



LxNY Statement on Funding Equity in Arts and Culture

LxNY Statement on Funding Equity in Arts and Culture Equity in arts and cultural funding is more urgent now than ever. The historical underfunding of Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian, and other communities of color has been compounded by the fact that our communities have also been hardest hit by the COVID-19 Pandemic. To their credit, arts funders have begun to speak about the importance of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in the arts; however, most have not yet adapted their own funding strategies to address the level of need our communities face.

We do not wish to see the defunding of some arts organizations in favor of others. Instead, we advocate for significant increases in funding across the board, with additional resources being directed to where they are currently most lacking. The end result must be that in New York City, communities of color and the organizations serving them all have the same level of resources as do wealthier white communities.

We call on the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs (DCLA) and other public and private arts funders serving NYC to adopt the following strategies to ensure true equity moving forward:

- First: DCLA must begin to report annually on the distribution of its funding by borough, zip code, and organization size. Previous reports by outside organizations have shown that DCLA's per capita distribution of funding by borough is hugely inequitable, with Manhattan receiving 10 times the per capita funding of Queens, and 5 times the per capita funding of Brooklyn. But DCLA itself does not report on its progress toward correcting these inequities, and its reporting to the city's Open Data Project does not include ZIP code or borough information. We must have greater transparency from the agency on where public dollars go, so that we can hold it accountable to its stated goals of increasing equity. Other foundation and government funders serving New York City should also report on their funding distributions in the same way. Such transparency in reporting is the necessary first step toward undoing funding inequities.

- Second: equity must be defined as directing significantly greater new resources to the communities and organizations that currently receive less funding from the rest of DCLA's allocations. In the past several budget cycles, DCLA has made an effort to make its funding increases more equitable by giving larger percentage increases to organizations that receive less funding—but this strategy unintentionally increases inequity by continuing to give larger increases to larger organizations, even if those increases reflect a smaller percentage of their original allocation. Increasing \$100,000 by 20% is still significantly less than increasing \$10,000,000 by 1%. Any future increases to DCLA's budget must instead be distributed with true equity in mind, and DCLA must report on it transparently. Private funders should also adopt a similar strategy.

- Third: We must see a change in an often-overlooked aspect of funding inequity: the way funds are distributed. The vast majority of organizations funded by DCLA receive programmatic funds, but general operating support is especially crucial in our recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. DCLA must take a holistic approach with any

additional funds and support organizational recovery, not just programmatic recovery, in order to ensure that the entire sector is able to bounce back robustly. This funding model already exists within DCLA, as the 34 members of the CIG are fortunate to receive most of their funding in the form of general operating support, which can be used to support staff, administrative and building costs, and other expenses that are typically not covered by programmatic grants. Removing unnecessary funding restrictions is particularly urgent for smaller organizations and organizations serving communities of color. We call on DCLA to explore moving ALL of its CDF funding toward an operating support model. Private funders should also begin to reduce or eliminate the restrictions they currently place on their grants, and consider shifting the balance of their grantmaking toward unrestricted operating support.

Embracing these three approaches will enable DCLA and other funders to make real progress toward eliminating the inequities the arts sector currently faces. We call on arts funders to move forward in this way, and we ask the rest of the arts sector in New York City to help us hold arts funders accountable to their stated goals of increasing equity.

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LxNY is a collaborative peer network dedicated to knowledge exchange, resource-sharing, and collective action towards systemic change. Formed in 2020 by a group of eight organizations serving Latinx communities and artists across New York City, LxNY aims to transform the historical underfunding of Latinx arts by advocating for the equity-driven missions of its cultural institutions, nurturing their deep relationships with community, and stewarding their hard-fought legacies into the future. Advancing cultural work as essential work, LxNY honors the expertise of its multigenerational arts leaders and culture bearers, harnessing their collective experience to better serve the city's diverse cultural landscape.

**Signed, LxNY Steering Committee's members:**

BAAD! Bronx Academy of Arts & Dance

Caribbean Cultural Center African Diaspora Institute

Clemente Soto Véllez Cultural & Education Center

El Museo del Barrio

Flushing Town Hall

Pregones/Puerto Rican Traveling Theater

People's Theatre Project

Repertorio Español