

Executive Summary

Arts and culture are what make New York New York.

New York City's relationship to the arts and culture is unique. Culture gives New York world-class stature, as it ensures our civic vitality and cohesion and enriches public education. It always has.

The City acknowledged this special relationship as far back as 1869 when it entered a unique partnership with the American Museum of Natural History. The City provided land and buildings and annual sums for the upkeep of the municipal facilities, while a private, nonprofit corporation oversaw the organization of the Museum's collections. In 1888, a similar arrangement led to the creation of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and by the early 1900s, the New York Botanical Garden and the Brooklyn Museum of Art. In the succeeding decades, scores of cultural organizations have been established, receiving a range of City funding, from operating and program support to capital allocations.

The impending change in City government, mandated by term limits, opens a rare window of opportunity to develop a more expansive, cohesive cultural policy for the *new* New York and to better equip arts and culture to play their critical role.

The City's very identity is inextricably linked to its unparalleled cultural assets and artistic activity. There is extraordinary diversity: from some of the nation's oldest encyclopedic museums of art and natural history to today's most innovative performing arts companies, from the nation's first children's museum to community-based arts centers, from education programs enlivening the minds of our children, to the writers, dancers, actors, visual artists, and musicians who call New York home.

Culture is clearly an effective agent for building positive social change. Key factors — such as advances in science and technology, a population growing in size and diversity, and the increased interdependence of regional, national, and international economic forces — make New York's cultural sector a critical component to the City's overall success. As the City grows ever more diverse, culture offers increasingly important ways to enlarge understanding, forge connections, and mitigate tensions that play out on the city streets, in the workplace, and in our schools. At the same time, the City's competitive business edge is enhanced by its strong cultural infrastructure.

Our cultural sector — with its remarkable abilities to educate young and old alike, to bring together communities, to engage audiences, and to stimulate the economy — is being challenged at a time of social change and economic challenge when its assets are more critical than ever. For its people, New York must — and can — do more.

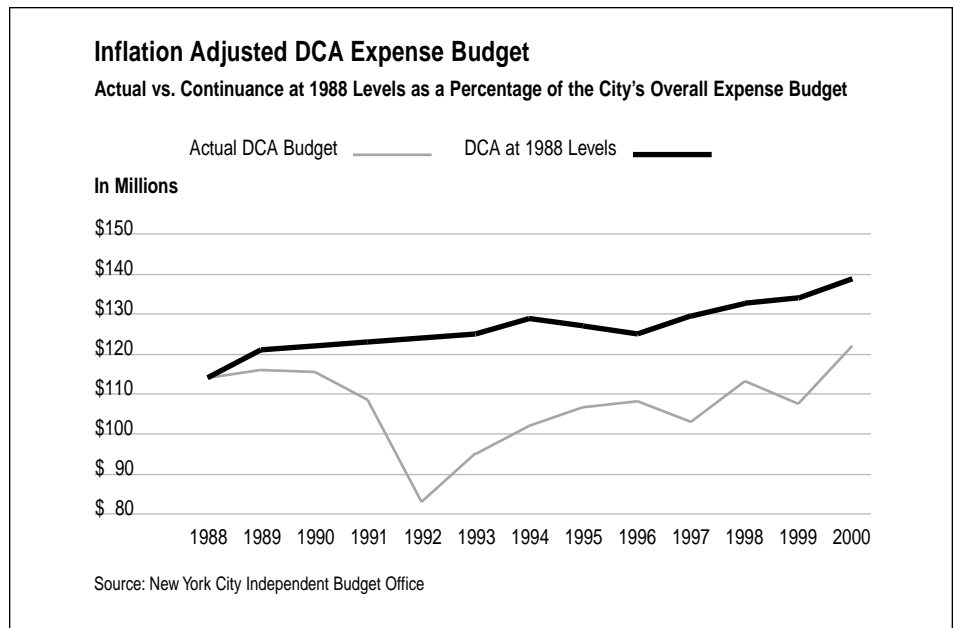
The Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA) is receiving a declining share of funds each year as a percentage of the City's overall spending. Since 1988 this has cost DCA nearly \$250 million in inflation-adjusted spending (see chart, p. 12). Organizations awarded City support have steadily lost funds, while today 72% of New York's cultural groups receive little or no City monies at all. Access to City support is a key ingredient in keeping the cultural ecosystem balanced — an interdependent system that ranges from the large institutions

“In a society riddled with self-doubt and without enough formal education, there is nothing more empowering for individuals than participation in the arts.”

— Public Policy Analyst

The Frederick Phineas and Sandra Priest Rose Center for Earth and Space. Photo by Denis Finnin, © AMNH.

Inset: Asian American Arts Alliance silent auction. Photo courtesy of the Asian American Arts Alliance.



that make the City a major tourist attraction; to the core group of mid-sized organizations that serve as enduring anchors in our neighborhoods, communities, and boroughs; to the small and emerging organizations and artists that constantly energize the field and the City.

The research for this report indicates that New Yorkers, particularly poor children and the elderly, face significant barriers to their participation in cultural activities. As significantly, our findings reveal serious gaps in the cultural infrastructure — in space, funding and financing, and workforce — and the lack of resources for innovation. If these barriers and gaps are addressed, New York City's cultural enterprise can maintain and maximize its contribution to the City's quality of life and the larger City economy.

“Culture and art are integral and integrated into our lives. Art is us, it is our lives, we live it, we wear it, we talk it, we eat it.”

— Brooklyn Town Hall Meeting

Throughout the Blueprint's research process, we kept asking our researchers, focus groups and interviewees a series of questions. What are the requirements for a sustainable cultural community in New York City? What is the City's responsibility to a sector that drives tourism, creates jobs, and educates and serves its citizens? And, what are the respective responsibilities of the private sector and the cultural community? What models exist for long- and short-term investment in culture? As we began to hear answers and gather quantitative and qualitative data, four overriding **objectives** guided our research and thus the content of this report, *Culture Counts*:

1. Examine existing cultural policy.

Findings:

Despite its standing as the cultural capital of the world, New York City lacks a comprehensive and comprehensible cultural policy that benefits organizations of all sizes and disciplines, as well as artists in all boroughs, and thus optimizes the City's role as a national and international cultural capital.

- There is a widespread lack of understanding of the goals and priorities of City funding.

- The lack of clearly articulated policies to guide funding allocations has allowed perceptions of inequity to take root.
- Information on the cultural sector is inadequate.
- The lack of a comprehensive cultural policy makes it difficult to plan for either the short or the long term.

2. Research and analyze the Department of Cultural Affairs' current funding structure.

Findings:

The accomplishments of the Department of Cultural Affairs are substantial, but the agency requires significant strengthening to operate more effectively as an agent, catalyst, and convener for a large and complex cultural economy.

- The funding system has not adapted to meet the needs of a range of organizations.
- Significant numbers of New York's cultural organizations lack access to City funding.
- Grantmaking criteria and the decision-making process are not clearly defined.
- Declines in agency staffing have not kept pace, particularly in Capital Projects, thus impeding planning and full service to the cultural sector and the public at large.

3. Survey current levels of public participation in arts and culture.

Findings:

There is enthusiastic participation in arts and culture among New Yorkers and strongly held beliefs about the benefits of that participation. But barriers exist that prevent many New Yorkers from participating fully in arts and culture.

- Arts and cultural programs are of uneven access and quality in public schools.
- The costs of attending cultural events are too high for many New Yorkers to participate regularly.
- Cultural offerings are not available in every neighborhood, and full information about cultural opportunities is lacking.

4. Identify the major issues affecting artists and cultural organizations and their ability to serve all New Yorkers.

Findings:

Inadequacies in the sector's infrastructure limit the ability of cultural organizations to deliver services to the public.

- A space crisis exists that particularly threatens small and mid-sized organizations in all disciplines and individual artists.
- The capacity of the sector to meet the challenges of a new era is insufficient.
- Borough-specific issues need greater attention.

Issues for Further Study

1. Capital funding for cultural organizations is more vital than ever. How capital funding decisions are made warrants further study.
2. The untapped potential of the cultural workforce and its lack of competitive wages and benefits deserve research.
3. The capacity of the cultural sector for creative research and development, as seen in small and community-based organizations, in artists' studios, and throughout the boroughs, is worth closer examination.

Strategies for City Leaders

1. Create a comprehensive cultural policy with clear goals, standards, and methods of review and evaluation.
2. Empower DCA to operate more effectively and provide better service to new and existing grantees through increased funding and staffing and more explicitly and clearly articulated grantmaking criteria.
3. Ensure active participation in arts and culture through expanded public school programs, reduced admission costs for the underserved, and improved transportation and information.
4. Develop long-term strategies to strengthen the cultural infrastructure.

*“In multi-ethnic communities
where diasporas are on the rise,
arts and culture help preserve
civic harmony.”*

— Queens Town Hall Meeting

The Methodology of Culture Counts

The substance of this report is based on a year of research that began in July 2000. The study incorporates the contributions of over 1,500 New Yorkers. Its findings derive from:

1. The first-ever public survey of New Yorkers' participation in arts and culture. The survey was designed and analyzed by the Fordham Institute for Innovation in Social Policy. Between March 25 and April 2, 2001, 805 randomly selected telephone interviews were conducted by the research firm of Yankelovich Partners, Inc. ("Profile," pp. 37 – 47);
2. One-on-one interviews with business, civic, cultural, and community leaders, conducted from October 2000 to May 2001 by Gregory Kandel of Management Consultants for the Arts (list on p. 70);
3. Focus groups on specific topics, including arts-in-education, private funders, community arts organizations, and individual artists (p. 70);
4. Town hall meetings in each borough organized in consultation with local co-sponsor organizations (pp. 69 – 70);
5. A report on real estate problems facing arts groups prepared by the Center for an Urban Future (pp. 49 – 57);
6. Mapping of cultural activity across all five boroughs executed by the Community Mapping Assistance Program (CMAP) of the New York Public Interest Research Group with data provided by the Blueprint and gathered from a variety of sources (pp. 16, 25, 33, 75);
7. Statistical data culled by Michael J. Gary from new and existing sources, including: the Alliance for the Arts, the Alliance of Resident Theatres/New York, Americans for the Arts, the Department of Cultural Affairs, Grantmakers in the Arts, Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), National Assembly of State Arts Organizations (NASAA), National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), National Science Foundation, New York City Arts Coalition, New York City Arts Education Roundtable, New York City Independent Budget Office (IBO), New York State Council on the Arts, Ohio State University, Office of Management and Budgets, U.S. Census Bureau, and the U.S. Department of Education (see charts, pp. 12, 21, 22, bibliography, p. 74);
8. A report on national cultural policy by Caron Atlas, an arts consultant who works to link art, community building, and cultural policy (pp. 65 – 68);
9. An examination of the role of individual artists in the cultural landscape and a summary of the artists' focus groups by Roberto Bedoya, writer and arts consultant (pp. 58 – 63).