have all, in all our organizations and efforts, we've been trying to expand audiences and continue to discuss how do we state the case for the importance of our work and get people to buy in. That conversation hasn't changed. I've been having that same conversation for almost 40 years in the nonprofit arts sector. Pockets of personalization within the community, the range of work that we offer is what opened us up, but there's been nothing that I can put my finger on that says here was the silver bullet for us. It's an ongoing challenge. I continue to be inspired by the work of NIVA. I don't know if any of you became members of National Independent Venue Association back in 2020 at the onset of COVID. It was an organization that coalesced very rapidly because all of us who were presenters at the time and producers, everybody was losing money because we were all closed. This organization coalesced very rapidly and ultimately was responsible for getting the SVOG Act passed in Congress. Now that would never happen today, of course, but the speed and the advocacy with which NIVA formed and executed was amazing. And I love the concept. I think that's what this conversation today is about. For me, there are similarities to when NIVA started and the conversations we were having about how we are going to get through this. I'm already hearing and feeling some similarities here.



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**Speaker 7:** Something I'm thinking about is my belief in where we need to focus and also trying to be pragmatic about the climate we're living in. I really love the idea of trying to move toward universal earned income for really everyone in the country, but also very much for artists and for valuing culture workers more than we do right now. I love that model and I want to hold that vision. I think pragmatically to get there, we need more people in our country, in our society to understand or believe the arts are benefiting them so that then they're willing to pay for it. Because right now there's this like, oh, I don't want to pay for someone's salary, right? Like I see that, I hear that the people who I grew up with in my conservative hometown (who) don't see the arts as benefiting them, so they don't want to pay for it. This is so much larger than the arts, but I do believe we need to invest in bringing arts closer to more people so people can understand. So, it's an education piece, but it's also very much an advocacy piece so that more community spaces where things are much more accessible, where there's less of a divide You're not having to just go to the city to go see and experience the arts. You can get it closer. There are so many good organizations that are doing this in the communities, but I think there needs to be even more investment there by the larger sector so that we see that not just for those communities, but it's going to benefit the wider ecosystem.

**Speaker 8:** So many great and inspiring ideas, to piggyback on just a few of them: using research from other fields, it's something we talked about in the first breakout session I was in. For example, all of the health and wellness research that's coming out right now and the fact that it's it is good for you to see works of art or experiencing art in person. Getting back to the point of I really believe that we need to focus on messaging and find our way in to other spaces like [Speaker] suggested, like working with local art sports and gyms and get to where people are so that they see wellness holistically, mind and body. Critical to mental and mind health is creativity and spaces for creativity and practice, whether you're a big A artist or someone who is just engaging in creativity as a practice of being human. I don't know how we invest in that. I'm interested to think about that and what people have said here. But this notion: creativity and art is key to the health of humanity. From that, everything builds: civic cultures, communities, wellness, well-being, everything. I'm inspired by the way by small, local, hyper-local organizations that are doing that. I see it in little historic house museums. I'm based in [Location]. I see it in small museums. I see it in partnerships that are being created. For example, getting art kits distributed through food pantries or Meals on Wheels, getting outlets for creativity into the hands of people who might be homebound, who aren't coming out, who aren't able to access, and I'd like to see more of that scaled.

- **Speaker 1**: I'm going to say something that may be a little prickly: we need a stronger value proposition. That's what I heard (in) what you said. I think we need to reframe (whether) we need mission and vision statements? Are they valuable? I've seen too many from organizations that are just too similar and it doesn't speak really to the transformational



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power of music. Sure, and what else? It's not immediate, and it's not to the moment. We lose that immediacy with our community because I believe that our original sin and [Speaker], I think you've said this, the original sin was that nonprofits were built to live off the margins of our economy. We were built with philanthropy. That was, we should have never been the oil baron's side project. Emil Kang put up a great op-ed recently about just stop making more nonprofits, do away with the fact that we are predominantly (funded by) contributed revenue, the US dollar is going down, not up. We need to think about the whole model differently. Again, [Speaker] sorry, I don't have a good example of what that looks like, aside from just being in Europe and seeing how much the public and the government obviously carries the day there. But that, of course, is our current problem. I would just love if anyone has ideas of how do you fully reshape a business model? Do we lobby for something that is not a 501c3, that we push folks to start investing in that? Doing things like an opera company that also can own, casino and get earned revenue there. I mean, just wild, crazy things that don't lead us in that starvation modality to rely on contributed revenue. I think we've got to get (away from) that.

- **Speaker 2 (Facilitator):** I'll also add here that I do think that we are creeping back into the first prompt around vision and kind of want to redirect us of thinking about what do we need, what type of work, what workflows or however you want to describe for yourself to be able to achieve these visions. If you put an idea on the table, then, just walk us through a little bit about what that looks like if that workflow is to be put in action.

**Speaker 9:** I would love to see more investment in professional development for arts administrators, namely because I've worked in other industries – banking, food and beverage – and on the corporate end, there's just a lot of money spent in developing talent, early talent, mid-career talent, senior executive talent. For as much focus as we have on developing talent of our creatives, the folks that are managing the work from an operations perspective, administrative perspective, need as much investment. I'll say also briefly, in thinking about how this convening came together, it was by folks who volunteered to do it. And what if we had the infrastructure and the resources invested in keeping these tables together so that arts administrators feel supported? I think we put a lot of focus on the creative side, which is important, but there's also the business side of the work that needs development.

**Speaker 10:** I lead the research at the [Organization], but across three areas, and the arts is one of them. But we also work in youth development and other spaces where there's a very similar conversation about the value proposition and looking to other fields, nursing being one of them, of where the whole discussion about the value of the work and consequently how nurses are compensated – it actually did shift and that's a whole other conversation – but I just want to say that there are some parallels in other fields. What I'm hearing is calling for a campaign that maybe



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has a five, eight, 10 horizon. There are just so many parts of the sector, right? And so, building on what you just said, [Speaker], there's arts administrators, there's also artists, there's also universities that are preparing people in the arts and in arts administration. There are nonprofits, there are LLCs. There's so many different dimensions to the sector, the ecosystem, and the problems and questions and challenges are slightly different, related but different. That's where I feel to move the needle, there needs to be this consortium that can map out: so there's a narrative change strategy, there's a compensation strategy, there's a nonprofit/arts organization strategy. I guess I'm just struck by, it's easy to say, how do you do that? It does seem like it takes all of these folks that are on this call and elsewhere, and it takes some leadership for people to put together the outline of a plan and then to get philanthropy to fund that part with a long-term vision of getting into the cigarette tax or the this tax or that tax and shifting to government funds. Because philanthropy is just a drop in the bucket. It can't do anything in the long run, but it can get something like that started. What I wonder is if some folks – and maybe it's the organizers of this meeting – can get behind mapping out that campaign. We have so many differences in terms of what we do and where we are and what we care about, but that's where people can find the part of that campaign that they want to contribute to and be a part of. Maybe I'm just saying what the organizers of this call had in mind. But I just want to say that the coordination functions with a time horizon just seems like the missing piece. Because I feel like not only a lot of what we're all talking about, there are conversations in other fields, but also there are not new conversations, as we all know. Moving the needle requires a new way of approaching the problem. Last thing I'll say, I am aware of a couple of these kinds of initiatives. There's a new one I was just hearing about called Next Ladder, which is not in the arts, but it's workforce with AI and there are other kinds of moments where people are getting behind what are seen as pressing problems of practice. I think there are funders out in the world that would support this thinking around the arts.

- **Speaker 2 (Facilitator):** I certainly would say I agree with you there, and especially as we're talking about what it means to move the needle and start to think about how this work moves forward. Just a couple of things that I would offer is I think about what it means to map out the ecosystem. We talk about so many different parts of it. How do we begin to bring a lot of work that has been happening across our sector into greater focus and purpose? Then I think about the artists and their careers and the pathways that they have for their own personal viability and what that means for communities around the country. I think a lot about technology and those workflows and, of course, what's happening with AI – can't fight against that tide that is coming and going. And then the last one I continue to think about is money, the capital that our field needs, and what's the workflows around securing funding that and sources that are much more reliable, as we've all been dealing with.



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**Speaker 11:** I'll just piggyback on that around the funding stream, because that's the world that I live in, fundraising for the arts. I said this in the last room, that I would like to see our sector explore a national arts fundraising campaign from individuals and business and foundations. Not saying that we shouldn't advocate for government support, but I think we've never gotten to a level of organizing across the country, making the case, having the right narrative. I think that is possible. I think there's so much work that's been done around the narrative. We just have to synthesize it, create toolkits, create networks, of foundations and corporations and local arts agencies, and come out like Earthshare did in the year 2000 and be visible. It may take decades to raise a lot of money, but we haven't, to my knowledge, tried that.

- **Speaker 12 (Facilitator):** Let's say hypothetically, if you were able to have a great national campaign, raise a billion dollars or billions of dollars, what are the structures we need to decide? Who manages the money? Who gets the money? Is it state level? Is it local level? How does the [disbursement] look?
- **Speaker 11:** Obviously, the magic is in the answer to that question. I don't know that I have a suggestion today, but I can tell you how we do it at [Organization]. We run several hundred workplace giving campaigns, the largest one being [Company]. We're also in [Company] and all the way down to the local public library. We also administer the workplace giving campaigns for geographies of our corporate partners elsewhere. We run an arts campaign on behalf of [Company] in [Location] because [Company] owns [Company]. And then we do all the administration, provide the tools, the resources for [Company]. And then collect the money and send it to our foundation partner in [Location], which has changed a couple times. But then that partner determines through their own grantmaking process where those local dollars go. We do that with [Company] in different parts of the country. We do it with several [Industry] firms and [Industry] firms that are based in different parts of [Location]. It's something that I would love to figure out how to expand and really work with corporations that have multi-city presences to create a campaign structure around the arts that they would have at the highest corporate level, rather than having to say, "oh, we don't do an arts campaign here because," and I hear that a lot. That's how I have thought about it and tried to put it into practice as a test case scenario of how you would do multi-city fundraising for the arts from a single place.
- **Speaker 13:** There are a couple of cities, very few, including Milwaukee, that have a United Arts Fund. Milwaukee benchmarks against Cincinnati [and vice versa]. [These are] the only two [cities] in the country that have a collective arts fund of this size. That's one of the reasons why [Location] is one of the most stable cities in the country when it comes to arts and culture, number three on a per capita basis in terms of private philanthropy and arts and culture. This comes from Northwestern Mutual, Wisconsin Energies, Rockwell



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Automation, all in all and I think it can be replicated at a national level, like a United Way for the Arts.

**Speaker 12 (Facilitator):** [With Organization] the predominance of the money that was raised went to the opera, went to like four or five places. When a new director came in and said, "Hey, we need to make this more equitable. We need to fund arts in the community. We need to fund arts that look like our community, the diversity of our community," all of a sudden, the funding went down because people's pet projects weren't getting funded at the same level they were in prior years. Folks with capacity were like, "well, if the opera and the orchestra aren't getting this level of funding, then I'm going to pull back my funding."

- **Speaker 11:** That's just one scenario, one community's experience.
- **Speaker 12 (Facilitator):** How do you protect from that?
- **Speaker 11:** First you have to recognize how this grew up. In [Organization's] case, it's grown up over a century. And UPath is what, 30, 40 years old? There's a lot of history and inequity over that period. But that has been acknowledged in the United Arts Fund field across the country. It's imperfect as anything but there are ways to create a much more equitable system. [Organization] went from that same thing in the 1950s, funded eight organizations, and today we have 50 operating grant recipients and an open process that more can come to the table. Yes, that does mean that folks get less sometimes, as more come to the table. But that's not to say that we can't do it. But that's on all of us to then try to raise more money. So again, imperfect, but acknowledging the history and figuring out what is future forward. And yeah, there will always be those donors who say, "I want to fund whatever," and they can and they should, right? We're trying to gather the dollars from the people who believe that the arts do exist. Impact education and healthcare and pick your other industry, those donors appreciate the economic vibrancy and social cohesion that the arts promote. That is research-based, that insight. That's who we target, those people who appreciate the arts for their economic value and social cohesion, not necessarily because they're passionate about a particular art form. That's creating a whole different market for philanthropy, small amounts at a time. Although we have large donors too. We've developed an app that is a comprehensive arts and entertainment and sports calendar. You can download it. The whole idea is to eventually make your arts support as forgettable as your $9.99 Spotify subscription. If you become a member in the app, you can access a whole lot of benefits, complimentary tickets, exclusive experiences, things like that, trying to create a digital community of people interested in being in community, whatever your art form or sports team is. But appreciate that so much that you're going to kind of be on automatic pilot as we all are for so many things in the digital world. So that's our great experiment. We do intend to white label it at some point when we get it developed appropriately, but's



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already old news as technology changes. It's without workplace giving, without giving in religious institutions, without having alumni networks that higher ed has – what's the way that the arts get to a large marketplace? We have to somehow create that marketplace for philanthropy.

**Speaker 14:** I'm the [Title] of the Arts and Science Council in [Location], which has really now become more of a local arts agency, because unlike in [Location], our corporate giving campaigns really after the Great Recession tanked. I think [Speaker] brings up an interesting point, right? There's a historic inequity in these organizations and that is real. I can't deny that. When I joined the organization was really on the same path that [Organization] was on about how do we open up the process to include more organizations. We were doing that in a context where I think similar to what you've described about [Organization] in [Location], I would say there was correlation, but it wasn't causation, right? Coming into the organization, we're shrinking as we were trying to make sure more organizations could have access to those resources. I think the place where I'm struggling in this conversation is – as I talk to my colleagues around the country, recognizing that [Organization] looks very different than [Organization], which looks very different than [Organization] – and this, for me, there is this tension in saying, "what is our national conversation?" And I recognize we're on a call today to be thinking about this from a national perspective. I find that there is a lot of freedom that each of our sister organizations across the country gets to do this work in a local context. I'm not trying to create a photocopy of [Organization] in [Location]. We're all doing this in different ways and I think that's okay. Let's say this national fund was to turn the National Endowment for the Arts instead of not really an endowment into an actual endowment. I don't know that that's a solution that's compelling to me. I think there's so much opportunity for us to work in the local context and say what's right for [Location] is going to look different than what's right for [Location]. The thing that I've walked away from in this, and I've learned as I talk to community members, is there are a lot of us that are deeply resentful of those old workplace giving campaigns. They remember their managers sitting over their shoulder and twisting their arms saying, "No, you've got to give this much to the United Way and to the Arts and Science Council." So, I lowered my hands because I didn't want this to become the trials and tribulations of the United Arts Funds and local arts agencies across the country. But I'll end with that, in this piece of we're trying to have a conversation about what this should look like on the national level, I'll say that I find it deeply rewarding that all of us who are working in a local level get to do this in different and exciting ways. I find a lot of freedom in that for our organization.

- **Speaker 11:** I totally agree. I don't think it's either/or. But local is where it's at for sure in this disconnected world that somebody noted.
- **Speaker 14:** The other thing I'll add, just from our experiences, if the prompt is really about what we are, what should we be focusing on in this? I think one of the successes our



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organization has had as we have transitioned so much is we've really focused on how we become a grant maker that is serving individual artists. Our community, without getting into it, because I don't have my slides, has had a very complicated couple of years as far as what does local arts funding look like, and our organization stopped administering operating support grants for a couple of years as that switched over to the city government and really was able to focus on how do we support individual artists first and building a grant making infrastructure that allowed us to meet artists at different points of their career. I think for our city, that was important because of this historic inequity. We have to acknowledge that our organizations were designed first and foremost to serve nonprofit arts organizations and that individual artists got left out of those processes. And so, we really focused for the last four years on saying, how do we leverage the new resources that are available to us primarily through local government to target directly towards individual artists? I always joke that [Location] is the quintessentially American city and that it is a city that has been shaped by the corporate sector in the corporate sector's own image. The banks consolidating is what has created the city. The banks invested in the arts because they saw it as a tool of workforce development. And now the local arts agency's task is to say, we have this real creative community. How do we now resource the creative community from that grassroots level? And I'm left wondering what this community would look like if 30 years ago we had been doing that work instead of really starting it five years ago.

**Speaker 4:** Thinking about the NEA and how it would distribute across all 50 states to libraries, to individual organizations, unfortunately never individual artists, but also state and local public art, that distribution mechanism is in place because you all know your local ecosystems. So, to create a new network via a national fund that is essentially private, where we forget about our subscription of $10 a month. And I love all of that. I think it's just a *both/ and*. And I would also include community foundations in terms of their ability to also respond to the hyperlocal and being very familiar with their ecosystems as points of distribution.

**Speaker 13:** My viewpoint on this has changed over my career. I worked in Los Angeles, Washington, DC, and London, and then I moved to [Location]. I moved from hyper liberal mega cities into the bellwether state. Ohio might be the bellwether state, Pennsylvania might be the bellwether state. But if we're truly looking at accomplishing something on a national basis, particularly when it comes to public policy or public funding, we're going to have to look through multiple viewpoints. That is going to be the way to our success. Because hyperlocal viewpoints, what works for Washington, DC, and New York, it's not going to be what resonates here. When I go in to sit down and I talk to Senator [Name], I am not using the talking points that I would do if I were sitting down with Mamdani, and we've got to figure out what unites us all.



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**Speaker 4:** Plus one on [Speaker] messaging points that have to be very distinct and specific based on place, but also the big tent and the umbrella and the meta-narrative. If I could put you on the spot, [Speaker], one of the things we were talking about was campaign work and sort building narrative. I was thinking in that part of the conversation about creative labor, creative conditions. Could you talk a little bit about that?

- **Speaker 15:** The [Organization] has been working on really trying to think about our unrestricted support to individual artists. It's paid out over seven years so we realized it's a bit of a guaranteed income pilot if you want to think of it that way. Then in order to figure out how we could advocate that every artist have access to the kind of social safety net that the type of support provides, we established something we're calling the [Campaign] annually. This year we'll be in seven different cities across the country. We're looking to fund and partner with organizations who want to host these local conversations about what are the conditions that artists need to thrive here in this place? And then to be a link to hook those local conversations into a national work and movement. We're also going to be doing some grant making. Every May 1st, we'll announce grants to other institutions and organizations in this country who are working aligned with creative labor, creative conditions to advocate for artists' conditions and to propose new models for artists to thrive in the country. But I think all of what you are talking about – artist-led is the number one goal here. I think that there are funder conversations happening around labor, cultural policy, how do we coordinate? I'm really interested in figuring out how to make this an artist-led conversation and how to get individual artists the support that they need to determine the narrative of what some of these priorities are going to be. And then to build an infrastructure of movement building around that. If anybody wants to get involved in creative labor, hit me up. But also, really happy to hear what you all are doing to see how we can support. Thanks, [Speaker]. We'll also pose a question to the room about urgency and really trying to figure out these calls. Let's do some [expletive]. And let's do some [expletive] today and how to help ignite [things], that feels really important.
- **Speaker 4:** I love the last part, let's do some [expletive]. So, thank you, Speaker. I'm going to repeat that. I just wonder what our campaign after Labor Day would potentially look like knowing that there's a concentrated effort on the part coming from this one particular foundation. What would be the post-Labor Day campaign? And for what period that would be strategic and allow for a level of concentration and focus and messaging, dovetailing back to some of what Speaker and Speaker were touching upon.

**Speaker 6:** I want to name a dissonance that I feel, which is kind of how we are collectively thinking about the ecology that we want attend and as we're talking about national structures, hyperlocal structures, and that I am excited for the next phase of parsing a national commitment to collectively



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thinking the national ecology through a hyperlocal lens that is the only way to think about the world. But there's more for us to get at together.

## Group 12 Chat

1. To [Speaker's] point starting with what research exists in other fields regarding the impact of the arts on lives.
    a. Yes, look to what draws folks in (sports, film) and build from there as structures, inspiration, guidance.

2. A local artist and cultural worker recently said to a group of us "artists are no different than plumbers." To that I agree — except for this one point — we do not question that we have to pay the plumber.

3. If we are trying to do something nationally, I think we need to be pragmatic. Not that I disagree personally with many of the suggestions, we have a country that is equally conservative and liberal. We will have to find common ground.

4. Look at cities that are doing relatively well in "purple" communities. What is working? Milwaukee, WI is "purple" and has on a per capita basis arts funding that is #3 in the country from private philanthropic sources.

5. How do we hold a long-term goal and vision when knowing the short-term reality makes them DOA if we are seeking national public policy or support for them?

6. Maybe we are thinking about abandoning our case for national public/government support?

7. And looking at private sources mainly.

8. Remember a couple of years ago when the field was advocating for the federal government providing much more support for the arts (which I supported 100%)? Can you imagine the disaster we would be in if that had happened, we reoriented to be dependent on that, and then the Trump administration zeroed it out overnight? Ask anyone in Europe these days if public funding is the answer.
    a. Absolutely, [Speaker] - the other immediate lever coming to mind is shifting toward earned as the driver - you are right, gov't is an unstable foundation to lean on.
    b. I would much rather be dependent on 5,000 donors than 1 government. The more diversified our revenue is, the more stable we are.
    c. I would say that there are ups and downs in govt funding. If arts are essential to society it has to be a govt function (local, state, feds).



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   d. Same is true for health and education. Privatizing is a dead end.
   e. Practically, do you see that being a reality in the near-future? Perhaps it is a long-term goal, but many arts organizations don't have a path through the next year or two.
   f. This is a 10-year goal.
   g. I think that is the path. What is our short-term, mid-term and long-term goals?

9. If donors want to give to a single organization, they can. If they want to give to the entire arts sector, they give to the United Fund. The United Fund reaches 10,000+ donors that we as an individual organization could not otherwise.
   a. That's exactly right [Speaker]. I have a membership to UPAF and it charges me $50 a month and that's how I support our entire community.

10. I do think Milwaukee, Cincy, ASC all serve very specific communities and perhaps all is not replicable. But what can we use that may help us all?
    a. 70+ of the 100 counties in NC have a local arts agency or other designated partner that distributes funds from the state arts council. Fun Fact.

11. I think the maximum number of funding sources we can get the better. If any one tanks, we won't be as vulnerable.

12. Trust-building is where this needs to start (and end) - that long-range campaign that builds a bigger tent (red/blue - arts aficionado/first timer to [Speaker's] point) is core to success and consolidation of narrative/power/implementation.

13. What I have heard, using different language, is that the arts should be thought of as a utility, necessary. But many people don't experience the arts utility. Our model is "all free" access to all programs, changing the relationship from transaction to mission-based, attendance is an act of mission participation, where all share in the utility (unlike metered access like a utility). Given that this model can't work for all, how can we all adapt a model that shifts from transactions. Devos, our convener, makes the model begin with the art...so support for what we do and how we get support depends on the experience of art.

14. Anyone familiar with rapid prototyping in design thinking?

15. At this point DDF has a multi-million-dollar commitment annually in the effort.



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# GROUP 13

## Group 13 Transcript

**Speaker 1 (Facilitator):** So [in] the first segment, we got so [many] rich ideas and feedback and learning, I'm going to ask everyone again for your candor and generosity with one another as we step into this new topic, which is about "how do we get there?" We talked before about getting to this future of 20, 20-something years [out]. And as you look and recall [the] visioning [work] that you did, what ways do we need to be working? And on the slide it says, "strands of work." It's just a way of us trying to articulate what are the different ways we're working that need to be strengthened and maybe to be doing more or to be doing [in a] new [way] to realize the visions that everyone has been bringing forward. So, for example, we've got some quotes to prompt your responses about what you believe we need to focus on because of whatever reason.

I believe we need more investment in understanding the scale of people who dance for fun. That's one of my things, is so many people [are] doing it, not for pay, not for career, doing it because they know it feeds their soul and I believe that is where a lot of our untapped strength is, and I believe we need more data to help us understand [what is driving that phenomenon]. Anybody else? What ways of working do we need to strengthen and do more of, to [actualize] vision?

**Speaker 2**: I believe we need to focus on a full and inclusive understanding of the cultural ecology, [whereas] we tend to focus narrowly [on] institutional nonprofits, which are important and powerful and essential. Our conventional advocacy approach is to make sure there's resources for institutions. Not everybody, but on average. And I think there's just a real opportunity to think of any and every way that creative voices find resources and attention and distribution opportunities and support and community and learning that includes nonprofits, but also for independent fiscal sponsorships, different ways of aggregating resources and people and attention. I think that that kind of focus would bring us a much bigger tent and many more options. And I think that the [corollary] to that is ensuring that artists and arts managers are aware of and fully capable in and across all these systems so they can pick the right course, whatever that might be.

**Speaker 3:** I believe we need more investment in shared digital infrastructure across the field so that we are spending less time and resources on trying to do these things ourselves and then attempting [to] share, [amidst] tech obsolescence and staff turnover and loss of the research and passions of people who are trying to [accomplish] these goals. And so having a digital infrastructure across our field that allows us to safely and swiftly share information so that we're all empowered to spend our energy and capacities in ways more effective to our missions.



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- **Speaker 4 (Facilitator):** So, you're talking about the infrastructure of organizations, the resources that individuals have available, that there's more work [to be done] with data and with systems. I just want to make sure I'm capturing [your point].
- **Speaker 3**: Yes, the assets and data that we all rely on or would benefit from or would allow us to amplify the work of artists more effectively.

**Speaker 5**: I think we need to actively go back to revise the very architecture, legal architecture and opinions of our sector, which I think we got horribly wrong in the early 20th century. And get rid of our fundamental building block of the charitable corporation and move our sector to one of a guild of stewards of public trust resources that are connected to regional and locally formed, community-based management structures using the tools of fiscal sponsorship. I think the radical fragmentation of our field started with some of these rather morbid decisions we made in its early design. And I think a lot of what we're doing, including fiscal sponsorship, is a kind of decorative workaround at best for something that was fundamentally mis-designed. I think we have some legal work ahead of us, legislative work to significantly revise the legal underpinnings of our sector and how it's organized and how stewardship is undertaken. This may be controversial, but I think we should make the sectors—private, government and the third sector, which we call the non-profit sector--much more sovereign from one another. I am deeply skeptical of what happened. I celebrate what happened in the mid-20th century, the Great Society moment when the sector became the implementation partner for government, for so many "social good" things. But I am not confident that we have the social compact and polity today where government is a reliable partner or sustained supporter of this work. I would like to see us move away from government support of the third sector, including the arts. And that means bolstering and increasing the means and motivations for more private philanthropy and community-based resources in response.

**Speaker 6**: I believe we need to focus on data, impact data, and not for our audience. Please stop sending your visitor infographics. Data for us so that our successes are better guided and our failures are better documented so that our successors, peers, and partners don't have to repeat our mistakes. They can make brand new ones. We can keep moving forward in that way. I believe we need to focus on – this might be new and different – behavioral economics and systems analysis, because you can get a horse to drink once you lead him to the water, if you know what you're doing. I got two $6 coffee cups sitting on my counter right now to prove it, just because I got extra stars at Starbucks this week that was challenging me to drink more $6 coffee. So, I think that there are some tools that really go into the understanding of human behavior and how we interact to connect and develop loyalties and active passion around things that are important to us. As much as we talk about engagement, we still tend to lean more often to a "build it and they will come, now it's posted on Instagram and they will come" kind of model. I think we can do something there. I believe we need to focus on re-imagining and retraining our boards because, my goodness, a lot of our board



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structures are the last bastions of dominant mindset culture, right? And they are often doing more harm than good to our organizations, particularly those organizations most powerfully positioned for progress and social impact. So, I think [these changes would be] good for the sector and are representative of what I have been grappling with. I believe that as we continue to talk about arts as fundamental to our culture, as being a right for all, and those kinds of things, that we cannot, as a sector, abdicate our role in influencing and moving the governments that govern us. As much as I would like to move to Costa Rica right now, I understand that there is still some responsibility. But frankly, there's also still quite a bit of power inside of our sector. And regardless of how we reimagine the power structures and the connections and the funding and all that kind of thing. I think that art's abdicating its role in influencing, not being influenced by, but influencing government policy, policymakers, is not what's in our best interest, not in the best interest of the culture. But I think it also convinces us that we have less power than we actually do.

**Speaker 7:** I believe it's important that we completely blow up the notion of arts education as we have understood it. We've ceded it largely to the K-12 and to four single disciplines. We must understand it is a lifelong [learning process], and I mean from preschool, infancy, all the way to people as old as I, and that we can't limit it to the disciplines that are encoded in that system. And that we cannot limit it just to the sort of archaic 19th century studio practices of those disciplines, and that it needs to be tied to opportunities for young people, apprenticeships in high school, dual enrollment, all those kinds of things. And lastly, I would propose a form measurement, which is about community vitality, understood as to what extent is this community in which a young person can gain access to join and contribute to the arts and culture of a creative sector. And that is as important as the kinds of cultural vitality that we currently measure.

**Speaker 8**: When I think about what strands we need to realize any visions, it's about the silos that we deal with every day that restrict resources, whether human resources, financial resources, or philosophical resources. And I think we need to focus on these silos and call them out to promote intersectionality, interdisciplinary work. I think that there are many different agencies across the nation, whether federal, state, or local government agencies, private entities that are interested and willing to partner with arts, humanities and arts organizations. But the silos that are either from a legal perspective or from a "we don't do that here" kind of perspective, I think, prevent real engagement across sectors. And I think that focusing on calling out and reconsidering how silos may affect the work and more investments in intergenerational, multicultural, and interdepartmental work will be quite important. And I'm inspired by those jurisdictions who used cultural strategists in government, in private philanthropy, in the public [sector]. I'm inspired by that work to understand that reducing silos can increase the impact of the arts and humanities in communities.



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**Speaker 9:** I want to add my voice to the chorus regarding the importance of investing both time and money in our ability, our capacity, and our skills in being able to measure and communicate our social, cultural, and creative impact alongside and maybe supersede our economic impact. I think that it's important in the ways that it allows us to be a part of, as others have said, cross-cultural and cross-sector conversations.

**Speaker 10:** I was thinking about opportunities for sharing policies, strategies, planning tools, operational tools across and among organizations. Though a digital platform was mentioned, I was thinking more "old school" and getting people into rooms and discussing and sharing these tools. But obviously, digital platforms would provide for a broader means of exchange. But I would like to see a sharing across organizations of different sizes, from different places, what we know and what works and what we want to teach others.

**Speaker 11**: I believe that we must assert the centrality of the arts as core to our democracy, and that we have an opportunity to demonstrate that the arts are a shortcut to build civic infrastructure. While I absolutely believe that we need broad institutional reform, we have to remember that in our search for financial solutions, that too often we exacerbate structural inequities and that if we remove, for example, the public sector support of the arts and culture, then that leaves most of rural America and Indian country in a lurch. The public sector is the only sector that does an equitable job at supporting most of the country. And, you know, I think a little bit further down that line, we must remember that public support waivers, because too few people have experienced the broad value of the arts in terms that they value in their own communities. Thus, I believe that we need more investment in creative civic experimentation. And I'm really inspired by Ireland's Basic Income for Artists program and by the public benefit-forward work of Warm Cookies for the Revolution.

**Speaker 12**: I would like to see us focus on visibility from the arts and how do we communicate who we are and the value that we bring to all areas of society, health, tech, education, sustainability. I think that we live in a world that people are so caught up in what they see on their phones and their computers. They're getting information. [Digital devices are] telling them what they should think and what they should value. So that's the way that people put value on things. We need to find a way to collaborate with each other, more collaboration, less competition, and to elevate the arts and the value that arts bring. I just think that we need a little bit more [of a business mindset] in our nonprofit [processes], a little bit more ROIs and KPIs so we understand the data so we can elevate societal value to the different kinds of arts that we have. I know micro is in the macro, right? I truly believe that arts are very localized and you have to support the arts that are in your [home geography] but, as a collective, we have so much power. I see sports and they all come together and they get these huge branding opportunities, right? Because there are eyes on them, because



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there is a ton of public appeal to them. We all work in different markets trying to appeal to the same people. In the collective, we are as powerful or more powerful than other fields. So, the more we collaborate, the more we do together, I think that's where the investment should go. I know, and I cannot name it because it's been a while, I think it was in Austin, where several arts organizations and cultural organizations came together to create a campaign around the center of the town and how the center became the art space. And they had a lot of success with that, not only in the mass appeal of the area and the experience of being in that area, but also government-wise, they had a lot more power to be able to advocate for what they wanted.

**Speaker 13**: I would love to see a national messaging campaign for the arts that is aligned from our field in terms of language, concepts, branding in ways that are relatively unified. Of course, place-based is important too, but there's so much powerful rhetoric out there that is gripping, and thinking about the concepts, language, and definitions, and how we are using those in the arts is critical. And to the question, "what feels inspiring or what feels like it's working," some of the most resonant examples I've seen were in youth systems change work and initiatives. And I think one of the ones that just hit me and made me cry when I read it was the Memphis Music Initiative, but there are many other organizations in the list of awardees through the Lewis Prize for Music, which unfortunately was [only] a five-year funding initiative, that are doing some really amazing and impactful work.

**Speaker 14**: I believe that we are predisposed to leave no ear unturned, right? To speak to our audiences because we talk about that a lot, but I also believe that we will be given an easy pass if we leave out some of the hard audiences. So, as we think about where we are right now and serving the underserved and, dare I say, our classic targets, those whose voices have become powerful and dissenting right now, like those tough, bold conversations. And so I believe that if we carve out time for one time out of 10 to make room for authentically tough conversations, as we think about who we need to remember to incorporate, we want to go beyond the children, beyond the quote unquote community, beyond just the role, and into this upper middle class struggling with what is going on, because I think those tough conversations are challenging. And then I believe that the number one way to do that is over food. I had a mentor once say that it is very, very hard to argue with someone when your mouth is full of food, and that has proven to be a very tried and true way of convening. There's nothing [like] bringing a chef into a room, and we're going to have a "real talk" conversation. And so that's just one of the strategies. But I believe we need to be careful about who we label the enemy and forget to invite to the table right now.

**Speaker 15**: I would be remiss not to cite my own field, but years ago, [the work] that led [me] here was really aimed at solving or trying to solve the challenges of individual artists, small arts organizations. And I really came to collectivization and commoning as the solution, at least in my



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view. And this is a model that's very, still very foreign in the arts world. Most people are familiar with Fractured Atlas and the sort of re-granting model. It is entirely possible to commonize infrastructure. And we've applied commoning cooperative values to these structures where it's about intentional community building married with co-stewarded or shared stewarded infrastructure, meaning legal insurance, all the things, all the systems and resources needed to manage risk, manage money, all of that. Think of it as a management co-op. And I see that as, in my view, the only future not only for the arts, but for our sector. We cannot manage 1.9 million fractured organizations out there. The second thing that I would share, just somewhat unrelated, is I'd love to see us move from economic impact and an over-financialization of the arts, because we assume that to be the language of government or lawmakers, as well as the capitalist class, which it is. But really think about social indicators of health and well-being, because that is increasingly becoming also the language of the capitalist class and government. And I'm being somewhat cynical, but pragmatic in that. But I think that well-being and health (hews) closer to why artists get up (in the morning) and do what they do, speaking as a former artist, than generating money or economic impact. Certainly not encompassing in what artmaking entails but feels a little bit more authentic and relatable and translatable, and takes some of that, I think, disconnect between the impetus of artmaking and this kind of financial justification and modifies it a bit. Personally, I think the economic impact case on balance, over the last 40 years, has been a failure. I don't see it having yielded the return that I would remotely expect because we're all still sitting here asking these questions about capital and funding for the arts. I would like to just say that very clearly in this room.

**Speaker 16**: There's a wonderful national program. It started out of Out-of-Hand Theater in Atlanta, Georgia. It's now a multi-organizational partnership where people can host, and they've developed a really refined model so that [conveners] bring a play on a topic that they have developed with theater educators. They present that play in living rooms or social centers, wherever the host wants to host. The host agrees to do a certain number of things, get the attendees, provide the food, but they have a very well-refined process that has been written about and studied on convenings over meals in communities. And so that's a wonderful model that's just available off the shelf, all the details [available] on their website.

**Speaker 17:** I would say the protection of space for creatives as cities and communities increasingly gentrify and would point to the work of the creative campus at the Arts and Business Council in Boston, but now increasingly in many spaces across the US. Because without space for both living and working, artists and arts organizations could not be more vulnerable.

**Speaker 18**: I feel like my synthesis from my breakout in the previous session left me with some observations I think are important to this space, [such as] the place the speaker was coming from



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and their lived experience, their professional context, and how they exist within society. The ability and the mode of answering that question really varied from people being in nonprofits and feeling very mired in the scarcity and finding it difficult to see through a different lens of the future beyond scarcity, or what the struggles are currently, to the other side of the spectrum of full fantasy: a 2045 vision devoid of current context. And then, largely, I would say that some of the responses that were very rooted in contemporary context and unable to envision this [the 2045 vision], that we must consider where we are now. And brutality and the rise of fascism. And there was also a distinction between white folks and arts administrators and how they were responding versus, I would say, artists and folks of color. And so, I think where people are coming into the conversation and the roles and envisioning that future is so important in trying to translate and seek to reconcile in this space with this group of people. Of course, that can't be done in four hours, but I just wanted to name that as a tension that I was observing in that first space.

- **Speaker 1 (Facilitator):** It's almost as if you're thinking that we have to increase our capacity to deal with that tension, right? That tension that you're talking about could be a real drag on our ability to reach whatever better place we want to be.
- **Speaker 18**: I have always been a proponent that to move forward, we need to know that we're speaking the same language and [have a common understanding] of the definitions we're [using] because those are so informed by the context that we are coming from. And so, in the arts field, we can say the same words and mean totally different things, which means we're still talking past each other. So deconstructing and re-crafting together.
- **Speaker 4 (Facilitator):** We spent yesterday here in this space together, this very disparate group of us, [discussing a shared] vocabulary. It is absolutely something we have to break through. We have to figure out how to form some agreement around vocabulary if we're to get to a lot of this other work. I don't exactly know how to do that, but it has to happen, I believe.

**Speaker 19:** So, I'm thinking back to the switch of arts education [from a one-off pursuit] to lifelong learning. When we're thinking about this 20-year, 50 years, whatever [number of] years, it's this lifelong participation in the arts. So, an artist is going to have a lifelong career. And I think we [pay so much attention to] pulling out certain places in a person's development where funding is [invested] and activities put. I've been working recently with artists who are dealing with their legacy. There's always this lifelong learning that is happening in the field. And I think just acknowledging that during an administrator's career, in the creative's career, and working with organizations and their own archives and so on. I don't really have a specific point or something to use as an example. But I think it's just a feature of the conversation.



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**Speaker 20:** It's a half-formed thought, but something that I think that we should focus on and invest in is cultivating champions and defenders. I think that they're the artists among us, they're the administrators among us, and who among those or who from an external pool or group might be charged with or take up the mantle on their own of being champions and defenders so that the folks who are administering can administer, the folks who are creating can create. Those of us who have the interest and the ability to maintain some sort of duality amongst those spaces, I think is fine, but really focusing on cultivating those voices, those habits of mind, those practices, just as we've refined any fine art practice or our work as administrators of systems that we build so eloquently or our spreadsheets that are to die for. What are those practices of our champions and defenders so that they are just as much a part of our ecology and ecosystem as is any other?

**Speaker 21**: Hearkening back to the invocation of Thomas Paine at the beginning, and I said this in the other group, I'm a big fan of David Graeber's work. And one of the things he reminds us of is that all these systems that we labor under today, modern capitalism, are very young. They're only about 500 years old. And that fact should encourage us to understand that they are not permanent, that they can be completely rethought, torn down and rebuilt. I think we need more building of – it sounds a little strange to say this in an arts context – [the] imagination muscle in re-imagining the systems. Artists are great "imagineers" intrinsically, but I find that the material, the medium that they must work with, is absent, i.e. the knowledge of how the sector is built and how the systems that they labor under are functioning in many cases. And I would love to bring that medium more into the imagination space of the arts community, because I think the arts community could lead to some very substantial changes in our sector. And I think it's more possible than we often imagine to be so. And that muscle needs to be built more, so we can be a bit bolder in questioning some of the fundamental assumptions about how we do this stuff, which I think desperately needs to be questioned.

**Speaker 4 (Facilitator):** When we talk about the digital age and the advancement of media arts and access through streaming, we don't talk about the fact that there is a significant subset of folks in our country who don't have access to broadband. And so, we leave that out of the work that we're all doing, making sure that we are including and setting the largest table we can. That's a piece I don't hear us talk about. So, I just share that as something that's on my mind.

- **Speaker 22:** That's always been an issue. But certainly, during the pandemic, and kids starting homeschool, [the digital divide] really illuminated the inequities around access. And I'd hoped the system had been broken down enough that we were going to refashion rather than getting back to the same shape. But I appreciate you naming that it's still an issue, especially since so many agencies are relying more on digital and virtual engagement.



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**Speaker 23**: It's striking to me [that we're] saying things should happen and notice things are happening and if we could just ever so slightly coordinate our work. I have grad students who are writing papers and assignments and doing case studies. They might as well do them on things that are important to other aspects of the field. I think there's probably people with stories to tell who maybe don't have capacity to tell them. Then we have journalists and resources who can come in and tell those stories. I think we have extraordinary examples of wonderful work or people making new ideas, but don't have a voice. So, it just feels like even a 2% increase in our ability to communicate and collaborate with the gifts we bring to the party feels like a real opportunity. I have grad students [to whom I have to give] assignments. They have to do things that are meaningful. They must make sense of the world using frameworks. They can do that in a way that draws on the story we've just been talking about. So, I would love to be part of that coordination. I don't know how it works because it's such a noisy universe, but I would love to explore that.

**Speaker 1 (Facilitator):** We tend not to think of volunteers as [being] as much a part of what we do right now. In the system that we have, they're sort of like amateurs of organizational work. And I think even, to your point, a 2% shift in how we think and use and embrace people who are giving their time out of love for what it is that we're trying to bring to the world. I think that would be something in our capacity that we need to shift and work on to get to the next place of our evolution.

**Speaker 24:** I'm going to say the quiet part out loud here, which is at some point, I believe we also need to lean into thinking about active and intentionally combating the forces of, say, for example, racism in particular. Because we often have these conversations in absence of acknowledging openly that that is the dominant headwind, right? And that we need to think about the fact that we are not just up against folks who think, "Oh, art is not that important." It's art for who, by whom, and to what end, right? So, this is all about that. About the "isms." The good news is that we seem to be in a season in which the "isms" are so loud and so obvious that you can call out an "ism" and nobody says, "Hey, what do you mean? That didn't seem that racist to me." OK, so we've got that part. But I think as we come up with these things and these strategies, on the list of things that I believe would be great to play offense and not just defense against is to call out those elephants before we find ourselves trying to dodge their feet as we're doing the work on the ground. No [clear] solutions about how exactly we do that. But I do look forward to us leaning into some perhaps compassionate, but offensive tactics when it comes to battling in those spaces and those spheres, which a lot of us, even if we're not actively in that space, we get caught up in the net designed to catch that.

**Speaker 25**: I really want to lift up this idea of shared spaces. And I was excited to hear more about the social impact of the commons. [In my area] we don't have many spaces that are social or safe for people to be in public. And if you're of adult age, certainly not without alcohol. We live in a



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place where there are very few hours of sunlight. Addiction is high. [The] suicide [rate] is among the highest in the nation for various reasons. Social spaces are multi-generational, social spaces are critical for so many reasons. In my community, there's that harsh temperature element. And people die in the cold and soothe themselves in damaging ways. I really think this focus on community planning to create safe multi-generational social spaces is so critical.

**Speaker 26:** The thinking about that impulse to have safe shared spaces as one of the most fundamental elements of community design. How many public housing facilities or how many public schools are built in a way that affords that kind of safety and gathering in communities. We worry about energy efficiency, LEED certified buildings. What's the certification that [states that] this is a building for which public funds can be used? One of the fundamental things should be that they answer to the kinds of things [Speaker 24] just described.

- **Speaker 4 (Facilitator)**: An expansion of the public art concept, right?
- **Speaker 26**: Yes, public design.

## Group 13 Chat

1. I have often felt relieved that my LAA is non-governmental. Even so, we're still too reliant and beholden to government funding, whims, and retaliatory action. I would love for there to be more sovereignty.
2. I'm inspired by Robin Wall Kimmerer's writing on abundance and the gift economy in The Serviceberry and Braiding Sweetgrass. I advocate for local and regional mutual aid networks alongside national infrastructure.
3. See 3C initiative - shared digital platform for creative youth development on LinkedIn
4. https://www.thelewisprize.org/2023awards
    a. The TLPM website has a list of all awardees on the website and the whole premise was to put big dollars behind youth-led, arts-centered, systems-change initiatives.
5. Another impactful, inspiring org to me is the People's Kitchen Collective in the Bay Area. https://peopleskitchencollective.com/
6. I am inspired by of a national program called Equitable Dinners, that does exactly what [Speaker] mentioned, of convening and facilitating discussion over meals. Anyone can sign up to host around the country. https://www.equitabledinners.com/we-hold-these-truths
    a. Please add other models you know: https://www.transformationtable.org/



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7. Creative Campus initiative at artsandbusinesscoucil.org — the buying and redevelopment of artists' spaces.

8. I'm also inspired by regional touring programs hosted by several regional arts organizations. I'm most familiar with South Arts' (former) Dance Touring Initiative and admire its combo of skill building, shared resources, regional networks for sharing embodied work https://www.southarts.org/programs/momentum/dance-touring-initiative
    a. https://thaddeussquire.substack.com/p/reclaiming-the-commons-a-new-vision
    b. I'm a fan (of) shared infrastructure. But it always makes me ask the question: There are 36M fragmented small businesses duplicating efforts at all times - and they remain the cause celeb. What about the 1.6M fragmented small arts, culture non-profit businesses... makes us so much more vulnerable to the constant calls for consolidation... is it our brand? our messaging? 50%+ use of contributed revenue? Our service? Who we serve? Our determination to last forever?
        i. Great question! I think one difference is the available flows of capital and operating revenue to non-commercial enterprise.
    c. Indeed, these are great questions. I think to some degree our fragmentation can be a strength - modularity, etc. But I think we are far too fragmented and that has vast repercussions like capital access and flows, morbid competitive cultures, etc. There are ways to support pluralism without radical fragmentation.

9. I think we have artists lead the facilitation of deconstruction and crafting of concepts, shared definitions, etc. in future spaces like this.

10. Good call out "champions and defenders." I also use "stewards and owners" when activating history and stories

11. "The ultimate hidden truth of the world is that it is something that we make, and could just as easily make differently." David Graeber

12. Broadband — but also access to other fundamentals: safe, shared gathering spaces, public transit that links them to other neighborhoods - never mind, food and health care.
    a. Let's please mind food and health care!
    b. And FOOD. Always with shared food.

13. What [Speaker] just mentioned about the legal requirements for spaces (or limitations) also speaks to [Speaker's] comments about building the muscle of understanding how the systems work.



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