

Voices for Creative New York

A Blueprint for Philanthropic Funders
To Invest in Policy Change
Through Advocacy and Organizing

CREATIVES
REBUILD
NEW YORK

HR&A

About Creatives Rebuild New York (CRNY)

Creatives Rebuild New York (CRNY) is a three-year, \$125 million initiative that provides guaranteed income and employment opportunities to artists across New York State. CRNY believes that artists are workers who deserve equitable, sustainable support structures and that improving the lives of artists is paramount to the vitality of New York State's collective social and economic well-being. Fiscally sponsored by Tides Center, CRNY's funding commitment is anchored by \$115 million from the Mellon Foundation and \$5 million each from the Ford Foundation and Stavros Niarchos Foundation (SNF). Learn more at creativesrebuildny.org.

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Prepared for CRNY by HR&A Advisors, Inc. (HR&A)

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Acknowledgements

Creatives Rebuild New York and HR&A Advisors would like to express our deepest appreciation to the many people who contributed to this Blueprint. The research and recommendations included here are the result of a comprehensive effort that brought together artists, creative workers, culture-bearers, organizers, arts service organizations, and other organizations representing a range of creative practices and spanning multiple cultural identities and creative industries across New York State.

We owe a special mention to the following organizations for participating in this effort: New York Folklore, Naturally Occurring Cultural Districts NY (NOCD-NY), LxNY | Latinx Arts Consortium of NY, Asian American Arts Alliance (A4), IndieSpace, ACE! (Upstate Alliance for the Creative Economy), New York Foundation for the Arts, NYC Arts in Education Roundtable, Tribeworks, Friends of Ganondagan, Arts Services Inc. of Western New York (ASI), Freelancers Union, Onöhsagwë:de' Cultural Center, The Alliance of Resident Theatres/New York, Working Artists and the Greater Economy (W.A.G.E.), Art.coop, New Yorkers for Culture & Arts, Dance/NYC, Actor's Equity Association, Entertainment Community Fund, Black Artists Collective, Rochester Artists Collaborative, 4AArts, ArtsNYS, Hue Arts NYS, Arts for LA, California for the Arts, Arts Alliance Illinois, and National Arts Policy Alliance.

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Introduction

There are systemic challenges facing New York's creative communities and there is more that policymakers can do to support artists and creative workers in our state. Despite their outsized impact on New York's economy, many creative workers live on the edge of hardship and economic uncertainty and require additional resources and protections to continue working and serving communities statewide.

Improving existing policy and advancing new policy solutions can help to improve conditions for New York's creative workforce alongside other economically precarious workers in New York. However, without a stronger base and ecosystem of organizations outside of government mobilizing for this kind of policy change, it will be difficult to win the resources and protections necessary for creative workers to thrive in New York. **Philanthropic funding needs to go further to support this ecosystem.**

An overview of the challenges faced by New York's creative workforce (and how the creative workforce is defined) is provided in the recently published [New York Isn't New York Without Artists](#) a policy playbook that is a companion publication to this blueprint. The playbook identifies timely and actionable policy solutions to address the drivers of economic uncertainty for New York's creative workforce.

Voices for Creative New York: A Blueprint for Philanthropic Funders To Invest in Policy Change Through Advocacy and Organizing

is a call to action for New York's grantmakers to proactively invest in strengthening the organizing and advocacy capacities of New York's creative workforce. The Blueprint is the result of a collaborative process that convened a diverse cross-section of creative workers and organizations that serve and organize creative workers in New York to make clear what investments are needed in the ecosystem and what assets can be leveraged.

We are calling on New York's philanthropic funders to adopt the recommendations in this blueprint. The core recommendations in this blueprint are: 1) address the critical under-resourcing of existing organizations that serve and organize creative workers in New York; 2) expand the base of creative workers civically engaged on issues that impact the well-being of workers; and 3) create new infrastructure for collaboration among organizers and organizations across the state that anchor this work.

Adequate investment from the philanthropic community on these core elements of the blueprint will grow the political capital of creative workers, lead to more coordinated efforts among organizations across the state, and result in more wins that advance policies that recognize creative workers are vital to the success of our region.

The State of Arts Advocacy and Creative Worker Organizing in New York

Understanding the dynamics of the ecosystem of organizations that serve and organize creative workers in New York is crucial for shaping effective investment and grantmaking strategies to support this ecosystem. Research and engagement of a diverse cross-section of arts advocates and creative workers have surfaced emerging themes on the key assets, gaps, and opportunities.

ASSETS IN THE ECOSYSTEM

Many organizations across New York engage with policy issues that impact creative workers in our state.

For example, the Freelancers Union, which boasts a membership count of more than 120,000 individuals in New York State, supports independent creative workers through advocacy, education, and services. IndieSpace supports independent theater-making in New York City and represents the collective efforts of more than 600 organizations and approximately 2,000 individual practitioners. Friends of Ganondagan represents 525 members, focusing on Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) history, culture, and living traditions. Music Workers Alliance is a “worker center” that fights for independent music workers at the federal, state and city level for access to benefits and fair protections. New Yorkers for Culture & Arts, which plays a major advocacy and convening role in New York City and is stepping into a growing role in state-level advocacy, engages on issues of equitable funding for the arts and hosts a well-attended weekly advocacy call that has helped to build momentum for recent budget successes in New York City.

Organizations come in the form of nonprofits, artist collectives, consortia of organizations, and labor unions.

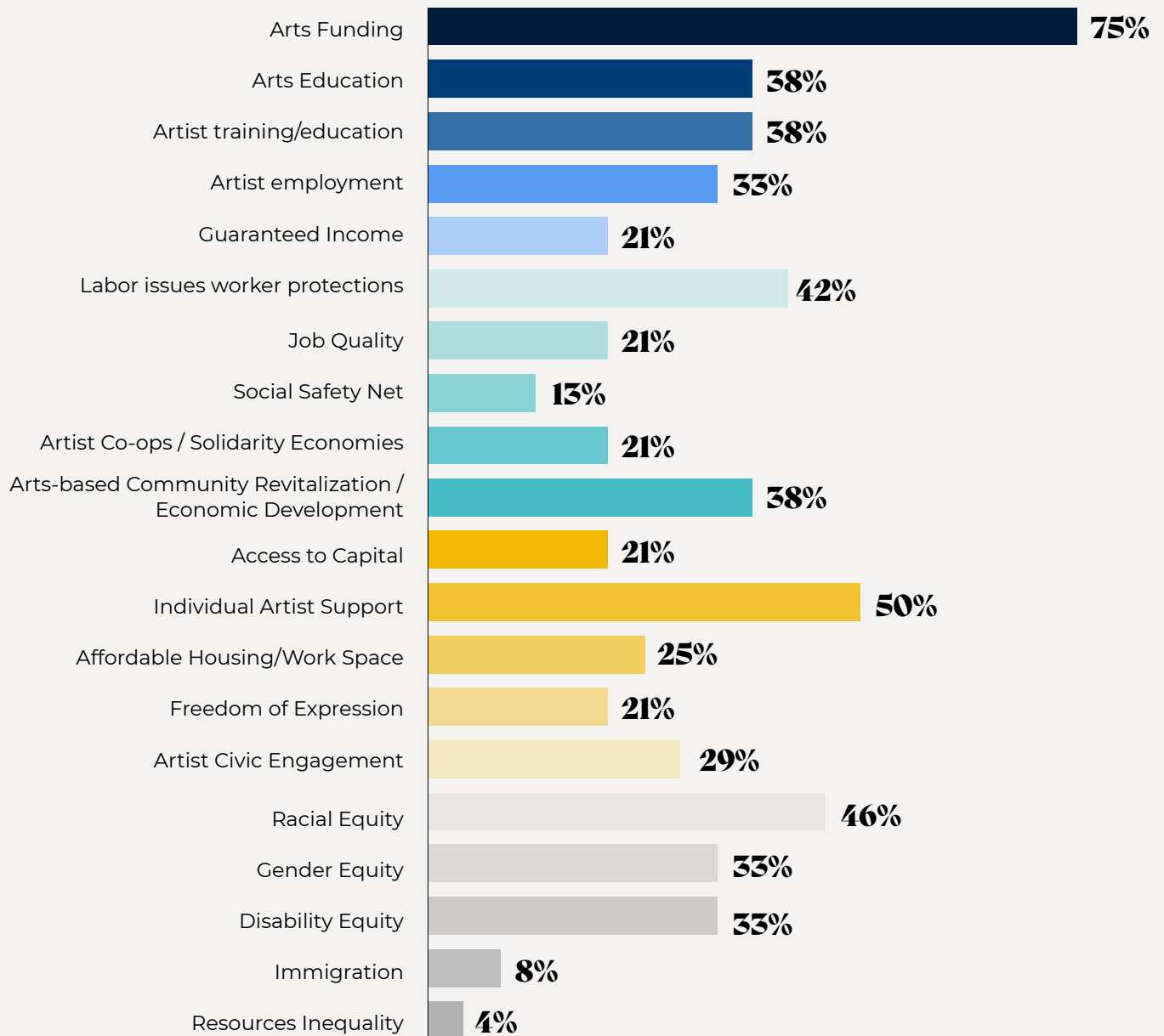
Actors’ Equity Association and the American Federation of Musicians Local 802 are labor unions representing workers in the ‘live arts’ in New York that exemplify advocacy and organizing work that helps shape legislative agenda. ArtsNYS is a nonprofit network that coordinates and convenes a broad range of arts service providers, and advocates to

strengthen the arts throughout New York State. Organizations like Art.coop, Tribeworks, and the Rochester Artists Collaborative exemplify organizations in the ecosystem that approach base-building through solidarity models and cooperative structures. The Alliance for Resident Theaters/New York is a membership-based non-profit that helps New York City theaters finance their goals through grant programs, strategic cash flow loans, and ongoing advocacy efforts to defend arts funding at the state and city levels.

Organizations are tackling a wide range of issues reflective of the communities they serve, which span a diversity of cultural identities and artistic practices.

For example, the Latinx Arts Consortium of NY advocates for cultural equity amplifying Latinx arts across New York City while promoting engagement in equitable arts funding campaigns. The Asian American Arts Alliance fosters freedom of expression for Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander artists, and contributes to broader initiatives to center historically marginalized cultures. New York Folklore’s mission is to encourage and amplify the diverse folk cultural expressions of New York and its traditional craft artists, many of whom share rural and/or immigrant identities. Naturally Occurring Cultural Districts NY (NOCN-NY) focuses on community culture as part of thriving and equitable neighborhoods, and conducts advocacy around public space, civic participation, and just support systems. MuseumHue is a pivotal advocate for underrepresented arts entities led by BIPOC communities, driving agenda-setting initiatives that amplify diverse cultural voices in policy discussions and funding decisions.

What issues does your organization tackle?

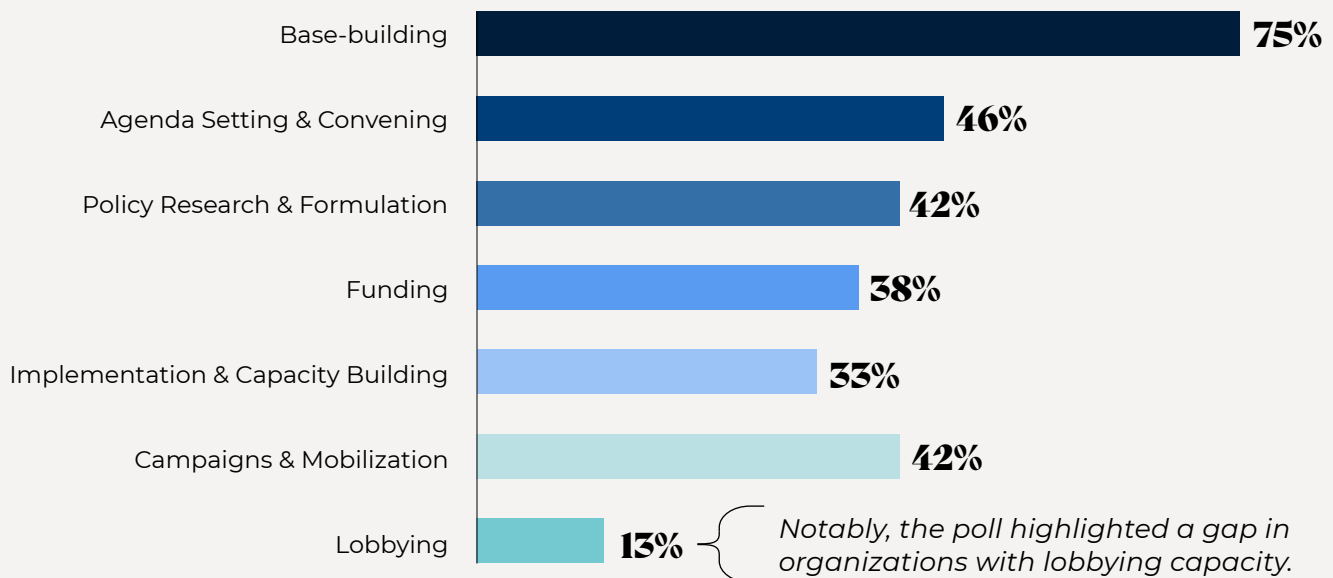


A pre-workshop poll of 24 organizations that participated in advocacy convenings hosted by CRNY revealed that collectively they are tackling a wide range of issues, including arts funding, individual artist support, worker protections, and racial equity.

Organizations play different roles in the overall ecosystem—from grassroots base-building to strategic agenda-setting, policy formulation, lobbying, and technical assistance. Dance/NYC, as part of its advocacy work, publishes a periodic census of dance workers in New York City. Organizations like the Actors' Equity Association, the Entertainment Community Fund, and the New York Foundation for the Arts contribute expertise in policy formulation and research that shapes legislative agendas and work with organizations that directly engage policymakers through lobbying campaigns. Upstate Alliance for the Creative

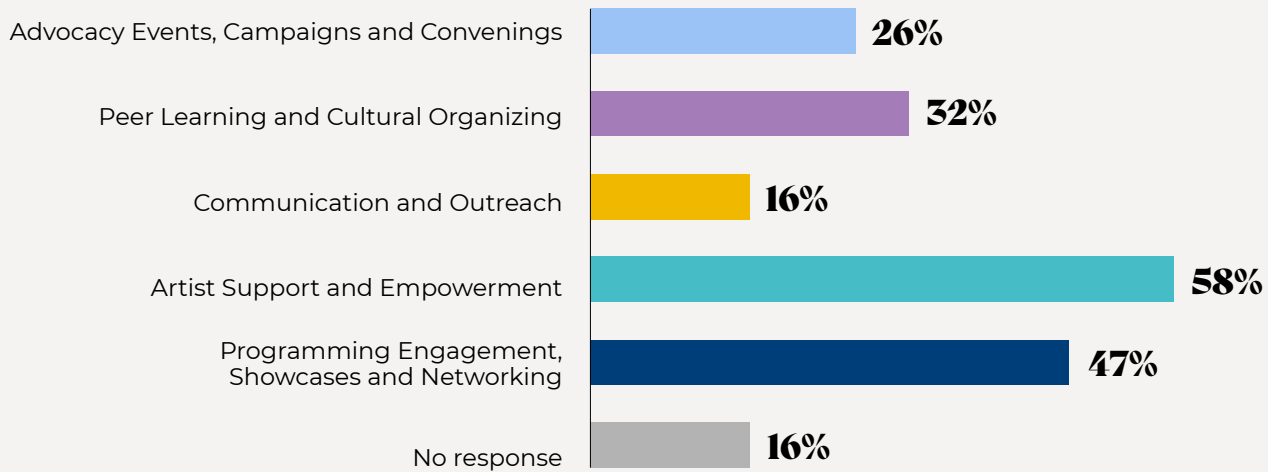
Economy convenes stakeholders, drives policy discussions, and mobilizes support for issues impacting creative industries. Working Artists and the Greater Economy (W.A.G.E.) is a pivotal initiative to organize artists around fair labor practices in the cultural industries. Arts Services Inc. of Western New York (ASI) provides technical assistance and capacity-building support to artists and cultural organizations across the region. The New York City Arts in Education Roundtable is a non-profit that tackles issues impacting the arts education community and hosts the largest arts education gathering in the region.

What role is your organization playing in advocacy and policy?



The pre-workshop poll of 24 organizations revealed that collectively many arts organizations in New York are engaged in base-building, but there is a notable gap when it comes to organizations engaging in lobbying efforts.

If your organization organizes artists, how does it do that? What tactics does it employ?



The pre-workshop poll revealed that organizations are employing a wide range of tactics to organize artists, including through artist support programs and by providing networking opportunities.

Several model campaigns have underscored the transformative impact of sustained policy change campaigns within New York State's creative economy in recent years.

Notably, campaigns such as the “Freelance Isn’t Free” campaign have exemplified strategic advocacy that centers precarious workers in the creative economy. Two landmark legislations emerged (New York City and New York State) championed by the Freelancers Union and a coalition of freelance workers and other advocacy organizations, that established crucial protections for freelancers, including rights to written contracts, timely payment, and recourse for non-payment—an essential safeguard for the livelihoods of independent creatives across the state.

Another example is how the Music Workers Alliance successfully advocated for including independent arts contractors as eligible businesses for New York State’s Seed Funding

Grant Program, a \$200 million grant program designed to help early-stage small businesses and promote economic recovery from COVID-19. This win set a precedent for making statewide small business funding available to independent creative workers.

More recently, New Yorkers for Culture & Arts led a successful coalition of arts organizations pushing to restore the budget of New York City’s Department of Cultural Affairs and won automatic funding for arts organizations that have received public funding for several consecutive years, helping to stabilize the budgets while reducing the administrative burden for these crucially important pieces of New York City’s cultural fabric.

GAPS IN THE ECOSYSTEM

This section highlights findings and insights on the challenges and gaps that are limiting the creative worker organizing ecosystem. While there have been some successful efforts in recent years, there has not been the sustained level of policy wins necessary to sufficiently address the steep challenges faced by creative workers or to build the durable political capital that keeps the needs of creative workers top of mind for New York policymakers.

There is a need to build a larger base of creative workers across New York State who are civically engaged on issues impacting their livelihoods. Power comes in numbers and there are not yet enough creative workers who are civically engaged on the issues that impact their livelihoods. The underlying structure of the sector, where workers are more likely to be self-employed than have a single employer, is a challenge to building collective power.

Organizations that organize creative workers are struggling with limited resources.

Organizations are often stretched thin and operating with limited funding. This strain hinders their ability to dedicate staff focused on advocacy, policy analysis, or coalition coordination. Without designated personnel with the expertise and time to lead these efforts, organizations struggle to prioritize advocacy and organizing work amidst competing operational demands and programmatic responsibilities. And among those who do have these kinds of staffing resources, many find it difficult to retain staff with political and policy expertise in addition to experiencing challenges backfilling roles and training new staff to do this type of work.

The limited experience of many organizations combined with inadequate levels of funding restricts organizations' abilities to work with professional lobbyists, invest in policy and advocacy training, and produce research.

There are few organizations in the ecosystem with C4 lobbying resources, except large cultural institutions and the unions (and sometimes their lobbying work is at odds). Less experienced organizations can benefit from training to better understand the ways policies can be shaped at the state and local levels. There is also a noted lack of resources for research on the issues impacting creative workers.

Resource issues are exacerbated for organizations grappling with intersectional challenges.

Those who organize for racial equity and disability justice, among others, are finding that their causes are not taken up meaningfully by broad-based advocacy campaigns to support the creative community in New York. This results in BIPOC arts organizers working separately from their peers, hampering progress on initiatives to root out systemic disparities.

The lack of commitment from philanthropic funders perpetuates a scarcity mindset. This makes it harder to collaborate with others who can seem like competitors for scarce funding, which hampers efforts to build partnerships and long-term coalitions.

Many organizations face challenges in sustaining their participation in coalitions and collective impact initiatives. Research and engagement with stakeholders validated a strong interest among organizations to expand their advocacy and organizing work, as well as a growing recognition that to build lasting power on the issues that matter to artists and creative workers it is necessary to enhance the resources of existing organizations to sustain their participation in coalitions and collective impact initiatives.

The lack of sustained participation in partnerships, coalitions, and collective impact initiatives is resulting in fragmented efforts. Stakeholders acknowledge that there are considerable assets in the ecosystem, but also significant room for growth in terms of working together more effectively. For example, there is a notable disconnect between the creative unions in our region and non-union organizers and arts advocacy groups, even though there are many overlapping agendas. There is a critical need for greater unity and collaboration across arts and labor groups in New York, in addition to those groups advancing broader worker justice and economic justice agendas in the region.

There remains a significant need for greater collaboration and coordination across geographical regions. Despite the active presence of advocacy organizations both upstate and downstate in New York State, the levels of collaboration show significant room for improvement. This fragmentation impedes collective efforts to effectively address statewide issues impacting creative workers and cultural organizations.

New York lacks statewide organizing infrastructure to enable collaboration, coordinated base-building, and to advance a shared, comprehensive agenda to address the critical needs of creative workers.

New York is only a handful of states without an independent statewide arts advocacy organization so clear responsibility for nurturing that infrastructure is lacking.



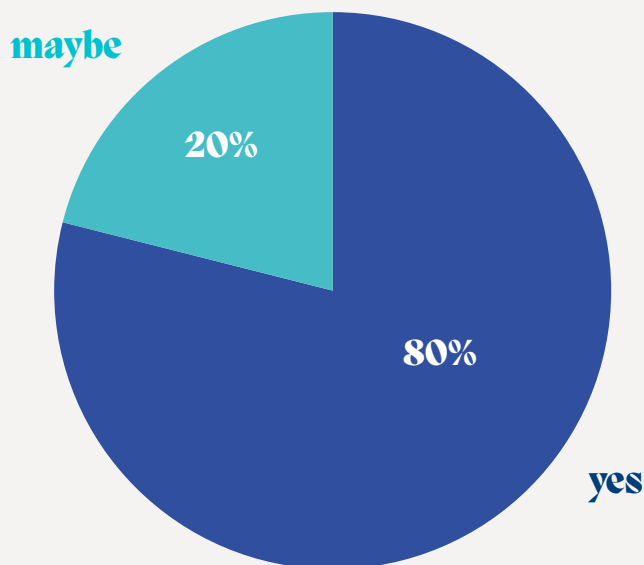
OPPORTUNITIES IN THE ECOSYSTEM

There are plans among existing organizations to expand their advocacy and organizing work. Interest is high among the convened group. There is an opportunity to leverage the efforts of organizations working on strategic initiatives intended to grow their constituencies, such as Dance/NYC, which is actively setting goals to build a more active base of dance workers who they can count on to take key actions, including sign-ons, outreach to elected officials, and rallies.

The policy framework introduced in *New York Isn't New York Without Artists* has the potential to align a diverse set of organizations that care about the issues impacting creative workers. The timely and actionable set of proposals highlighted in the [policy playbook](#) includes strategies to better resource both individuals and organizations beyond traditional arts funding from New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA). This playbook can serve as the basis for solidifying a shared agenda focused on improving the lives and livelihoods of creative workers in New York.

There is strong interest and momentum among influential organizations in New York to strengthen statewide collaboration. Stakeholders raised the need to establish clear responsibility for nurturing the infrastructure that enables collaboration. This presents an opportunity to convene organizations to collaboratively design and maintain new infrastructure at the statewide scale.

Does your organization have plans to expand its advocacy/policy change work in the next 1-2 years?



The pre-workshop poll revealed that the vast majority of arts organizations are planning to expand their advocacy and organizing work in the next 1-2 years.

There is a growing understanding of the need to coordinate work across the entire policy change lifecycle. Stakeholders indicated an interest in coordinating their roles in relation to organizations in the ecosystem occupying other crucial points of the continuum.

Policy Life Cycle



Collaborative Vision

CRNY and HR&A convened a cross-section of New York creative workers and organizations that serve and organize creative workers to map out opportunities to address critical gaps, leverage strategic assets, and invest in the organizing and advocacy capacities of New York's creative workforce and arts and culture ecosystem.

The CRNY advocacy convenings brought together a diverse coalition of organizations representing a wide range of communities, artistic disciplines, and identity groups at city, state, and regional levels. From small teams to networks of hundreds, this gathering highlighted the strength in both breadth and depth of arts advocacy. Together, they represent a collective base of over 124,515 individuals and 1,345 organizations.

The main convening activities were a series of workshops facilitated over several months that served to surface insights on the most critical challenges facing the arts advocacy and creative worker organizing ecosystems.

Three main challenges surfaced from the convened group:

1. **Addressing the severe resource constraints** that hamper the work of those who are already serving and organizing creative workers in New York;
2. **Growing the base of creative workers** who actively participate in civic engagement opportunities and campaigns that impact creative workers and other workers;
3. **Maintaining the infrastructure for collaboration** among the organizers and organizations that anchor this work across the state.

The convened group landed on a set of recommendations for philanthropic funders:

1. **Provide flexible funding to organizations serving and organizing creative workers:** Allocate resources to organizations already engaged in foundational work, ensuring they have the support needed to sustain and expand their efforts.
2. **Support programs and campaigns to increase civic engagement of creative workers:** Back efforts to increase the number of creative workers across that state who are civically active on policy issues that impact their needs and livelihoods and those of other precarious workers.
3. **Invest in the creation of a Statewide Advocacy and Organizing Collaborative:** Seed a collaborative that invites existing groups to shape its structure in the first year and support a formal launch of a multi-year collaborative in the second year.

The following sections elaborate on each of these investment strategies. The third strategy, given the rare opportunity to engage the convened group on the issue of collaboration and shared leadership, emerged as a focus of the workshops and therefore has more robust detail than the others.

Investment Strategies for Philanthropic Funders

1 | Provide Flexible Funding to Organizations Serving and Organizing Creative Workers in New York

Many organizations in New York State that serve and organize creative workers face chronic underinvestment. Funders often do not fully understand or appreciate the broader impact of these organizations. Arts advocacy organizations and arts service organizations, which serve as vital intermediaries providing services to creative workers, are finding the funding landscape particularly challenging as investment by funders in these types of organizations has decreased significantly in recent years, part of a broader trend in the decrease of charitable giving to the broader arts and culture sector.

This is a missed opportunity for impact. Organizations that offer programs and services for creative workers are often well-positioned for advocacy and organizing work because the individuals they serve are a natural base to organize around issues impacting creative workers. Indeed, many artist service organizations across the state provide pathways for the artists they serve to participate in organizing campaigns around critical issues like affordable housing, healthcare, and economic security.

Funders should increase their investment in organizations with established track records of leading advocacy and organizing work on issues impacting creative workers. These organizations need to operate with adequate resources to sustain their essential work and sustain their participation in long-term coalitions and collective impact initiatives. Funders can learn from peers who are already [supporting grassroots organizing](#).

Multi-year general operating support for these organizations can help to ensure that they serve as part of the backbone of the creative worker organizing ecosystem. This kind of investment strengthens the organizational infrastructure necessary for long-term resilience and positions these organizations to scale their impact.

Funders must prioritize resources for organizations that are most in need and least able to secure funding independently. This means identifying and supporting grassroots organizations that serve marginalized communities. One way to do that is to identify local coalitions and engaging the grassroots organizations that are part of those coalitions, or working with intermediary organizations with a track record of successfully distributing funds to grassroots groups. Funders may need to adapt their risk tolerance and adjust their due diligence processes as these organizations may not track the kinds of information funders routinely request. But by concentrating investment efforts on these organizations, funders can ensure that a diverse range of creative voices can shape the direction of policy efforts and intersectionality is woven into every aspect of their investment strategy.



Kendry Martínez / Colectivo Intercultural TRANSgrediendo / LGBT Center Intercultural Collective Inc.
Photo Credit: Colectivo Intercultural TRANSgrediendo / LGBT Center Intercultural Collective Inc.

2 | Support Programs and Campaigns to Increase Civic Engagement of Creative Workers

Unless the creative workforce in New York grows as a political base, the issues impacting creative workers will not be a priority for policymakers. There isn't a strong labor movement in the creative sector outside of the creative unions and recent museum worker unionization efforts. The broader creative sector remains largely unorganized.

Philanthropic funders should support campaigns and programs that seek to expand the number of creative workers who are civically engaged and actively participating in organizing and advocacy efforts. Supported programs and initiatives can encompass a range of activities designed to inform and motivate creative workers to participate in relevant advocacy and organizing efforts. Programs can include political education trainings, public messaging campaigns about the importance of civic participation among creative workers, gatherings such as rallies, advocacy days, and conferences, or other actions that demonstrate the direct impact such participation can have on creative workers' livelihoods and communities. This base-building work is crucial for effective organizing.

Funders should take note of the organizations that amplify the “Art Takes Work” campaign, a CRNY-supported narrative change campaign that will bring attention to the hard-working artists of New York. The campaign will be launched on January 14 with an event in partnership with the Times Square Alliance. The campaign's goals are to advance the public's understanding that art is labor and artists are workers, and to promote the CRNY Policy Playbook. Among the organizations that amplify the “Art Takes Work” campaign, funders are likely to find other programmatic initiatives that those organizations are advancing to grow a base of artists who identify as workers and are willing to take action on issues that impact workers.



3 | Invest in the Creation of a Statewide Advocacy and Organizing Collaborative

New York lacks a strong, independent statewide arts advocacy organization. So without more sustained collaboration among existing groups, the ability to effectively organize to address statewide issues impacting creative workers will continue to be limited. There is a significant risk that the unnecessary divides—between upstate and downstate organizations and coalitions; between New York’s creative unions and its arts service organizations; among BIPOC-led organizations and others—will continue to lead to missed opportunities to move public policymakers to adequately and comprehensively support the state’s creative workforce.

While there are foundational elements in place, a clear responsibility for nurturing the infrastructure that enables organizers and organizations across the state to collaborate on organizing and policy initiatives is lacking. Establishing clear lines of responsibility for strengthening and sustaining relationships among influential organizations and coalitions—particularly those who are convenors and/or serve as “backbone organizations” for collective efforts—is essential for creating a unified voice and a more coordinated approach to advocacy and organizing efforts in the coming years.

The immediate opportunity for funders is to support the creation of a Statewide Advocacy and Organizing Collaborative. One of the imperatives that emerged from the group convened by CRNY and HR&A was the need to “identify who or what should be tending to the infrastructure for collaboration among organizers and organizations across the state.”

The organizations that participated in the CRNY advocacy convenings engaged in a visioning exercise around the prompts:

What is our vision of the future where arts organizations effectively collaborate to advance a common policy agenda?

What actions are required to maintain a strong “connective tissue” between arts advocacy stakeholders?

The visioning exercise and follow-up discussions among the convened group served to solidify the outlines of a grantmaking proposal for funders: to seed the creation of a **Statewide Advocacy and Organizing Collaborative**.

The key elements of the emerging proposal include supporting a group of organizations and creative workers to shape the structure of the Statewide Collaborative in the first year and supporting the formal launch of a multi-year initiative in the second year.

Given the makeup of the organizations that are shaping this proposal, anchored by the group convened by CRNY and HR&A, the emerging vision for the Statewide Collaborative has the potential to galvanize participation from a critical mass of organizers and organizations that can bridge the main disconnects in the ecosystem and unify upstate convenors, downstate organizers, creative unions throughout New York, and the diverse ecosystem of organizations that serve and advocate for creative workers in our region.

VISION & GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The vision for the Statewide Advocacy and Organizing Collaborative is serving as a hub for statewide coordination, facilitating cross-sector partnerships, and advancing a common policy agenda.

The Statewide Collaborative is envisioned to embrace a broad definition of the creative workforce in New York and a core membership of creative workers and organizations with a strong track record of organizing other creative workers. The goal is for the organizations in the Statewide Collaborative to include representation from:

- Labor Unions for Creative Workers
- Artist Networks
- Creative Workers
- Arts Advocacy Organizations
- Artist Service Organizations
- Policy Research Organizations
- Worker/Economic Justice Organizations
- Local and Regional Philanthropic Funders
- 501(c)(3) and 501(c)(4) entities

The Statewide Collaborative should prioritize creative and cultural worker leadership. Having independent workers with meaningful leadership roles, and not just people affiliated with organizations, ensures that base-building and systematic development of leaders who can take increasing responsibility remains at the core of the vision for the initiative. The organizational structure should facilitate shared decision-making, responsibility, labor, and equitable compensation.

The Statewide Collaborative should adopt a clear framework of representation that is inclusive of diverse identities and cultural practices in its leadership. Even as it embraces a broad definition of the creative workforce, the goals and purpose of the Statewide Collaborative should affirm that the steepest barriers are faced by creative workers with marginalized identities rooted in race, class, gender, sexuality, disability, age, and geography. BIPOC and Queer representation in leadership is a priority.



3 | Invest in the Creation of a Statewide Advocacy and Organizing Collaborative

CORE FUNCTIONS

The **Statewide Advocacy and Organizing Collaborative** is envisioned to execute a set of core functions. First and foremost: guiding the vision, driving focus, and mobilizing resources for collective campaigns, including how member organizations “tap in” to participate in campaigns. The core functions would also include hosting regular convenings, forums, and conferences, including yearly summits to maintain strong relationships with key policymakers, funders, and community leaders; fostering collaboration and communication among members, partners, and allies; serving as an information hub and providing a central repository for data collection and policy research; and coordinating education and training resources to enhance organizing skills and knowledge of the political landscape among creative workers.

Below is an expanded set of functions envisioned:

Advancing a Common Policy Agenda Statewide

- Set priorities for a common statewide agenda that addresses the critical needs of New York’s creative workforce, building from CRNY’s Policy Playbook.
- Engage in policy formulation and reform at local, state, and national levels to support the creative workforce.
- Ensure equity is a foundational principle of the agenda, prioritizing the voices and needs of BIPOC, LGBTQ+, disability justice, and other marginalized communities.

Build the Base of Creative Workers

- Support collaborative members in growing a diverse constituency of creative workers through grassroots organizing and outreach efforts.
- Establish shared infrastructure for members to provide constituents a platform to share their stories and contribute to statewide policy discussions.

- Facilitate the formation of local chapters and regional groups to ensure representation and advocacy across the state.

Convene

- Organize regular convenings, forums, and conferences (across all regions of New York) to bring together stakeholders, including organizing yearly Summits.
- Foster collaboration and communication among partners and allies.
- Engage in national partnerships and capacity building with groups like the National Arts Policy Alliance (NAPA) and the Creative States Coalition.

Partner

- Develop strategic partnerships with labor unions, economic justice organizations, and other advocacy groups.
- Maintain and strengthen relationships with key policymakers, funders, and community leaders.
- Collaborate with educational institutions, research organizations, and think tanks to advance policy goals.

Research

- Conduct research to inform policy development and advocacy strategies; develop reports, white papers, and policy briefs to disseminate findings and recommendations.
- Serve as a hub of data on the economic, social, and cultural impact of creative workers; maintain a repository of case studies, best practices, and successful advocacy campaigns for reference and guidance.

Political Education

- Develop educational programs for creative workers on policy issues, legislative processes, and effective advocacy techniques.
- Develop programs to support the professional development of member organizations.

3 | Invest in the Creation of a Statewide Advocacy and Organizing Collaborative

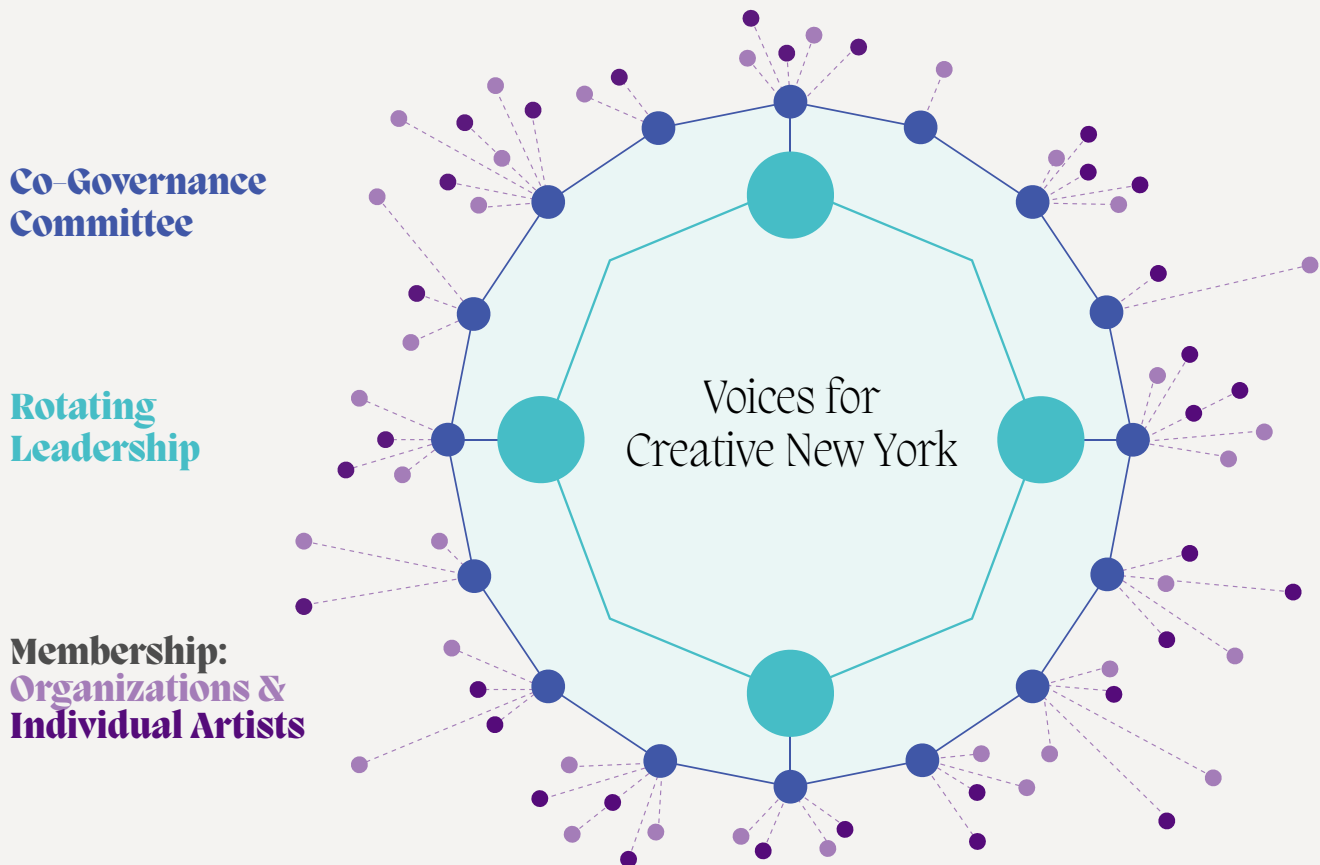
ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES

The convened group engaged on the question of organizational structure, decision-making, and accountability.

The Statewide Advocacy and Organizing Collaborative is envisioned to adopt a model of governance and decision-making that creates opportunities for shared leadership. Sharing leadership responsibilities among a core group of organizations with convening capacities and existing networks can enhance the legitimacy and effectiveness of the efforts of the Statewide Collaborative, which can have multiple levels of responsibility

that allow key players to step up when most needed. However clear decision-making protocols are crucial to ensure it is effective and avoids the common pitfalls of collective governance. There are successful models to draw from, including those that employ “backbone organizations” to ensure a focus on administration and execution.

From engagement with the convened group, one model of an organizational structure emerged that would be led by a Co-Governance Committee with a role similar to that of a non-profit board and a Rotating Leadership Team that would be comprised of a smaller group with a role similar to that of co-executive directors of a non-profit organization.



The Statewide Advocacy and Organizing Collaborative is envisioned to adopt a model of governance and decision-making that creates opportunities for shared leadership.



3 | Invest in the Creation of a Statewide Advocacy and Organizing Collaborative

For both the Co-Governance Committee and the Rotating Leadership Team, the goal would be to ensure that they are inclusive bodies reflecting a diverse cross-section of stakeholders who are pivotal within their respective fields and that creative workers are included and supported to be part of these leadership bodies.

The Co-Governance Committee would serve as the long-term decision-making body promoting the strategic vision and the Rotating Leadership team would function through a “rotating stewardship” model, where different organizations that are members of the Statewide Collaborative would take turns participating, ensuring a diverse range of perspectives and a sustained commitment to co-governance. The Rotating Leadership Team

would combine expertise from members of the Statewide Collaborative that includes policy, organizing, programming, and development. Their proposed responsibilities would include developing and implementing strategies to achieve the Statewide Collaborative’s mission and goals.

This model would be just one potential organizational structure to explore. The convened group of stakeholders is interested in examining alternative approaches and evaluating each structure to determine the best path forward to balance coordination with autonomy and decision-making, ensuring efforts are both cohesive and responsive to the unique needs of a diversity of communities.

PHASED APPROACH AND NEXT STEPS

Among the recommendations to funders identified through this process, there are near-term opportunities that merit planning and coordinated action. **Crucially, the organizations that participated in the CRNY advocacy convenings have signaled strong interest in continuing to collaborate to move forward efforts that realize these opportunities.**

The ask of funders is provide the emerging collaborative financial support over the next 2-3 years to achieve the following:

Year 1: Base-Building & Planning for Sustained Collaboration

In the first year, a critical mass of organizations that participated in the CRNY advocacy convenings are anticipated to work together on events that advance collective base-building work and simultaneously to engage in deeper planning to launch a formal structure for sustained collaboration the following year. The first year is focused on solidifying an understanding of how the organizations can best to work together and the assets that everyone brings to the work.

- **Program Support for Statewide Base-Building Activities: Expand the Empire Arts Summit:** ArtsNYS is planning the Fall 2025 iteration of their statewide summit to engage more stakeholders on a broader range of issues that impact artists and creative workers. Bringing an expanded coalition of individuals and organizations to the summit will grow the base of civically engaged arts advocates and create the foundation for a collectively shaped statewide advocacy agenda. The [California Arts & Culture Summit](#) offers an exciting model for this kind of expanded gathering.
- **Planning Grant for Statewide Collaborative: Design the Statewide Advocacy and Organizing Collaborative:** Overall, it is anticipated that a critical mass of 15+ influential organizations across

the state will participate in the working group that emerges as the core of the Statewide Collaborative. Among those organizations, a core of 2-3 organizations are proposing to facilitate the working group to create the Launch Plan, which will outline the collaborative's structure and roles and responsibilities for key personnel. The convened group of stakeholders is interested in examining alternative approaches and evaluating each structure to determine the best path forward.

Year 2: Launch of the Statewide Advocacy and Organizing Collaborative

Building on the structure and strategies established during the planning phase, the anticipated plan for Year 2 is to officially execute the Launch Plan for the Statewide Collaborative.



Conclusion

The work of artists is essential to society and central to New York's identity, culture, and economy. Now more than ever, we need our artists to serve as agents of positive social change.

But too many of our institutions are failing artists and creative workers. Both philanthropy and government are not sufficiently providing the critical support necessary to ensure that artists can thrive in every community in our state. The root issue is power. Arts funders have an opportunity to equip artists and arts organizations with the resources they need to build power to more effectively advocate for their needs.

We call upon leaders in the philanthropic sector to use this blueprint to invest in arts advocacy and creative worker organizing and support the organizations already at this intersection. By pursuing the recommendations in this blueprint, philanthropic funders can close the gaps in support that currently jeopardize the strength of New York's creative economy.

The ingredients for success are all here, from the traction that we are seeing with the recently introduced policy framework, *New York Isn't New York Without Artists*, to the resilient and coordinated efforts of advocacy organizations working across the state.

New York State has an opportunity to become a national model of how a durable arts and cultural ecosystem can bolster a creative workforce in the face of the extreme challenges we face as a society: political, financial, environmental, cultural, and more. This is precisely the time to realize the potential of our diverse creative workforce and to demonstrate that the creativity and work of our artists in our communities are what make New York, New York.

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