

A.R.T./ New York Virtual Town Hall Meeting

Thank you to everyone who attended the Virtual Town Hall on Friday, March 27. It was lovely to see all of your faces in this virtual space as we connected about where we are now.

Ginny started off the Town Hall with brief remarks.

She began by asking how everyone was feeling and acknowledged that this is a really, really hard time for our community—unlike any crisis any of us have ever been through. The need to come together and support one another has never been greater.

She also asked for a moment of silence for Terrence McNally and all members of our community who are suffering.

Next, she shared how her Yoga practice has been informing her view on this experience. Transitions are key to Yoga, and we didn't have much time to transition into this new normal. She encouraged us to be kind to ourselves and do the best we can. We are all in this together. Ginny also noted that it may feel like the rug was pulled from under us and that finding our footing will take time, but if you do something each day that gives you comfort and helps you get back to who you are... you will get there. Above all, she offered a message of hope.

Impact Survey Results

Corinne Woods and David Shane presented the results of the A.R.T./New York COVID-19 Impact Survey. A PDF of the results will be made available on the A.R.T./New York website in the future. The data collected by A.R.T./New York ranged across our membership at all budget tiers, and shows an anticipated impact on the field of approximately \$47M through mid April.

In the future, we may be sending a revised version of our survey, but we're also working with Cozen O'Connor and may instead share a link to a different survey they are working on.

Overview of Government Response

Jamie Ansorge with Cozen O'Connor led this section, which included comments from Laurie Baskin of TCG and Ashley Firestone of DCLA.

- **Federal Government:**

- A \$2 Trillion Stimulus (the CARES Act) was just signed, which provides a number of different opportunities for non-profits and cultural organizations in addition to the expansion of support to individuals. The bill is very long and detailed, and Cozen O'Connor is still reviewing the details.
- **The bill includes \$75M for the NEH and \$75M for the NEA. \$19M of that NEA allotment is for arts grants; \$5M hoping to go to NYSCA for grants.**
 - **The NEA funds can be used for GOS, no matching funds required. The funds are to “prevent, prepare for, and respond to Coronavirus, domestically or internationally.” More details will be posted in the coming days**
- There is also an expansion in the SBA Loan program, including the opportunity for loan forgiveness on some loans. You should talk to your banks now. A.R.T./New York shared more information about this program on our resource page: art-newyork.org/coronavirus-resources
- Additionally, the Act includes one-time payments from Federal relief for individuals. Individuals with annual adjusted gross income of up to \$75k are eligible for up to \$1,200, the amount of the check is decreased for those making between \$75k and \$99k, and is not available for people making over \$99k. Additionally, it allocates \$500 per dependent child.
- Expanded unemployment insurance for people affected by COVID-19, including 1099 workers. There were a number of questions about applying for Unemployment Insurance, which we do not have answers to at this time.
- Mortgage relief and foreclosure relief for up to 180 days.

- **City:**
 - DCLA does have a PEG (Plan to Eliminate the Gap) clause, but remaining funds can be withheld due to the city's deficit. DCLA is working with City Hall to retain the final payment amount for all organizations previously promised awards. However, it is noted that typically when cuts are made, those cuts come from the final payments (as stated as a caveat in all grant agreements that all awards are contingent upon the city's financial health). DCLA is, nonetheless, working very hard right now to prevent this from being the case.
- **NYSCA**
 - Kathleen Masterson shared that there is no specific info from NYSCA at this time. They have been gathering information on needs from the field and recording them. The Governor's office is working with their chairman on strategies and initiatives to help sustain their grantees. Kathleen will reach out with more information as it is available, but please keep sending your questions to her as NYSCA is collecting them.

Foundation Response

Laura Aden Packer and Emily Sproch from the Howard Gilman Foundation

- All arts funders in the city communicate frequently with weekly calls at this time to share best practices. Gilman is "leaning in" to their grantmaking and encouraging peers to do the same at this time, up to and including borrowing resources from one another (Zoom licenses!) and opening grant awards to be used for GOS.
 - There was a lot of appreciation from the attendees for the Zoom licenses, and the willingness to think creatively about supporting grantees.
- The focus right now is getting answers from the field on how COVID is affecting the field and streamlining application and grant award procedures to speed aid to the field. Gilman is also contributing to individual artists at this crisis time, which they do not typically do, through supporting emergency relief funds that have been set up.

- **The NYC COVID-19 Response and Impact Fund**

- The fund is a partnership between many funders which prioritizes small and midsized organizations. The Fund is \$78M, of which \$19M is for direct grants to Arts and Cultural Organizations and \$30M is for no-interest loans through the Non-Profit Finance Fund. Laura encouraged everyone who was eligible to apply.
 - The smallest grant being awarded at this time is \$10k.
 - Requirements to apply:
 - No budget floor, but budget ceiling is \$20 million.
 - Must be 501c3 or fiscally sponsored by a 501c3. Fiscally sponsored groups are eligible to apply for relief, though it is noted that the fund is prioritizing 501c3 and Government funded orgs.
 - Must have been funded through one of the 5 borough arts councils, DCLA, OR NYSCA.
 - Based in NYC and must show impact in NYC.
 - Applications are reviewed on a rolling basis. The goal is to make awards relatively quickly.
 - More information about the fund is available at <https://www.nycommunitytrust.org/covid19>. Reach out to NYCT with additional questions.
- Will the relief award funding have any impact on how Gilman funds in the future?
 - All previous year grants will be renewed at the same amount, and Gilman does not anticipate any cuts. This is the time to step up, not step back. Nothing will impact the ongoing grantmaking to the arts in NYC. There are \$75m in the fund, \$30m of that is for loans. Companies experiencing cash flow issues can apply for a loan separately from their grant application

- **Questions**

- How do we demonstrate that COVID is responsible for lost revenue? We can't show 2 months of lost revenue until after April.
 - You can show 2 months of expenses for 2019 and 2020 as a comparison if they align. You can also compare average revenue for two months in 2020 (after the COVID-19 impact) to both: average revenue for the same two month period in 2019, and average monthly revenue based on total 2019 revenue. Then you can check to see if either calculation shows at least a 25% decrease in revenue

- **Unanswered COVID-19 Relief Fund Questions**

- *We encourage you to address these, and additional questions to the New York Community Trust who is administering this fund.*
- Interested to know if we should calibrate our request to our budget size. If our annual budget is around 1 million, is there any sense of what range of request is appropriate? Or do we just apply for what we need/want and see what happens?
- Has anyone started the conversation with Fractured Atlas about applying to the COVID-19 fund on their fiscal sponsored projects' behalf? And other fiscal sponsors?
 - Maybe there's someone from FA on this call... not a question that needs to be discussed in the group, would just be interested if anyone has started this outreach with fiscal sponsors

General Questions/Concerns

- Is there a separate list of grants for smaller organizations who may be fiscally funded but not yet have their 501c3? Or known relief funds for artists and 1099 contractors?

- “Trickle Up” with Niegel Smith, Taylor Mac, Kristin Marting, Morgan Jenness, Emily Morse, and others is a relief fund being put together for freelance artists. TrickleUpNYC.org
- A.R.T./New York will continue to keep an eye out for these opportunities and [update our resource page](#) as we find them. There are currently funds from the Indie Theatre Fund, NYFA, Dance/NYC, the Actors Fund, Arts and Culture Leaders of Color, and many others. If you find more across the field that are not currently on our resource page, please let A.R.T./New York know. We know this is a need and that freelancers and artists are a particularly vulnerable group.
- There is a NY State act for paid leave but it does not go into effect until April 1st, so how are companies to be reimbursed for the two weeks in March when income was lost?
 - Unknown at this time, but more info will be forthcoming from TCG and Cozen O’Connor.
- How far in advance should companies be looking as far as planning when they apply for grants? Will A.R.T./New York advocate for companies on the other side of these shutdowns?
 - The COVID-19 Relief and Impact Fund Relief is for a 12 week period.
 - **From Ginny:** It’s difficult to discuss the future, as the reality of the situation is not yet concrete and we do not want to speculate. The mayor has said schools will not reopen until September. The relief fund and Broadway League are looking for June, possibly July at this time. This is the time for us to compile our cases and take stock of how many hours, how many artists, etc. are being lost. We are sending out Advocacy Alerts every time we learn something, so as soon as we know more, we will send that information out.
 - Laurie Baskin, TCG, also noted that projected income loss projected through the end of the calendar year is being considered with upcoming grant making.
- How can I help my local community and city/first responders? How can theatre be involved in community service with volunteering, blood drives? Is anyone else interested in collaborating on a community service project on behalf of the theatre community?

- A.R.T./New York is considering this topic for an upcoming discussion or roundtable.
- What does the world of theatre look like when the spaces reopen? With recurring cycles of outbreaks, how can the field better adapt to a new environment and stage live shows in a space where people feel safe? When we get to a place of wanting to gather larger groups together, what does that solution look like?
 - A.R.T./New York is considering this topic for an upcoming discussion or roundtable.
 - Until we can reconvene in space together, A.R.T./New York has created a user-generated database of “Alternative Programming” that we encourage you to add your own events to.
<https://airtable.com/universe/expwHcJPs1Fuy90Tj/alternative-programming-online-performances-classes-and-events>
- We are experiencing our own learning curve as we foray into different and new technology. How can we ask the tech community (in kind services?) to offer support to our audiences and, if possible, specifically our lower income communities?
 - Board members from the tech community might be interested in having this conversation.

Further Unanswered Questions:

Though these questions were not able to be addressed in the Town Hall, A.R.T./New York will keep this list in mind as we gather more resources, and share any answers we can.

- Any idea if there is a deadline on the Employee Retention Grant?
- As a small theatre we pay a large number of our artists as fees (1099) and not as employees (W-2). We canceled a production that was in rehearsal and paid our artists the remainder of their contract, however, we now have no opportunity to recoup since our earned income is gone....is there any program that might help us?

- How do we demonstrate that COVID-19 is responsible for lost revenue?
- How exactly is the payroll tax credit at NYS level going to work? How do we get those funds back?
- Is there a way through government intervention for people to collect unemployment but keep their health insurance with our orgs?

Topics for Further Discussion:

A.R.T./New York is currently scheduling topical roundtables to hold space for Members to engage more fully with the topics listed below.

- **How can we help?** A discussion of volunteer opportunities and other ways to lend support to the community.
- **The Future.** What will it look like when we open again? How do we handle the next 2 years? What are best practices for keeping our staff, artists, and audiences safe in the long term? What relief funding may be available when we're ready to return?
- **Online Programming & The Future of Theatre Making.** Sharing strategies for best practices around online revenue generating programming. Brainstorming new ways of making and sharing work. Making work accessible to people with varying levels of technical experience
- **Social Media vs. Face to Face.** The value of theater and human interaction. Theatre is essential! Not an alternative. Live theatre doesn't happen via Zoom.
- **Managing Isolation: Lessons from the Disability Community**
 - <https://disabilityvisibilityproject.com/2020/03/26/disabled-communities-in-the-covid-19-pandemic/>
- **Global Connections.** A look at practices around the world and how they are managing and keeping up with live theater

Links Shared:

[A.R.T./New York Resources Page](#)

[A.R.T./New York Alternative Programming Database](#)

[Prospect Theater Video](#)

[NYC Community Trust](#)

[Indie Theater Fund Application](#)