

CREATIVES REBUILD NEW YORK

Theory of Change

CRNY Mission

To position artists as workers and advance equitable and sustainable support structures for artists within the arts and cultural ecosystem in New York State.

CRNY Background

New York's arts and culture sector typically generates around \$120 billion annually^[1] for the state and accounts for nearly half a million jobs. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, employment in New York State's creative industries was at an all-time high.^[2] Due to COVID-19, the state has lost 50 percent of its performing arts jobs alone, and in New York City the figure climbs to 72 percent—the sharpest losses of any industry. As of December 2020, arts, entertainment, and recreation employment in New York City had declined by 66 percent from one year earlier, the largest decline among the City's economic sectors.^[3] This is the only sector in the city that remains below half of its pre-pandemic employment levels.

Along with individual artists, arts and cultural organizations across New York State have also been devastated, with many forced to eliminate staff positions often held by practicing artists, radically reduce budgets, cut programs, and draw on limited cash reserves to maintain minimal operations.

The impact of COVID-19 and the need to rebuild have pushed innovation. Government has made large scale interventions including the Payment Protection Program, the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance, and Save Our Stages, and NYC has released a variety of COVID-relief funding streams, including the City Artists Corps. Philanthropy has also contributed in enormous ways. The New York State Reimagine New York Commission, which was charged with developing comprehensive policy recommendations to reduce the State's digital divide, improve access to healthcare, and support expanded employment opportunity, included philanthropists who were committed to including the arts, Elizabeth Alexander among them. The Mellon Foundation stepped up and the Governor announced the creation of Creatives Rebuild New York (CRNY) in his January 2021 State of the State address.

CRNY is a direct response to the challenges faced by artists. It is also a response to systemic challenges that have long plagued the arts and culture field – a field that has benefited from gig economy labor and has prolonged deep inequities in access to resources, particularly for small and mid-sized organizations, often led by and serving Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities.

The pillars of CRNY are not new. Creativity has always been essential to recovery.^[4] Thousands of artists were employed during the Great Depression by the Works Progress Administration Federal

Art Project (WPA/FAP)^[5] and later through the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act of 1973 (CETA).^[6] And in response to the Great Recession of 2008, the National Endowment for the Arts created the Our Town Program and helped spearhead the creation of the public-private partnership ArtPlace America to support stronger communities through the arts.

CRNY Vision

CRNY aims to catalyze systemic change in the arts and cultural economy, recognize the value of artists' contributions, and reshape society's understanding of artists as workers who are vital to the health of our communities. Simply put, we must move beyond valuing the artistic product and begin to value artists' labor. Artists need and deserve to be paid predictable and regular incomes and have access to the social safety net.

CRNY Values

CRNY is committed to confronting racial and wealth inequities and to developing effective strategies that move the New York State arts and culture ecosystem toward an equitable future. The Guaranteed Income for Artists and Artist Employment programs have been designed to reach artists deeply rooted in and reflective of populations that face structural barriers to financial security, with specific attention to addressing the pandemic's startling and disparate impact on artists who come from, and serve, communities of color.

CRNY's ethical framework prioritizes:

- transformative, caring support for artists;
- trust in and respect for program participants;
- worker solidarity and labor acknowledgement;
- reparative, equitable access to funds and opportunities; and
- an invitation to challenge and reimagine existing systems and institutions.

CRNY Outcomes

- 1. THE LIVES AND LIVELIHOODS OF INDIVIDUAL ARTISTS IN NEW YORK STATE HAVE IMPROVED**
 - Artists have achieved greater financial stability/economic security.
 - The social, physical, and mental wellbeing of artists has improved.
 - Artists have more time, space, and energy to engage in artistic practice.
- 2. COMMUNITIES IN NEW YORK STATE HAVE BENEFITED FROM THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF ARTISTS**
 - Artists have contributed to collective healing, cultural continuity, and socio-political causes in communities.
 - Community-based organizations were better able to serve their communities through work with artists.
- 3. ARTISTS' LABOR IS BETTER UNDERSTOOD ACROSS NEW YORK STATE**
 - Process – not only final product – is recognized as an integral part of artists' work.
 - Artists are seen as agents of social change.
 - Artists are seen as integral members of the workforce and deserving of a safety net.

4. **INDIVIDUAL ARTISTS ARE BETTER SUPPORTED BY THE STATE-WIDE ARTS AND CULTURE ECOSYSTEM** (including policy, philanthropy, organizations)
 - The state-wide arts and cultural ecosystem recognizes the diversity of communities and contexts in which artists live and work, and supports them equitably.
 - Organizations across the state provide sustainable, quality jobs and benefits for artists, and engage them equitably and respectfully.
 - Local and statewide cultural policies and funding structures provide a better safety net for individual artists.

5. **ARTISTS ARE BETTER SUPPORTED BY LABOR AND SOCIAL SAFETY NET POLICIES**
 - New York State artists have become allies and advocates for labor and social safety net policies.
 - Local and state workforce policies take into account artists' employment and benefits needs.
 - Artists are included in state and national policies for guaranteed income.

CRNY Outputs

CRNY was launched to catalyze a national movement of broad-based employment programs to put artists back to work and to help communities understand the many ways that artists contribute—as workers, culture-bearers, changemakers, and teachers. Short-term, CRNY seeks to achieve the following outputs:

- Unemployment, lack of a social safety net, and underemployment of artists is alleviated (for some artists).
- The creative work of artists in partnership with communities – prioritizing Black, Indigenous, People of Color, LGBTQIAP+, artists with disabilities, rural artists, and artists with legal system involvement – is continued.
- Artists are able to remain in New York State under less financial strain.
- The knowledge and expertise of practitioners and artists is centered in a funding initiative with money distributed to places, organizations, and individuals who need it most.
- Artist-designed models for guaranteed income for artists and artist employment are demonstrated.
- Contributions are made to the knowledge base that can inform stronger working life and safety nets for artists.
- Strategic partners have been identified and positioned to carry forward the work.

Artist Employment Program (AEP) Outputs

AEP is a two-year artist employment demonstration program that seeks to understand and demonstrate a way in which:

- Artists have stable employment with benefits.
- Artists have been paid for their artistic practice.
- Artists understand how to collaborate with community-based organizations and communities.

- Organizations understand how to collaborate with artists and organizations value artists' contributions as members of their team.
- Community-based organizations deepen their mission-based work through their collaborations with artists and through receiving general operating funds to support the collaboration.
- Multiple models of artist and organizational collaboration have been implemented, including a cooperative work model for artist employment.
- Artists see themselves and are seen (by philanthropy, communities, organizations, policymakers) as a critical part of the community and the arts and cultural ecosystem.
- Artists see themselves and are seen as valuable workers essential to our society.
- Artists are understood as part of the broader workforce.
- The field better understands what artists need to thrive as artists and workers.
- New York State's social and economic recovery has been supported by funding community-based organizations that are:
 - working at the intersection of arts and community
 - historically under-resourced
 - hardest hit by COVID
 - BIPOC- and artist-led
 - BIPOC- and artist-serving

Guaranteed Income for Artist (GI) Outputs

GI is an 18-month guaranteed income program for artists, providing \$1000 a month of no-strings-attached cash to understand and demonstrate a way in which:

- Artists' labor is acknowledged.
- Artists are supported with a safety net and can pay for basic needs.
- Artists have more time, money, and energy to focus on creative practice.
- Artists have more agency in making life plans.
- Artists have increased physical, mental, and emotional well-being.
- Artists with disabilities can (or cannot) be supported and their benefits protected when receiving guaranteed income.
- Artists are part of a collective network that understands their needs and has the potential to maximize their influence within policy systems.
- Artists see themselves and are seen (by philanthropy, communities, organizations, policymakers) as a critical part of the community and in the arts and cultural ecosystem.
- New York State's economic recovery is supported by supporting New Yorkers who are hardest hit by COVID and who are BIPOC, LGBTQIAP+, caregivers, artists with legal system involvement, rural artists, and artists who are d/Deaf or disabled.

Impact and Narrative Change (INC) Outputs

INC initiatives create the scaffolding for evidence, research findings, stories, and narratives uncovered in our AEP and GI work, resulting in the following outputs:

- A set of key learnings about the program design and structure of Guaranteed Income for Artists the Artist Employment Program is shared.

- A community of peers is catalyzed to collectively reflect on and amplify challenges, opportunities, and informed practices related to artist employment and guaranteed income for artists.
- The intended and unintended impacts of AEP and GI on the social, financial, and artistic wellbeing of artists is understood and established.
- A comparative analysis of the benefits and challenges of three models for supporting artists labor – worker cooperative, direct employment, and gig/independent contract work – is commissioned.
- Comprehensive qualitative and quantitative data about the creative practices, financial stability, wellbeing, policy attitudes, demographics, and geographic contexts of artists in New York State is collected and shared for use by other institutions and individuals.
- Insights are gathered and shared about public sentiments towards artists working in local communities within New York.
- Key learnings from CRNY’s research are leveraged to create new support systems for artists at the state and national levels.
- State and national policy and advocacy efforts are identified and supported as part of a strategy to advance the values, objectives, and/or long-term sustainability of CRNY’s approach to guaranteed income and artist employment.
- The idea that artists’ labor is essential to society is advanced through storytelling about the role artists play in: (1) healing community trauma, (2) preserving and continuing cultural identity and practices, and (3) building community power around specific social or political issues (such housing, racism, immigration, disability justice).
- An online learning module for artists that focuses on what guaranteed income is, and where it fits within the solidarity economy, is developed and disseminated nationally.
- Digital media campaigns that highlight artists’ labor and process – in communities and beyond – are created.

Citations

^[1] From NYSCA, 2017 - <https://arts.ny.gov/>

^[2] Eli Dvorkin, “Supporting the Recovery of New York States Arts and Cultural Community,” published in October, 2020, <https://nycfuture.org/research/supporting-the-recovery-of-new-york-states-arts-and-cultural-community>

^[3] <https://www.osc.state.ny.us/files/reports/osdc/pdf/report-12-2021.pdf>

^[4] <https://www.creativeworkers.net/>

^[5] [The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica](https://www.britannica.com/topic/WPA-Federal-Art-Project) (May 5, 2020). WPA Federal Art Project: United States History. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/WPA-Federal-Art-Project>

^[6] See Burnham, Linda F. and Durland, Steve. Public Art Review. Looking for CETA. <https://forecastpublicart.org/looking-for-ceta/>