

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF NEW YORK ARTS RECOVERY FUND

Experiences and Lessons Learned in a Time of Crisis

In response to the events of 9/11, the New York Foundation for the Arts created the New York Arts Recovery Fund to help artists and arts organizations recover from losses due to the effects of 9/11. With record support from thousands of donors, the Fund raised \$5.2 million, of which \$4.32 million was awarded to nearly 500 individual artists, small artist businesses, and nonprofit arts organizations. Below is a summary of the experiences and lessons learned during the process of assisting New York City's artists and Arts organizations.

How Artists Were Affected by 9/11

The repercussions of 9/11 were as varied as the artists themselves. Clearly many artists were evacuated from their homes and studios, which were located in what is called ground zero. Their homes and offices were covered with debris or used for rescue centers. Artists lost income because of cancelled or reduced performances, exhibitions, and benefits. Artists lost income because of the general decline in public and private funding for arts organizations.

Furthermore, downtown's lockdown caused exhibit cancellations and postponements. In addition, the city Board of Education budget cuts struck a blow to teaching artists unable to rely on the education community for employment.

How Arts Organizations Were Affected by 9/11

The affects of 9/11 on commercial Broadway theatre dominated headlines, but the majority of arts and culture activities in New York City are supported by nonprofits. These range from the Metropolitan Museum of Art with its \$130 million budget to some 128 theatre companies with budgets under \$100,000. Faced with reduced endowments, foundations were reluctant to take on any new organizations and reduced the size of grants to current grantees. Corporate funding declined as funds were diverted to 9/11 relief and companies' profits fell.

New York Arts Recovery Fund

The New York Arts Recovery Fund was a four-part initiative:

- **Information Resources.** We worked with other arts and non-arts organizations to gather and distribute information concerning existing government and private resources available to assist with the effects of 9/11.
- **Advocacy.** We worked with others to articulate and advance the voice and needs of artists and arts organizations in the relief and recovery programs and services being developed on behalf of other individuals and organizations affected by the tragedy.

- **Grants.** We developed an emergency grants program designed to meet the needs of artists and arts organizations. Using NYFA's extensive grantmaking experience for individual artists and organizations, we developed a regrant program for artists and organizations in all disciplines.
- **Public Programs.** We worked with others in the field to develop marketing and public promotion campaigns about the importance of the arts for communities. These included a panel discussion in November 2001 on The Artist in Time of Crisis and a large benefit concert in January 2002, Arts on the High Wire.

NYFA was responsible for raising money and administering the Fund. In developing policies and in deciding grant awards, NYFA worked in collaboration with the Alliance of Resident Theaters/New York, American Music Center, Arts & Business Council, Asian American Arts Alliance, Association of Hispanic Arts, Harlem Arts Alliance, Nonprofit Finance Fund, and New York City Arts Coalition. In addition, an *ad hoc* committee of NYFA's Board of Trustees provided oversight of the Fund.

The Review Process

In total, 781 applications were received, far exceeding our predictions for applicants and expectations for the staff needed to administer the Fund. Total requests for funds exceeded \$9 million.

An artistic resume or other proof of professional activity was required to confirm activity as an artist, but artistic merit was not a consideration and representational samples of work were not accepted. Panelists were either representatives of or recommended by the collaborating partners.

Awards were made to those who experienced a significant degree of loss as a direct result of 9/11, whether by the need to relocate space in which recipients lived or worked, clean up of debris, loss of income due to cancelled performances or exhibitions, or health related expenses. Awards were based on need.

Conclusion

NYFA's 30 years of experience in grantmaking assisted us in creating a grant program that was lauded as fair and equitable. This was in contrast to some of the newly formed charities with no experience in grantmaking that either had administrative problems distributing their money or in some cases found that a specific category of victims was much smaller than originally expected. NYFA kept to its primary constituency – artists and the small arts groups that serve them – and in doing so was able to successfully disperse all funds within a ten-month period.

Could more funds have been given away? Are more funds needed right now? Absolutely yes, to both questions. But that will, unfortunately, always be the case. NYFA's holistic

approach to the support of artists through grants combined with information resources and training to help artists become artist-entrepreneurs offers the best hope for a healthy community of artists in New York City. We hope it will also serve as a model for communities elsewhere.

The New York Arts Recovery Fund accomplished many of its goals as it faced difficult and sometimes overwhelming circumstances. Clearly, we learned once again that artists and arts organizations are vulnerable to economic instability and exist with little or no safety net.

The Fund's grants program fulfilled its primary goals (1) to assist artists and small arts organizations in financial need and (2) to provide informational services to return artists to their art making.

What remains inspiring from the process is the unflagging commitment on the part of artists to continue their craft and to create art despite inadequate support, an economic recession, and a kind of devastation that is beyond comprehension.