



A VISION FOR

Emergency Readiness, Response and Recovery in the Arts Sector

A National Coalition for Arts' Preparedness
and Emergency Response White Paper

September 2012

THE VISION

This country's diverse artistic output is one of our greatest resources. However, the arts sector is at great risk of loss from unanticipated and unplanned events. Time and again, the arts community has been faced with disasters of a mass order, including September 11, Hurricanes Katrina, Hugo and Irene, the AIDS epidemic, floods in the Midwest and fires in the West. Today we must be conscious of risks from pandemics and terrorist threats.

On a smaller scale, individual artists and arts organizations face problems that impact their ability to do their daily work: the irreversible computer crash; the public protests of a controversial exhibit or performance; the unexpected loss of an organization's founder or leader; the frozen pipes or electrical fires that damage a facility or studio; the sudden decline in revenue; the break-in or petty theft that damages the psyche of the organization or individual.

We as a community need to address this challenge. Over the past decade, a number of efforts have developed, ad hoc in most cases, in response to identified needs or to directly help in the aftermath of an emergency. The National Coalition for Arts' Preparedness and Emergency Response (the Coalition) believes that the lack of a coordinated, sustained effort ultimately costs the arts sector. The Coalition has a vision and has taken steps towards a more unified approach, and has made progress in helping artists and arts organizations, individually and collectively, to become more resilient, more in-control, more able to withstand the unexpected. To ensure we come through crises, able to continue our artistic efforts, and with our artwork, physical assets, and community relationships relatively intact. We also recognize that the arts often act as a catalyst for community healing and connection in the wake of a disaster, and must be prepared to do so. Our vision is that no matter what hap-

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pens **today**, we want to be able to do **tomorrow**, what we were doing **yesterday**.

The best way to recover from an unexpected event of any type is to have planned in advance—to be in a state of **readiness**. To have records

and portfolios backed up remotely, studios and arts facilities prepared for emergencies, crisis communications plans and contact lists in place, and plans and training in place for restarting critical business functions as quickly and completely as possible.

Whether or not an organization, artist or community has a readiness plan, when they experience an emergency they need outside assistance and support for immediate **relief**. Existing government and human service organizations are prepared to assist with general humanitarian needs but are unable to meet the specific and unique needs of the

arts community including immediate recovery and preservation of artwork, tools, equipment and facilities.

Once immediate relief has been provided and an organization or artist is ready to resume business activity, a system for **recovery** is needed for the short- and long-term return to full functionality: from restoring data and rebuilding damaged or lost physical facilities, to navigating public and private recovery programs and re-establishing previous—or establishing new—markets and audiences.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

In 2006, the Coalition for Artists' Preparedness and Emergency Response, an effort led by CERF+ (Craft Emergency Relief Fund+Artists' Emergency Resources) formed in order to assure that an organized safety net was in place for individual artists and the organizations that serve them. As South Arts became deeply involved

through its recovery efforts for organizations, the evolution to the Coalition for Arts' Preparedness and Emergency Response took place. Members of this task force include: the National Endowment for the Arts, state arts councils and regional arts organizations, arts funders, arts service organizations and individuals active and interested in its mission. A *Blueprint* plan to guide the creation of this safety net was drafted; member organizations have worked to create tools, resources and emergency response mechanisms, including *The Studio Protector* and *ArtsReady*, preparedness training programs, databases with emergency relief resources, an incipient arts responder network and advocacy efforts on behalf of artists working to replace lost tools after disasters.

The Coalition seeks to understand and respond to the needs of the entire arts community from individual artists and artist-centered groups to arts presenting, producing and service organizations of all sizes, including the administrators that manage them. We envision a sector that is prepared to meet exigencies and ready to serve those in need when preparation is not enough. However, this work depends on the engagement of leaders in all parts of the arts sector to carry the readiness message; build and develop resources for readiness, response and recovery; and to support one another in protecting our combined resources, cultural assets, history and people.

OBSTACLES

While the Coalition is working to create one, currently no nationwide coordinated system exists to address the three phases of preparedness, relief/response and recovery. Such a system needs to be in place prior to business interruptions; needs to be known to the arts community so that they can access it before, during and after an emergency; and needs to interact with but not duplicate the extant relief system including the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the

Small Business Association, the U.S. Department of Labor, state and local emergency management offices, and private relief agencies.

Readiness planning is also not a current business standard in our sector. When South Arts surveyed arts and cultural organizations across the country in May 2008, results showed that 68% of these organizations had experienced a crisis situation and did not have a plan in place before the event, and **still** did not have one in place afterwards. Top reasons given for the lack of a plan: 1) Not knowing where to begin and 2) Planning is not a priority for the organization's leadership. Artists, too, in large part, do not have readiness plans in place and again, the reasons boil down to not making it a priority and not knowing where to begin.

Some pockets of planning and recovery resources existed prior to the Coalition's formal work—The Actors' Fund, NYFASource, CERF+, The Chicago Artists Resource, Artist Trust, and others all maintain databases and resource information about emergency, relief and recovery. The NEA, the Heritage Emergency National Task Force and the American Institute for Conservation provide planning and recovery resources, particularly for institutions that manage collections and archives. Large public facilities are served by the International Association of Venue Managers.

Some state arts agencies, such as the Mississippi Arts Commission, offer artists and arts organizations direct training and tools for readiness planning. The Actors Fund, MusiCares, Jazz Foundation of America, CERF+ and other artists' assistance funds provide emergency financial assistance, counseling and case management services to help artists address immediate needs and access community and government benefits and services. Americans for the Arts and South Arts maintain Emergency Relief Funds to assist arts organizations in the wake of emergencies.

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Individual artists may access training, tools and emergency financial assistance from CERF+, other non-profits and a number of private foundations. The American Alliance of Museums delivers services and information on planning, preservation and conservation to its members. The Coalition is working to ensure that these excellent resources and best practices are publicized, coordinated and communicated; however, gaps still exist and too many artists and arts organizations are uninformed and ill-equipped in the face of crises.

We also recognize that there are both actual and psychological barriers to readiness planning. With shrinking resources, artists and organizations are hard-pressed to achieve their most urgent activities – making it difficult to draw their attention to the long-range importance of risk management and planning. And few of us want to imagine ourselves experiencing an emergency large or small. Yet, our current investments of time, money, and creativity could be lost without a structure for readiness, response and recovery.

STRATEGIES

We propose a movement to transform the arts field to a state of readiness—ready individually, ready as a sector, ready to help our own when they need it. We envision that not many years from now, artists and organizations will measure their overall health in part by their readiness. Just as our sector has recognized the need for, and works toward cultural diversity in our board

rooms and our offices, and is working to ensure all people have access to the arts; so we can collectively and imaginatively move toward a standard of readiness.

The Coalition and its members have conducted research and developed recommendations and tools, and training programs. Some of these are summarized on the next page. More information on the Coalition's efforts can be found at Grant-makers in the Arts' website; the Coalition's *National Blueprint for Emergency Preparedness, Relief and Recovery for Artists*, which informs this white paper; and information on ArtsReady's organization-focused efforts at www.ArtsReady.org.

TRAINING & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Coalition partners actively create, present and disseminate information and training about preparedness resources and practices at conferences and in webinars, podcasts and other venues/channels. “Train the trainer” sessions have targeted consultants who work with individual artists to help incorporate preparedness practices into business skill building sessions. A new pilot program works with BFA and MFA programs to incorporate preparedness practices into professional development courses. The Coalition welcomes ideas for how to incorporate resources and training into both new and existing professional training opportunities.

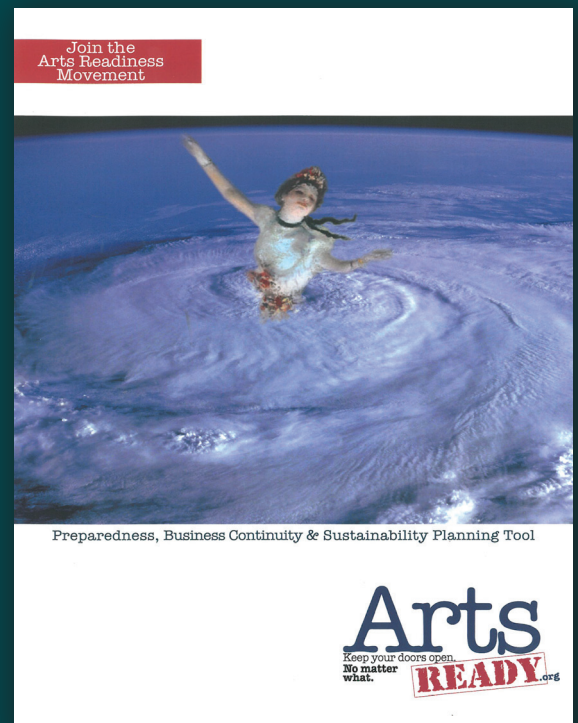


CERF+, on behalf of the Coalition, has developed an emergency preparedness and response toolkit for artists called The Studio Protector. It consists of an interactive ready-reference Wall Guide and a companion web site with an Online Guide that complements and elaborates on the information contained in the wall guide. These tools were designed by artists for artists with the assistance of some of the nation's leading authorities on emergency preparedness, recovery, and conservation - and field tested by artists who have been through disaster. As furniture maker Russell Karkowski said in a video interview for The Studio Protector web site, "[in an emergency] you can only do what you have practiced." The Studio Protector is here to help you get ready, respond effectively, and rebound quickly.

South Arts launched the ArtsReady movement in its nine-state region in 2009, and extended it nationally in 2010. The movement enrolls state arts agencies, local arts councils and national and state arts service organizations to communicate the value of readiness planning to the field. Initially, www.artsready.org provided online resources including sample readiness plans, planning tips and trainings, and links to recovery and relief organizations. The site also has functionality to, in the event of a large-scale event in the region, immediately begin fundraising on behalf of affected artists and organizations in South Arts' region.

In September 2011, in response to the identified planning barrier "we don't know how to start," South Arts and its collaborative partners launched the ArtsReady online planning tool. Premium Members of ArtsReady (through an annual subscription fee) receive full access to the tool. ArtsReady takes organizational users through a one-hour online risk assessment, leading to the development of an action plan with prioritized steps to plan for and respond to crisis situations, and mitigate damage; users also store critical data which might be needed in an emergency; and join the Battle Buddy Network to give and/or receive aid when needed. The tool is functional for all types of arts organizations that present or produce public arts programming. A free, Basic membership provides access to a newsletter, library and ArtsReady Alerts.

South Arts continues to recruit partners who are asked to subsidize the participation of their constituent arts organizations, and participation from partners nationally is needed to sustain and promote the tool.



COORDINATION & FUNDING

The Coalition has identified processes and characteristics for creating a nationwide coordinated system, which addresses the three phases of preparedness, relief/response and recovery. These include:

- Recognition that the arts community is best qualified to provide certain kinds of relief to (and guidance to other relief providers about) artists and arts organizations.
- The system should be a “network of networks,” national in scope with some form of centralized management and a sense of shared ownership, but dependent on local delivery and regional/state organizations and back-up responsive to geographic, political and cultural differences. A pilot effort is underway in southern California to engage and train/prepare “arts responders”—entities who will be prepared to provide frontline assistance.
- The effort must enroll nonprofit, commercial and government entities to construct and sustain the system.
- Financial support to continue to build and maintain the system is essential, and can consist of a mix of public and private funders, pooled income or mutual benefit funds, charitable contributions and in-kind support.
- The effort must incorporate lessons and best practices gleaned from past efforts, to avoid recreating the wheel.
- There is an opportunity to encourage readiness through a mix of technical assistance, public awareness and will-building, demonstration of cost-savings resulting from preparedness and risk management, and policy decisions by private and public funders and investors.
- Advocacy is a key component both on a policy level to effect changes to the extant relief system (SBA, FEMA, U.S. Department of Labor, etc.) to help artists and arts organizations with their needs, and on a case-by-case basis to help artists and organizations who’ve been denied relief.
- The effort should ultimately curtail costs and losses by focusing on preparedness and mitigation in addition to relief and recovery.
- We can help one another. The distribution/replication/storage of information/ resources/data broadly across the country is a protective step. We can share best practices and provide support and back-up to one another, whether artist-to-artist, organization-to-organization, or state-to-state.

THE INVITATION

To embed business continuity and recovery planning in the arts sector is to help ensure our own sustainability. We believe that our sector has the imagination and drive to develop and maintain a system of readiness to protect our valuable and irreplaceable creative resources. We invite you to join our efforts, become an arts responder and provide resources. You may contact any of the individuals listed on the inside back cover.



An earlier version of this paper was published in 2010 on the Americans for the Arts’ Arts Blog, as part of a series of Green Papers meant to inspire dialogue about the future of the arts sector.

Contact South Arts at 404-874-7244 for alternate formats of this document.

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