
New York Isn't New York Without Artists

Policy Playbook

To Strengthen New York's Creative Workforce
& Grow a Just, Creative Economy for All

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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INTRODUCTION

Economic insecurities are growing among our region’s creative workforce—a population that has tremendous impacts on the economic and cultural life of communities in which they live and create. Unless creative workers can make enough to live in New York, they will continue to leave the region for more affordable places.

This playbook is a **timely and actionable** set of policy proposals focused on improving the lives and livelihoods of creative workers in New York and growing opportunities in our region’s creative economy. It is a contribution to the community of policymakers and civic and political leaders in New York who want to better understand the value of our region’s creative workforce, what needs to happen so that creative workers can continue to call New York home, and how to improve outcomes for a broad swath of New Yorkers living on the edge of hardship and economic uncertainty.

This work builds on existing efforts in New York and across the country, including momentum at the federal level. The recommendations are the result of a year-long process (detailed in the appendix) that included policy research, budget analysis, case study research, interviews, and convenings with policymakers, artists, creative workers, and cultural organizers.

Advancing the integrated policy actions proposed here can improve our region’s competitiveness, expand opportunities in the creative economy, and align with broader economic justice efforts impacting other

precarious workers in our state, with whom creative workers share challenges. Policies that support New York’s creative workers also support freelance, gig, and other nontraditional workers, and ultimately help to position our region as a pioneer in supporting the future of work.

We call on government leaders to form a statewide intergovernmental working group to transform the policy actions recommended in this playbook into concrete, coordinated proposals for new investments, programs, and legislative initiatives. The framework and recommended policies that anchor this playbook are a readymade foundation for creating a Statewide Creative Economy Strategic Plan that draws on the capacities of a wide range of public agencies and institutions to collaboratively advance the proposed investments, programs, and legislative initiatives.

By publishing this Playbook, we hope to inspire new champions inside and outside of government to join the work ahead.

OVERVIEW OF POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Cross-Cutting Strategy

Form an intergovernmental working group charged with developing a Statewide Creative Economy Strategic Plan

<p>Housing and Financial Security Policies</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure strong tenant protections and anti-displacement measures are part of the New York Housing Compact 2. Incentivize the development of affordable housing in cultural districts across New York State 3. Pass the New York State Working Families Tax Credit 4. Create a statewide guaranteed income program
<p>Labor Policies</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Pass and implement critical worker protection laws for non-traditional workers 6. Expand eligibility, enforcement, and effective implementation of the Freelance Isn't Free Act 7. Establish a grant program to fund portable benefits pilot programs and financial security tools for creative workers
<p>Workforce Development Policies</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. Create artist employment programs to address environmental, health, and safety needs in communities 9. Develop and support training programs to increase access to fast-growing creative industry jobs 10. Expand accessible internship and apprenticeship opportunities in New York's cultural institutions 11. Conduct a biennial census of creative workers in New York
<p>Economic Development Policies</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 12. Increase public funding for economic development projects that integrate arts and culture 13. Invest in the capacity of Community Development Financial Institutions to expand access to capital for arts organizations and creative entrepreneurs 14. Expand navigation support to identify resources for creative and cultural spaces at risk of displacement
<p>Arts & Culture Policies</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 15. Legislate prevailing wage standards for artists working on publicly-funded arts and culture projects 16. Scale up direct, flexible, and equitable public funding for individual artists, culture-bearers, and creative workers 17. Increase public funding for culturally diverse arts and culture organizations 18. Reform tax policy to create dedicated revenue for arts and culture

THE STATE OF NEW YORK'S CREATIVE WORKFORCE

Defining New York's *Creative Workforce*

This Playbook embraces a broad definition of the creative workforce in New York.

Our region's creative workforce spans diverse disciplines, identities, and economic circumstances.

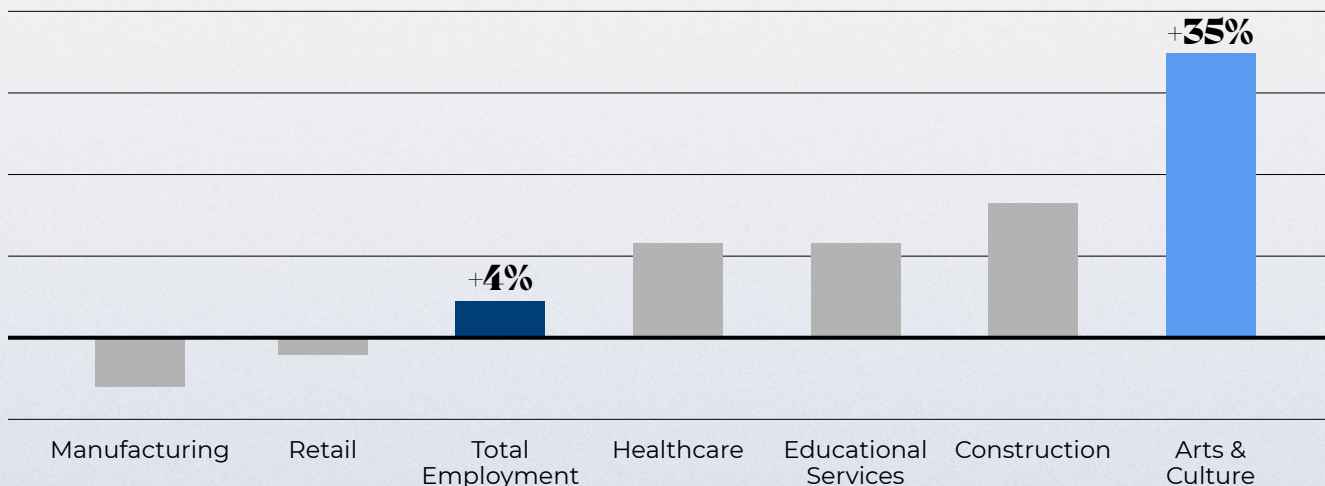
Our big umbrella of **creative workers*** covers dancers, singers, craftspeople, musicians, culture-bearers, storytellers, arts educators, poets, filmmakers, visual artists, actors, performers, musicians, craft artists, and new media creators. It also includes arts administrators, the staff of non-profit cultural organizations, workers in for-profit cultural and creative enterprises, including design-related industries, and creative entrepreneurs.

* "Artists" and "creative workers" are used interchangeably throughout this report.

The labor of creative workers powers a statewide economic engine.

According to Governor Hochul's [2024 State of the State](#) address, cultural sector economic activity in New York State accounted for 7.6% of New York's GDP, or nearly \$144 billion in economic activity powered by 450,000 jobs across the state. Center for an Urban Future's [Upstate's Creative Spark](#) report revealed that employment in the arts and culture sector across upstate New York surged 35% from 2009 to 2019, nearly 10 times the overall rate of employment growth upstate.

Percentage of employment growth by industry in Upstate New York, 2009-2019



Source: [Center for an Urban Future](#) analysis of data from Lightcast.

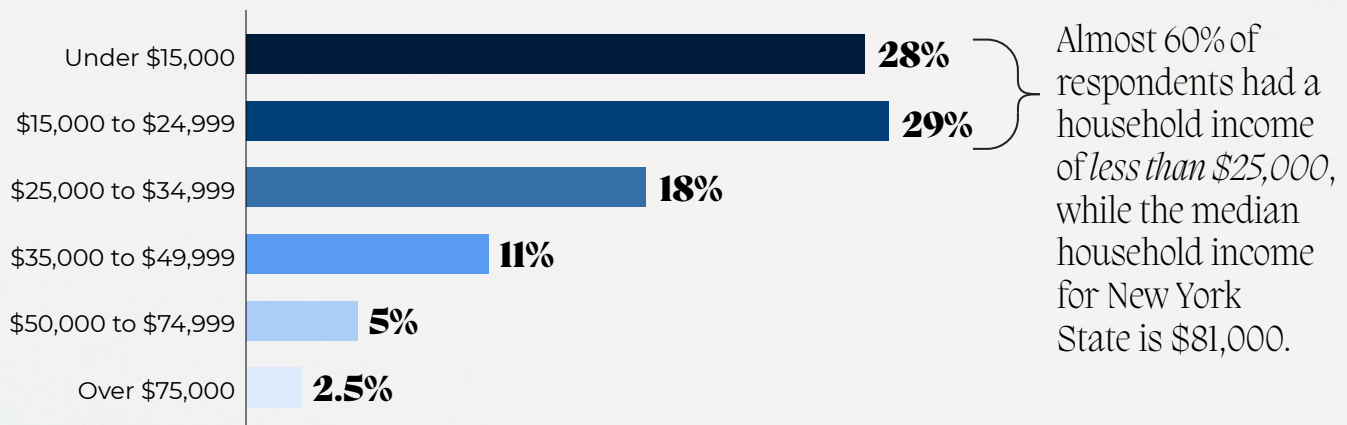


Jahmorei Snipes / Abrons Arts Center, Henry Street Settlement
 Photo Credit: Photo by Andrew Federman, Image Courtesy of Abrons Arts Center
 Project: Perfect City, For Sale

Despite their outsized impact on New York’s economy, creative workers in our state often live on the edge of hardship and economic uncertainty.

CRNY’s [Portrait of New York State Artists](#) survey, which received responses from over 13,000 artists across New York State between February and May 2022, found that Artists are earning significantly less than the average New Yorker. Almost 60% of respondents had a household income of less than \$25,000, while the median household income for New York State is \$81,000.

How much do artists make? *Median Household Income of Artists, 2021*



Source: Portrait of New York State Artists (CRNY), n= 13,164

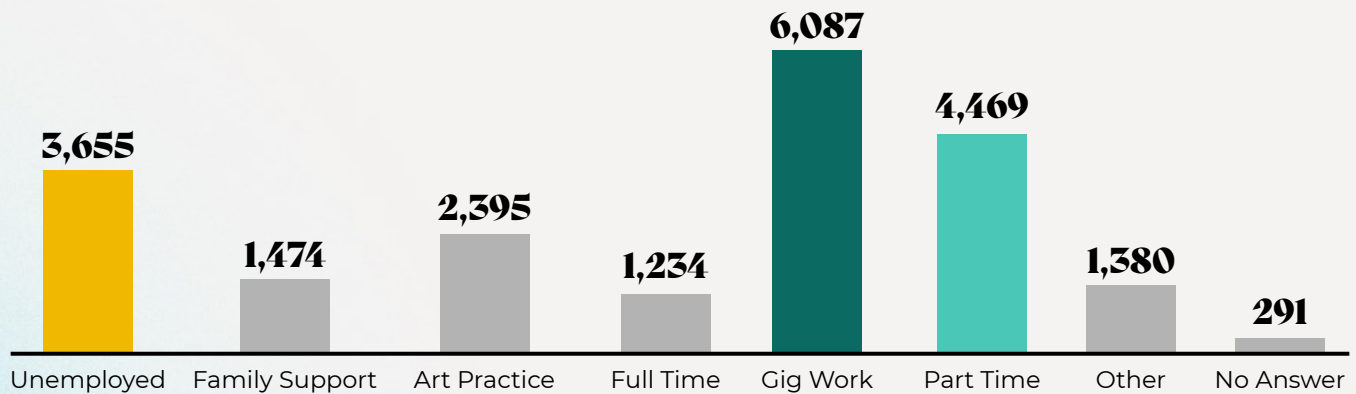


Tony Ramirez / Columbia County Sanctuary Movement
Photo Credit: Tony Ramirez

Creative workers are more likely to work in jobs with a high risk of economic exploitation.

Creative workers are more likely to be gig workers and freelancers who lack the same benefits, protections, and access to resources that typical full-time employees have. Benefits are often tied to employment, and creative workers are often not considered employees — or considered employed at all. The status of many creative workers as “independent contractors” amplifies their economic insecurity, in the same way it does other economically-precarious workers.

How do artists earn their money?



Source: Portrait of New York State Artists (CRNY), n= 13,164

Creative workers are particularly affected by the reliance on non-standard work arrangements that have fewer worker protections and social insurance, and greater chances of unpredictable pay, including significant amounts of unpaid work.

Creative workers are vulnerable to shocks.

Music Worker's Alliance's [How Are We Surviving](#) Survey found that 71% of musicians and DJs surveyed lost three-quarters or more of their income during the pandemic. Data from the Portrait of New York State Artists survey indicates that nearly two-thirds of artists do not have a financial safety net. 62% of respondents have no emergency savings, putting them on the brink of financial catastrophe. The survey also revealed that many artists are carrying unmanageable debt.



41%
972 artists reported being vulnerable to a medical emergency.

55%
1,311 artists reported that they carry unmanageable debt.

62%
1,494 artists reported that they have no financial safety net.

56%
1,333 artists reported they were unsure when they would make income again.

33%
783 artists reported they were enrolled in public benefits.

Source: Portrait of New York State Artists; data above is specific to the ~2400 participants of CRNY's GI for Artists program.

The economic precarity of creative workers mirrors patterns of broader racial and demographic disparities.

Many struggling BIPOC-led arts organizations are led and staffed by creative workers who often go unpaid or underpaid.

Data from the Portrait of New York State Artists survey reveals that only 1 in 5 Black artists have enough cash to cover emergencies, compared to 1 in 3 artists, overall.

According to [State of New York City Dance 2023: Findings from the Dance Industry Census](#), in the dance industry in New York City, immigrant dance workers earn 30% less and have 22% less savings than US-born dancers. Transgender dance workers earn 40% less than cisgender dance workers.

MuseumHue found that more than half of the BIPOC-led organizations surveyed for their [HueArts New York State report](#) had budgets of less than \$50,000. Among those entities with budgets under \$50,000, 57% offered monthly programming and 65% offered the majority of programming for free. The workers who lead and staff these organizations often go unpaid or underpaid, and there are many organizations that even if they are employing artists cannot begin to offer benefits.



Ellen Blalock / Schweinfurth Art Center
Photo Credit: Ellen Blalock
Project: These are a few images Ellen M. Blalock took of the Black community in Auburn that is included in the Auburn Black Family Album and the Faces of Tomorrow exhibition.

Snapshot of the Policy Landscape

Efforts Across the US

Momentum is growing at the federal level to promote a whole-of-government approach to supporting the arts and culture sector and the creative workforce.

[Employment Protections in the Arts and the Humanities](#) requires organizations (grantees and subgrantees) that receive funds from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) or the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) to pay professional performers and related supporting personnel at least the prevailing minimum compensation for their professions. Building on a [September 2022 Executive Order](#) issued by President Biden, the White House Domestic Policy Council and the National Endowment for the Arts recently convened a national summit promoting a *whole-of-government* approach to supporting arts and culture: [Healing, Bridging, Thriving: A Summit on Arts and Culture in our Communities](#). The US Environmental Protection Agency [announced the agency's first 'artists-in-residence'](#) at this Summit, and more federal agencies are working to follow suit. Other national efforts include the American Academy of Arts and Science's [Art is Work: Policies to Support Creative Workers](#) report, Americans for the Arts' [Putting Creative Workers to Work](#) policy roundtable, and the recent emergence of grassroots coalitions such as the [National Arts Policy Alliance](#) and [Arts Workers United](#).

Competing states are strengthening their creative economies by investing in their creative workers.

The [California Creative Economy Workgroup](#) is a publicly-funded initiative to develop a strategic plan to strengthen the State's creative economy. Modeled off a [similar process led by Washington State's Department of Commerce](#), California's strategic plan will emphasize direct investment in the state's creative workforce. [Indiana is having success](#) in lending to artists and entrepreneurs to engage in community development projects through its revolving loan fund, CDB Capital Fund. Minnesota passed a constitutional amendment creating a 3/8-cent sales tax dedicated to their Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund. Over its 25-year life, the tax will [generate \\$1.2 billion](#) for arts and cultural heritage projects and programs.

Cities across the US are advancing innovative policies and programs to support creative workers.

The City of Minneapolis offers [Artist Career Consultations](#), a free technical assistance program that supports artists in translating their creative business aspirations into sustainable careers. The [Chicago Arts & Health Pilot for Creative Workers](#) hires artists and creatives for year-long artist apprenticeships in creative therapy, advancing two goals: generating new employment opportunities for creatives and better integrating arts into the mental healthcare system. The number of municipalities that embed [artists-in-residence in city agencies](#) continues to grow through a mix of public and private investments. Oakland's [Cultural-Strategists-in-Government Program](#) recently expanded its approach to include the offices of elected officials.

There is considerable movement around the issue of portable benefits for independent workers.

Since 2018, state lawmakers in at least nine states have introduced legislation establishing portable benefits programs for gig workers or creating funds to study program feasibility and need. U.S. Senator Warner introduced [federal legislation](#) in 2023 to establish a \$20m emergency portable benefits fund for States and jurisdictions that want to pilot new ways of providing independent workers portable, work-related benefits.

Energy is growing for guaranteed income and direct cash policies.

The pandemic showed that the government can quickly and directly get cash into the hands of millions, with huge impacts on poverty alleviation. A guaranteed income – recurring and unconditional cash payments – has proven to provide economic stability for individuals and families. Hundreds of publicly and privately funded guaranteed income demonstrations are taking place in the US. Government agencies also acknowledge the power of cash: HUD has suggested a [pilot program to provide direct rental assistance in the form of cash](#), instead of vouchers, to eligible participants.

The Landscape in New York

There has been significant progress on legislation related to fair payment of freelance workers.

New York State recently adopted legislation similar to New York City's Freelance Isn't Free Act, which was enacted in 2021. The policies establish rights for freelance workers on their written contracts and authorize freelancers to sue their hiring party if they fail to abide by these rights. New York is also making progress in expanding retirement savings plans for freelancers. New York State recently updated the New York Secure Choice program so freelancers and independent workers are able to access the retirement savings plan.

Pandemic-era efforts established a framework for providing direct, flexible funding to individual artists.

New York City established its City Artist Corps program to incorporate artist employment as part of its COVID recovery strategy. The Music Workers Alliance successfully advocated for the inclusion of 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 established a precedent for making statewide small business funding available to artists.

COVID-era investments by New York State provided a framework for providing investment capital to working artists.

The Music Worker's Alliance [successfully advocated](#) for the inclusion of 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 artists.

Legislative developments indicate New York's policymakers are aiming to direct community development dollars toward arts and culture.

Both the New York State Senate and Assembly advanced a [bill to establish state-designated arts and culture districts](#) that would allow municipalities with areas with a concentration of arts and cultural institutions to receive state assistance, like development opportunities, technical assistance, and marketing assistance.

Investment in capital projects and public art linked to creative placemaking is poised to grow in New York.

In 2024, Governor Hochul committed \$50 million in new funding to capital projects and announced the launch of Arts Pluribus Unum, an investment in public art.



Alisia Glasier / Springville Center for the Arts
Photo Credit: Alisia Glasier, Max Collins

Both New York State and New York City are pioneering Public Artist Residencies.

New York City's Public Artist in Residency (PAIR) Program provides year-long residencies to embed artists into government agencies. At the State level, Governor Hochul recently announced the State of the Arts fellowship program as part of Arts Pluribus Unum.

Reforms to the Cultural Development Fund managed by the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs will stabilize funding for legacy cultural organizations in communities of color.

The new reforms mean that organizations that have received funding from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs for several consecutive years experience a more streamlined process to maintain funding.

New York City and New York State have created a partnership that potential to generate additional wins for our region's creative workforce.

The "New" New York Panel was launched by the New York Governor and the New York City Mayor to examine the future of New York City and the region's economy, which included a mandate to invest in culture by supporting artists, art spaces, and arts organizations. New York City is committed to exploring opportunities to identify clusters of affordable work and rehearsal space for working artists that can counter the long-standing affordability challenges facing the city's creative sector.

A CROSS-SECTOR POLICY FRAMEWORK

New York’s creative workforce is complex, consisting of people engaging in vastly different creative practices and experiencing vastly different economic circumstances. Yet, we know from the available data that there are critical needs that many creative workers share with each other and with other low-income workers. Those include basic economic security, affordable communities, good working conditions and benefits, and opportunities for creative growth and wealth-building.



Jocelyn J. Jones / Seneca Nation of Indians: Onóhsagwé:de Cultural Center
Photo Credit: Milan Art Residency

The policies in this playbook largely center around three “profiles” of creative workers:

- ***Creative workers with low, unpredictable incomes*** that they piece together from periodic arts funding opportunities and/or freelance creative work, who don’t have access to meaningful insurance or safety nets.
- ***Creative workers in low-quality employment***, with low pay, poor work conditions, low-quality benefits, few worker protections, and little alignment with (or leaving little capacity for) their creative practice.
- ***Small arts organizations that are struggling to survive/grow*** and the people who lead them (which is often unpaid work) are employed by them, or who otherwise depend on those organizations.

This Playbook identifies five policy areas that the research and engagement process validated as critical:

Housing and Financial Security Policies

to provide a baseline of security around basic needs.

- Expanding access to affordable housing, income support, and eventually guaranteed income for the broader workforce, regardless of how they earn an income.

Labor Protections Policies

to strengthen protections for freelancers and improve working conditions.

- Increasing access to well-paying, high-quality jobs for the creative workforce;
- Ensuring protections for freelance creative workers; and providing flexible, high-quality benefits for non-standard workers.

Workforce Development Policies

to open pathways to good jobs aligned with creative practices.

- Creating publicly-funded employment opportunities for creative workers;
- Increasing workforce training available for creative workers who are interested in bringing their creative skills to roles in high-growth strategic industries; and
- Reducing barriers for creative workers to thrive in arts administration and the non-profit cultural sector.

Economic Development Policies

to facilitate space, capital, and opportunities for creative growth and community wealth-building.

- Creating new opportunities for creatives to participate in community-wide revitalization and wealth-building;
- Facilitating access to capital and financial expertise, whether to secure real estate or to start a business; and
- Facilitating access to underutilized available space and facilities, public and private.

Arts and Culture Policies

to address critical shortcomings in arts and culture funding.

- Increasing public funding of the arts;
- Increasing funding for individual artists and creative workers, adequately funding small and historically marginalized cultural producers and organizations; and
- Leveraging public funding to ensure high-road compensation practices in the arts and culture sector.

We have organized this Playbook into those five policy areas. Each policy area opens with a succinct goal, introduces three to four discrete policy actions that we have identified as **timely and actionable** ways to achieve that goal, and provides some context about how we arrived at those recommendations.

To prioritize policy actions within each of the policy areas, we researched precedent and proposed policies, budget opportunities, and strategic plans in New York and across the country, and workshopped our findings and the emerging priorities with policymakers, creative workers, and thought leaders outside of government. The process confirmed the need to 'connect the dots' between policy efforts that many practitioners have been advancing inside and outside the arts in recent years.

We prioritized policies where our research and engagement process confirmed:

- Compelling 'infrastructure' to build on, whether precedent efforts in New York State or elsewhere
- Clear interest in the proposed approach from people inside and outside of the government
- Opportunity for policymakers and practitioners outside of government to work together
- Policy actions that reinforce each other

In articulating each of the policy recommendations, our approach was to identify various ways policymakers can move forward on the specified action.



Cross-Cutting Strategy

The first recommendation in this Playbook is for the state’s political leaders and policymakers to formalize an intergovernmental working group focused on developing a Statewide Creative Economy Strategic Plan.

The working group can use the policy framework and recommendations in this Playbook as a starting point for the Strategic Plan, which should further articulate goals, lines of accountability, funding sources, and strategies specific to all economic regions of the state.

This effort in New York can draw on recent precedents. [The White House Domestic Policy Council and the National Endowment for the Arts](#) convened a federal interagency working group tasked with developing a “whole-of-government” approach to supporting arts and culture and spurring new investment in the country’s creative workforce. California recently [passed legislation](#) to formalize a similar statewide task force, following the example of Washington State, which undertook a [similar process](#) beginning in 2022 and released its [Creative Washington Strategic Plan](#) in January 2024.

New York’s Statewide Creative Economy Strategic Plan would affirm the significance of the state’s creative workforce by:

- Quantifying the impact of the creative workforce on New York State’s economy and quality of life.
- Identifying optimal levels of economic development funding in every region, and a roadmap for growing the creative sector through local economic initiatives.

- Establishing roles and accountabilities for arts and non-arts agencies, including agencies that advance housing, financial security, labor rights, and economic and workforce development goals.
- Engaging creative workers to shape strategies for all sectors of the creative economy.
- Assessing emerging threats and opportunities, including the impact of emerging technologies.

The effort to create an intergovernmental working group to catalyze this work can build on an existing New York State-New York City partnership, the [“New” New York](#) Task Force. The recommendation is for the Governor’s Office, the New York City Mayor’s Office, the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, the New York City Economic Development Corporation, Empire State Development, the New York State Council on the Arts, and colleagues in the New York State Assembly and Senate to each lead aspects of this initiative. The Assembly’s Economic Development Committee, given its track record promoting sound workforce policies, is well-positioned to introduce legislation to formalize this interagency working group.

Housing and Financial Security Policies

Housing and Financial Security Policies

Goal

Strengthen and retain New York’s creative workforce by ensuring that all New Yorkers can meet their basic needs.

Recommendations

1. Ensure strong tenant protections and anti-displacement measures are part of the New York Housing Compact
2. Incentivize the development of affordable housing in cultural districts across New York State
3. Pass the New York State Working Families Tax Credit
4. Create a statewide guaranteed income program

Overview

Housing and debt are two key components of artists’ day-to-day lives that are unaffordable. Affordable housing where tenants are fully protected and cash policies that allow individuals to pay off debt, create an income floor, and begin to build wealth that could be transformative for artists and other workers. While these are not the only policies that can alleviate these financial strains, these strategies are feasible, and there is momentum behind them. Advancing universal healthcare and measures that lower inflation are understood to be more challenging.

POLICY RECOMMENDATION 1:

Ensure strong tenant protections and anti-displacement measures are part of the New York Housing Compact.***Why this action?***

Low-income New Yorkers, including many who are part of the state's creative workforce, desperately need affordable housing options. Median rents continually reach new records across the state, and more New Yorkers are paying unsustainable shares of their income on housing. This is exacerbated by excessive rent hikes and unfair evictions in areas where the overall cost of housing is rising too quickly.

The New York Housing Compact, part of New York State's FY 2025 Enacted Budget marks an important step toward addressing the ongoing housing crisis. The multi-pronged plan to address New York's historic housing shortage includes the Good Cause Eviction Law. This law, which passed in 2024, aims to protect renters from excessive rent hikes and unfair evictions. However, there are concerns that the anti-displacement measure will be difficult to enforce and that the law comes with exemptions that leave out millions of renters. For example, the new protections only apply to New York City, while municipalities in the rest of the state have to opt in.

What is the action and what is required?

The proposed action is to advance a set of parallel efforts to strengthen tenant protections and anti-displacement measures across the state. This begins by ensuring that landlords in New York City and other municipalities that have opted into the Good Cause eviction law comply with the law's provisions. This requires funding for a Know Your Rights campaign, which can include organizations that reach artists and creative workers.

The critical piece is for more upstate municipalities to opt into the Good Cause Eviction Law. Thus far, Albany, Kingston, Poughkeepsie, Rochester, Ithaca, and Beacon have already opted in. These majority-tenant cities have already passed the Emergency Tenant Protection Act, which signaled strong interest from policymakers in those areas on the issue of tenant protection. Going forward, the goal is to continue to engage municipalities that are majority-tenant cities, particularly those that have already passed the Emergency Tenant Protection Act. In those municipalities that opt into the Good Cause Eviction Law, there is an opportunity to adapt aspects of the policy.

A long-term goal can be to amend the law in future legislative sessions to modify the exemption of landlords based on the number of units they own. Currently, the law only applies to landlords who own more than ten units. The impact on affordability would be far greater with a threshold that exempted only small buildings (2-4 units) where landlords themselves live.

Who works together?

The Governor's Office, local mayors and city councils, regional housing policymakers, and housing advocacy organizations that worked to pass the Good Cause Eviction law. The Governor's Office and the New York State Division of Housing and Community Renewal can work with municipalities to adapt the policy to local needs.

*The New York Housing Compact
aims to protect renters
from excessive rent hikes
and unfair evictions.*

POLICY RECOMMENDATION 2:

Incentivize the development of affordable housing in cultural districts across New York State.

Why this action?

Housing affordability is a critical issue for low-income New Yorkers. Artists and creatives share these challenges with other economically precarious workers with irregular incomes and often have additional challenges because of unique space needs. Governor Hochul's New York Housing Compact is advancing plans to catalyze construction in 800,000 new homes and incentivize affordability in new development. At the same time, once signed into law by Governor Hochul, [Senate Bill S253A](#) would create a framework for developing designated arts and culture districts across New York in places with high concentrations of artists and culture bearers. A significant increase in affordable housing in those districts would have a transformative impact on New York's ability to retain its creative workforce.

What is the action and what is required?

The proposed action is to begin by signing Senate Bill S253A into law and to follow that by shaping the implementation of both that bill and Governor Hochul's New York Housing Compact to dedicate affordable housing funding to cultural districts. The recommendation is to identify cultural districts that are particularly vulnerable to displacement based on factors like high renter population, increasing rents, limited housing supply, and the prevalence of low-income renters. Policymakers can use data from CRNY and HueArts to help identify cultural districts where creative workers face significant displacement risk.

For at-risk cultural districts, the housing strategy can include the development of affordable housing typologies that match the needs of creative workers, including live/work

spaces, and mixed-use projects that include flexible spaces that could facilitate creative work, including exhibitions and performances. This strategy can draw on precedents like [ArtSpace](#) in New York City, which built 90 permanently affordable live-work units for artist housing in the El Barrio community in Manhattan's Upper East Side, a naturally occurring cultural district. Incentivizing the development of these kinds of housing options can help prevent the displacement of the artists and culture bearers that have contributed to building the value and defining the cultural identities of these districts.

This work can build on a [California law that passed in 2023](#) that requires that 10% of affordable units in California's cultural districts be set aside for artist housing. It can also build on an [artist housing certification process in Boston](#). Effective implementation of this strategy would also include helping artists access suitable housing options. The recommendation is to identify ways to support existing arts service organizations to serve as affordable housing navigators among their creative networks.

Who works together?

The Governor's Office, New York State Department of Homes and Community Renewal, New York State Council on the Arts, and local housing authorities can collaborate with cultural organizations with expertise in developing affordable spaces for artists, like ArtSpace and ArtBuilt. New York State Council on the Arts and the Department of Homes and Community Renewal can partner to identify cultural districts and develop a framework for affordable housing investments. Arts service organizations that are interested in connecting artists to affordable housing can also benefit from this strategy.

POLICY RECOMMENDATION 3:

Pass the New York State Working Families Tax Credit.**Why this action?**

Tax credits, or refunds, put money directly back into the hands of poor, working, and middle-class New Yorkers who are struggling with the high cost of living. Currently, the State has a patchwork of policies – like the Empire State Child Credit (ESCC), the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), and the Development Exemption (DE)—that can be expanded to include more families and modernized to make the tax credits easier to access.

What is the action and what is required?

The proposed action is to advance the Working Families Tax Credit legislation ([Senate Bill S277A](#) and [Assembly Bill A4022A](#)). The effort aims to combine and streamline the patchwork of existing policies into a more efficient and larger credit that ensures families receive the maximum credit amount. The legislation would remove the minimum income requirements that result in families with the lowest incomes receiving the lowest support and introduce a quarterly payment system (the current system is paid out once per year). The WFTC would also expand coverage of all tax credits to include immigrant tax filers who file with Individual Tax Identification Numbers (ITINs). Crucially, the phase-out is anticipated to be less steep than existing tax policy, preventing a cliff where families are suddenly ineligible or see substantially reduced benefits.

The impact of *refundable tax credits* as a poverty-fighting measure is clear and well-documented.

There is a large and popular people-powered movement behind tax credit modernization and expansion in New York, with increasing wins over the last several years, including the recent expansion of the Child Tax Credit to include children under age 4. The reform efforts in New York are part of a broader state-by-state movement to expand eligibility (and disburse payments more frequently). Since 2021, the number of states with a permanent state-level Child Tax Credit has doubled. There are also federal-level efforts to expand the federal Child Tax Credit and Earned Income Tax Credit. The federal Child Tax Credit, expanded by the American Rescue Plan Act during the COVID-19 pandemic, increased the credit amount and enabled advance payments to be made every month to families. Subsequently, [child poverty decreased by nearly half](#). The impact of refundable tax credits as a poverty-fighting measure is clear and well-documented.

Who works together?

New York State Senate, Assembly, and Governor's Office can collaborate with the Working Families Tax Credit Coalition to advance this action. Specifically, the Senate Finance Committee and Assembly Committee on Ways and Means have an opportunity to advance Senate Bill 277B and Assembly Bill 4022B, respectively. Once passed, this legislation will require collaboration from the Department of Taxation and Finances to eliminate the Empire State Child Credit (ESCC), the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), and the dependent exemption (DE) to create a single, larger, more streamlined credit.

POLICY RECOMMENDATION 4:

Create a statewide guaranteed income program.***Why this action?***

Millions of New Yorkers are struggling economically. Even working multiple jobs doesn't guarantee that low-income residents can make ends meet. A guaranteed income (GI) is an effective economic stability measure that helps people and families to thrive. Not only does a GI provide immediate relief for families experiencing poverty, but research shows it has broader impacts on wellbeing, such as allowing for child and elder care and increasing one's sense of agency and autonomy. In addition, GI relies on streamlined administration and trusts that people can make the best decisions for themselves. By contrast, other public benefits often rely on complex bureaucracy and impose an administrative burden to access those benefits, which presents [a cost to those needing assistance](#). Too much paperwork, long timelines, and a lack of human support can make someone give up entirely on accessing benefits.

What is the action and what is required?

The proposed action is to advance a set of sequential efforts to ultimately create a permanently funded statewide guaranteed income program. The first step is to introduce legislation in New York to study how to operationalize a state-run guaranteed income program. In California and Washington, similar legislation is moving. This study can assess feasibility, identify funding sources (including exploring how to use TANF funds), determine participant eligibility and mechanisms to ensure that the social welfare benefits of participants are protected and assess the benefits of partnering with nonprofit administrators. This effort can build on the work of the New York State Cash Alliance, a coalition of advocates, practitioners, cash

beneficiaries, and organizers formed in 2024 to advance guaranteed income and direct cash policies at the state level. The study can also draw from the process evaluation of CRNY's Guaranteed Income for Artists program, which delivered direct cash to artists across all of New York State. Lessons from that [process evaluation](#) include the need for a bold program mandate, a participatory design process, extensive hands-on support, and an effective method for verifying financial need.

The next step is to establish a state-funded guaranteed income fund whose programs are run in partnership with nonprofit administrators. California used a non-permanent funding source and started with a \$35 million Guaranteed Income Pilot Program that awarded grants to seven nonprofit administrators. Ultimately, the goal can be to secure a permanent funding source, including dedicated tax revenue or TANF block grant funding. The State of Michigan has already proposed the use of TANF block grant funds for cash-based assistance programs that aim to alleviate childhood poverty.

Who works together?

New York State Senate, Assembly, and the Governor's Office can collaborate with the New York State Cash Alliance to advance this policy strategy. This would include advancing several promising pieces of legislation such as the bill to create a Mothers and Infants Lasting Change allowance (S4578A/A6197), the Gate Money bill (S6643A/A9115), and the Transition Age Youth bill (S3102).

Labor Policies

Labor Policies

Goal

Support all economically vulnerable and non-traditional workers—including artists and creatives—with the respect, dignity, and labor protections they deserve.

Recommendations

5. Pass and implement critical worker protection laws for non-traditional workers
6. Expand eligibility, enforcement, and effective implementation of the Freelance Isn't Free Act
7. Establish a grant program to fund demonstrations of new portable benefits programs and financial security tools for creative workers

Overview

Artists are among the most vulnerable gig workers in the state. Finding feasible, creative, and sustainable policies that can provide them protection at work and support quality jobs can support them and other gig workers simultaneously. The Unemployment Bridge Program and Paid Leave have the potential to impact millions of New York's non-traditional workers. Freelance isn't Free already exists and could deliver a greater impact if the legislation was amended. Portable benefits have momentum across the country, and New York has a substantial population of artists, so it could be the leading innovator in this realm of labor policies.

POLICY RECOMMENDATION 5:

Pass and implement critical worker protection laws for non-traditional workers.

Why this action?

Hundreds of thousands of workers in New York State remain excluded from receiving basic protections that address unexpected events, like family health emergencies or sudden unemployment linked to economic downturns. Paid family leave and unemployment insurance, two essential forms of social insurance, are inaccessible for many non-traditional workers, including workers who frequently move from job to job and workers who are self-employed (which includes a large share of creative workers).

What is the action and what is required?

The proposed action is to advance strategic legislative initiatives focused on worker protections for non-traditional workers. The first step is passing the Senate and Assembly bills (A482/S3192) to create a permanent Unemployment Bridge Program. This would alleviate significant economic insecurity among non-traditional workers currently excluded from traditional unemployment insurance. These bills build on the Excluded Workers Fund, a pandemic-era framework to address the loss of income for workers who were excluded from pandemic-related aid. The proposed legislation includes a digital ad tax to fund the program and eligibility criteria that are inclusive of immigrants without work authorization, self-employed people, construction workers, those re-entering the labor force after incarceration, and freelancers. The legislation specifically refers to fine art, photography, digital media, writing, illustration, videography, and audio production workers.

The next priority is to issue new regulations or amend New York's Paid Family Leave law to make the program more accessible to non-traditional workers. Self-employed workers, for example, must purchase a voluntary paid leave policy, which comes with a two-year waiting period if not purchased within 26 weeks of starting a business. Full-time workers do not have access to paid leave benefits until they have completed 26 weeks of consecutive employment, and part-time workers working fewer than 20 hours per week do not have access until they have worked a total of 175 days. If workers start a new job, the clock resets—what they have already paid into the system through previous employers does not count towards meeting the requirements. Nearly all other states with paid family leave programs provide some portability through the ability to combine multiple jobs to meet eligibility requirements. [A Better Balance's 2023 report](#) provided clear policy prescriptions to modernize this program to better serve all workers. Paid leave contributions should be portable so that workers who change jobs do not lose credit toward their workforce requirements; eligibility should match other programs, requiring four weeks of continuous employment instead of 26; instead of a waiting period, New York can follow other states by allowing self-employed workers to opt-in during designated open enrollment periods or requiring that self-employed workers commit to remain in the program for a certain minimum period of participation.

Who works together?

To advance these two efforts, the Governor's Office, the New York State Department of Labor, the Senate and Assembly finance and labor committees, and organizations like the Excluded Workers Fund, A Better Balance, the National Employment Law Project, and Legal Aid.

POLICY RECOMMENDATION 6:

Expand eligibility, enforcement, and effective implementation of the Freelance Isn't Free Act.

Why this action?

Effective May 2024, [New York State's Freelance Isn't Free Act](#) provides new protections for freelance workers statewide. This law largely mirrors New York City's law under the same name. Both laws apply to freelance jobs with a value of at least \$800 and clarify legal remedies for freelance workers who have experienced nonpayment, intimidation, retaliation, or other acts defined in the law. However, the current law leaves gaps in critical protections and could be strengthened.

What is the action and what is required?

The proposed action is to advance parallel efforts to expand eligibility and ensure effective enforcement and implementation of the new statewide law so that creative workers can access its protections.

The first step is to allocate funding to help build awareness among our region's creative workforce about the new law so that creative workers know their rights. Many arts and culture workers lack awareness about the protections offered by Freelance Isn't Free. Providing funding for outreach strategies led by organizations that creative workers trust would be a powerful investment to ensure compliance with the laws.

The next step is to seek an amendment to the New York City legislation so that a greater number of contracts are eligible. Many creative workers believe that the \$800 threshold to determine the eligibility of contracts needs to be lowered. The recommendation is to lower the threshold to at least \$600, which is anticipated to cover a significant number of additional contracts and eligible freelancers.

To further strengthen protections for freelancers, the recommendation is to establish a reimbursable fund that extends cash to workers who have filed a claim under Freelance Isn't Free until the disputes are settled.

Who works together?

The Governor's Office, the Attorney General's Office, the New York State Department of Labor, the Senate and Assembly labor committees, and organizations that serve creative workers like the Freelancer's Union. New York State Senator Gournardes and New York State Assembly Member Bronson, the legislative sponsors, can lead the efforts to amend the law. The Governor's Office, the Attorney General's Office, and the New York State Department of Labor can advance implementation efforts and collaborate with organizations such as the Music Workers Alliance and the Long Island Arts Alliance to build awareness of the new protections.

Many arts and culture workers lack awareness about the protections offered by *Freelance Isn't Free*.

POLICY RECOMMENDATION 7:

Establish a grant program to fund portable benefits pilot programs and financial security tools for creative workers.

Why this action?

Creative workers often lack access to the benefits associated with full-time employment or other standard work arrangements. While some creative workers can access benefits through unions, many others are left out because of the project-based nature of their work. Aside from the lack of access to critical benefits like quality health insurance, the unpredictable nature of artists' incomes also causes them to face challenges in accessing housing and qualifying for loans.

What is the action and what is required?

The proposed action is for the New York State government to establish a grant program to fund portable benefits pilot programs and financial security tools for workers with irregular incomes. Portable benefits are benefits provided to non-traditional workers to maintain benefits like paid sick and family leave, health insurance, unemployment insurance, workers' compensation, and retirement savings opportunities upon changing jobs or working across many gigs. There are precedents to draw from. Since 2018, state lawmakers in [at least ten states](#) have introduced legislation to establish portable benefits programs for gig workers or create funds to study program feasibility and need. At the federal level, in 2023, US Senators Mark Warner and Todd Young and Representative Suzan DelBene introduced a bill to create The Portable Benefits for Independent Workers Pilot Program.

The goal of the New York State grant program would be to demonstrate the viability of portable benefits platforms and understand what works for non-traditional workers. An ideal population for a funded pilot would focus on teaching artists, as these artists often work as 1099 employees or part-time employees across many arts and cultural organizations, schools, and after-school providers. The portable benefits platform allows the employers to contribute toward benefits for these workers in one place, allowing the artists to access healthcare and other employer benefits. The benefits follow the individual teaching artist instead of being held by the employer.

Another pilot opportunity is to fund platforms that provide financial security tools for creative workers, such as income smoothing, converting 1099 employment to W2 employment, and worker cooperatives. Income smoothing tools allow artists to smooth reported income over several periods, reducing the appearance of volatility. This is particularly useful for artists with irregular or unpredictable earnings so they can budget effectively and qualify for loans and lines of credit (even during periods of low earnings). It is also beneficial when filing taxes or applying for public assistance. W2 employment provides artists with more access to affordable housing opportunities and unemployment insurance. Worker cooperatives offer the advantages of a democratic infrastructure and workplace where creative workers can receive services such as contract management, invoicing support, tax preparation, guaranteed payments, and support accessing healthcare. Advancing pilot programs that support and grow creative worker cooperatives can be a crucial step in improving the resilience of New York's creative workforce.

There are several innovative efforts to learn from, such as The Workers Lab and CRNY's partnership with Tribeworks. Tribeworks is both a worker-owned and artist-run cooperative Professional Employer Organization (PEO) that is committed to building a solidarity economy through the support of creative workers that allowed them to provide W2 employment, healthcare benefits, community-building, and worker-led decision-making to artists in their artist employment program. Tribeworks is both a worker cooperative and can provide employment and benefits to artists and cultural workers. Cooperatives for creative workers include Guilded, Freelancers Union, Stocksy United, and Meerkat Media.

Who works together?

The Governor's Office, the Department of Labor, the New York State Council on the Arts, and legislators assigned to labor, economic policy, and cultural affairs committees can collaborate on efforts to establish a grant program. This can include organizations like Working Matters and the National Employment Law Project. To advance a specific pilot involving portable benefits for teaching artists, the New York City Mayor's Office, the Department of Cultural Affairs, New York City's Department of Education, New York City City Council labor and cultural affairs committees, and organizations like the New York City Arts in Education Roundtable and Worker Lab can collaborate.

Aside from the lack of access to critical benefits like quality health insurance, *the unpredictable nature of artists' incomes* causes them to also face challenges in accessing housing and qualifying for loans.

Workforce Development Policies

Workforce Development Policies

Goal

Build a strong pipeline for creative workers across the state to access quality jobs in the nonprofit, public, and private sectors.

Recommendations

8. Create artist employment programs to address environmental, health, and safety needs in communities
9. Develop and support training programs to increase access to fast-growing creative industry jobs
10. Expand accessible internship and apprenticeship opportunities in New York’s cultural institutions
11. Conduct a biennial census of creative workers in New York

Overview

A thriving creative economy cannot be achieved without a robust creative workforce. Policies that promote access to education, training, and job placement can strengthen and create opportunities in the creative workforce in New York. The State should invest in the creative worker pipeline, put artists to work, and support artists’ careers. These recommendations present the most immediate and executable ideas. They consider the transferable skills that artists have and the understanding of how artists can become cross-sector employees that are receiving workforce development funds (ie. green jobs, tech jobs, and infrastructure jobs) and helping to solve the cross-sector issues our communities are facing. We understand that workforce development pipeline discussions often include K-16 education, but acknowledge and stand in solidarity with the many organizations already articulating the policies that focus on mending our arts education systems toward more equitable, quality arts education for all.

POLICY RECOMMENDATION 8:

Create artist employment programs to address environmental, health, and safety needs in communities.**Why this action?**

A proven strategy to improve economic security among artists and creative workers is to provide public sector employment opportunities aligned with creative practices. Public-sector artist employment programs are not a new concept—most notably, federal programs like the Works Projects Administration (WPA) in 1935 and the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) in 1974 created thousands of jobs for unemployed or under-employed artists and creatives. Today, there is a growing number of artist-in-residence programs at all levels of government across the country. New York City's Public Artists in Residence (PAIR) program alone has employed over 24 artists to work directly within agencies spanning public safety, human rights, health, and immigration.

We know that many artists and creative workers address public policy issues in their work—such as environmental justice, community safety, and mental health—and would be an asset to government efforts to address those issues in communities. Simultaneously, unprecedented federal climate and infrastructure funding is moving through New York State, New York City, and other local governments that can be leveraged to support creative workers.

What is the action and what is required?

The proposed action is for New York City policymakers to create artist employment programs that advance the goals of government agencies. Agencies can hire artists directly via well-established artist-in-residence models, or partner closely with community-based organizations to advance shared community well-being goals. CRNY's Artist Employment Program offers proof of concept for artists and creative workers embedded within community organizations. The model can be adapted to focus on community organizations that regularly partner or contract with government agencies to service community needs. The [California Creative Corps](#) offers state-funded employment to artists working on health, climate change, or social justice projects across the state.

One specific pilot opportunity is with New York City agencies that are managing federal climate dollars to support environmental justice and climate resilience work in communities. Agencies could allocate a percentage of funding for community-based organizations to hire artists to engage with the cultural dimensions of the climate transition in those communities. The [U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's inaugural Artist-in-Residence Program](#) in partnership with the National Endowment for the Arts establishes an important precedent for such an allocation of funds.

Another opportunity is to work with New York City's Department of Health and Mental Hygiene on an employment program focused on the intersection of arts and health. This is inspired by the successful work of Henry Street Settlement to embed artists in the organization's programs serving people with

mental health challenges. The effort can leverage the robust “clubhouse” infrastructure in New York City and draw on the work of [Chicago’s Arts & Health Pilot for Creative Workers](#), which hires artists for year-long artist apprenticeships in creative therapy.

At the state level, agencies managing federal funding from the federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act could be the first to advance Governor Hochul’s *Arts Pluribus Unum* initiative by employing artists-in-residence to support their transportation, housing, or other infrastructure goals. As a model, both the [Minnesota and Washington State Departments of Transportation](#) have hosted artists-in-residence to great success.

The broader creative placemaking movement, which has [documented](#) the impact that artists and arts organizations have across multiple sectors, can provide additional evidence and case-making for government officials.

Who works together?

The Governor’s Office, Empire State Development, New York State Council on the Arts, New York City Mayor’s Office, New York City Economic Development Corporation, the Department of Cultural Affairs, and the Mayor’s Office of Talent and Workforce Development can collaborate to refine this strategy. These public agencies can work closely with relevant agencies and community-based organizations that are successfully embedding artists in non-art settings, like Henry Street Settlement.



Cassie Helman / Traditional Arts in Upstate New York (TAUNY)
Photo Credit: Gus Geraci and Sarah Lynch

POLICY RECOMMENDATION 9:

Develop and support training programs to increase access to fast-growing creative industry jobs.

Why this action?

New York's Office of Strategic Workforce Development identifies [seven high-growth industries](#) statewide. These are industries with relatively high wages and financial security that are positioned to grow the 'jobs of the future.' Among them, the Film/Television, Software/Digital Media, and Advanced Manufacturing industries will generate thousands of jobs in the coming years that will afford New Yorkers opportunities to earn a living in ways that align with their creative interests and talents. The question is how to ensure that creative New Yorkers interested in those industries are ready for those career pathways, many of which require the acquisition of new, specialized skills and familiarity with emerging technologies.

What is the action and what is required?

The proposed action is for the State to invest in and facilitate the development of specialized workforce development programs that provide opportunities for creative workers to learn the specialized skills and emerging technologies that can complement the valuable creative skills they already possess to prepare them for employment opportunities within select high-growth creative industries. Partnering with public colleges and universities can make this initiative broadly accessible. Both SUNY and CUNY are well connected to the State's workforce development priorities so there is potential to innovate on existing training programs to incorporate curricula that prepare students for career pathways in the region's high-growth creative industries.

This action can begin with an analysis of the specific industry niches, employers, occupations, and skills that should be targeted for this effort, informed by the approach in New York City's Green Economy Action Plan. This analysis should include 'skills crosswalks' that inform training program design based on skills that creatives already possess and the skills they need to acquire. This can include an analysis of specific industries and occupations where creative skills are most in demand, key employers, re-skilling pathways, and a strategy for leveraging the State's community college system.

The next step can be to develop a pilot program involving select training providers and target employers. This pilot can be informed by other pilots happening across the country. Arts Alliance Illinois is in the process of developing an Arts-Tech Workforce Pilot that aims to provide artists with opportunities to learn new software skills and connect them with employment opportunities in Chicago's software/digital media industry. Though still in development, a key lesson emerging from this initiative is that a set of prominent employers need to be early champions of the project and that those employers must proactively inform training programs, but would also benefit from guidance and training about how to successfully work with artists/creatives that are making career transitions.

Who works together?

State and local workforce agencies like the Office of Strategic Workforce Development and the New York City Mayor's Office of Talent and Workforce Development can lead this strategy. These agencies can engage associations like The Partnership for New York City to identify employers who are open to participating in identifying opportunities and developing training.

POLICY RECOMMENDATION 10:

Expand accessible internship and apprenticeship opportunities in New York’s cultural institutions.

Why this action?

There are significant barriers to employment in non-profit arts administration, specifically high educational requirements, low pay, and relatively few opportunities for on-the-job training such as paid internships and apprenticeships. For New Yorkers without the connections and resources to find and accept unpaid opportunities, a more accessible pathway to these careers is necessary.

What is the action and what is required?

The proposed action is to advance a set of parallel efforts to expand accessible internship and apprenticeship opportunities in New York’s cultural institutions. The first steps are to expand internships, beginning with growing the capacity of the [CUNY Cultural Corps](#) program and expanding the program to include SUNY schools statewide. The CUNY Cultural Corps program is an internship program that pays CUNY students to work at various cultural institutions across New York City. Several cultural institutions in New York offer apprenticeships, including the New York City Center and the Brooklyn Museum. The programs have proven successful, and there are opportunities to expand the number and diversity of New Yorkers who can benefit from these kinds of experiences.

The expansion to SUNY schools should replicate the philanthropic partnership model of the original CUNY Cultural Corps program, which contributed to the student stipends, and also allocate public funds to subsidize apprenticeships at the participating cultural institutions.

A parallel effort focused on apprenticeships and supporting arts organizations to design apprenticeship curricula is recommended. There are opportunities to build on existing efforts. [Arts2Work](#) is the first federally-registered National Apprenticeship Program in Media Arts and Creative Technologies. New York State’s Department of Labor has a well-established [Registered Apprenticeship Program](#). These programs tend to offer longer-term (between 1-5 years) paid positions with built-in wage increases and standardized curriculums and certifications. The New York State Department of Labor recognizes [numerous trades](#), four of which are related to arts and culture. Across these four registered trades, just [one registered apprenticeship program](#) exists: an Art Operations Associate Apprenticeship program offered by an auction house in New York City.

There are also opportunities to support cultural institutions across the state to design apprenticeship curricula and to develop programs that align with New York State Department of Labor certifications, or to propose new ones. The key is to begin with organizations that have already developed robust training programs, like the [New York City Center apprenticeships](#).

Who works together?

New York State Department of Labor, the New York City Mayor’s Office of Talent and Workforce Development, Empire State Development, SUNY, and CUNY can collaborate to identify opportunities to expand the program to additional community colleges, and with cultural institutions to identify opportunities to expand registered apprenticeship programs.

POLICY RECOMMENDATION 11:

Conduct a biennial census of creative workers in New York.**Why this action?**

New York has no centralized, regularly updated data set on creative workers. Consistent and comprehensive data can help policymakers better understand the needs of creative workers, craft more effective workforce development policies, and evaluate progress on programs and strategies that invest in the creative workforce. Developing and maintaining a census of creative workers in New York State represents an opportunity for policymakers to create more accurate cutting-edge data on creative workers than currently available federal data.

CRNY's [Portrait of New York State Artists Survey](#) demonstrated a first-of-its-kind statewide approach to collecting and sharing better data about creative workers. Over 13,000 artists responded to the survey, which comprised 46 questions on the following topics: geographic and demographic information; artistic practice; financial circumstances; well-being; pandemic experience; and policy and advocacy involvement. This kind of data can be a crucial barometer of the workforce's needs, circumstances, and experiences that power New York's creative economy and can directly inform economic development investments.

What is the action and what is required?

The proposed strategy is to create a biennial census of New York State's creative workforce. There are efforts to build on, including a national effort led by the National Endowment for the Arts, United States Artists, and others to revise the Bureau of Labor Statistics occupational codes to align the taxonomy better to accurately and consistently capture data on creative workers. The [Chicago Arts Census](#) is another precedent explicitly led by arts workers.

The first step is to find a home for CRNY's Portrait of New York State Artists survey, which can be refined or expanded to fit within other workforce data collection efforts at the state level. A strategic collaboration between Empire State Development's Office of Strategic Workforce Development (OSWD) and the New York State Council on the Arts (New York State Council on the Arts) would be the most effective way to ensure integration and reporting of the data across economic development, workforce development, and arts and culture policies. Because the New York State Council on the Arts has funding relationships with many organizations whose constituencies are critical respondents to this census, however, New York State Council on the Arts will be an important partner in conducting the census and maintaining the data longitudinally.

CRNY's Portrait of New York State Artists Survey demonstrated a first-of-its-kind statewide approach to collecting and sharing better data about creative workers.

A key priority is investing in census outreach to contact as many creative workers as possible. This will require significant outreach across the state, emphasizing engaging harder-to-reach rural populations, communities of color, low-income communities, and artists who operate outside of traditional funding networks and systems of recognition. CRNY created an [Artist Outreach Corps](#), which compensated trusted artists and arts services organizations to lead outreach efforts for the Portrait of New York State Artists – which could be a model for a continued census initiative.

Who works together?

Because of the economic importance of New York's creative economy, the recommendation is for Empire State Development to house this effort, leveraging the New York State Council on the Arts as a key collaborator. Empire State Development and the New York State Council on the Arts can begin by collecting and compiling survey data produced by CRNY, Music Worker's Alliance, HueArts, and DanceNYC to provide a baseline of data and to learn from their best practices.



Davana Robedee / Schweinfurth Art Center
Photo Credit: Schweinfurth Art Center

Economic Development Policies

Economic Development Policies

Goal

Catalyze new investments in creative workers seeking to grow businesses and organizations, and support them as key partners in community revitalization and wealth-building efforts.

Recommendations

12. Increase public funding for economic development projects that integrate arts and culture
13. Invest in the capacity of Community Development Financial Institutions to expand access to capital for arts organizations and creative entrepreneurs
14. Expand navigation support to identify resources for creative and cultural spaces at risk of displacement

Overview

Artists and cultural organizations can be powerful allies for communities working toward sustainable and equitable economic growth. Building community wealth has been a major focus for New York State post-pandemic; New York Forward, the Downtown Revitalization Initiative, the Community Development Financial Institution Assistance Program, and the Community Development Financial Institution Revolving Loan Fund Program have been supported by the State's Regional Economic Development Councils (REDCs) and Empire State Development towards achieving that vision. The policies proposed here build on this work to leverage existing public assets, programs, and relationships to realize the economic development potential of the arts and our region's creative workforce.

POLICY RECOMMENDATION 12:

Increase public funding for economic development projects that integrate arts and culture.**Why this action?**

A small fraction of economic development dollars are invested in local creative economies in New York. Despite the clear economic benefits—generating tourism, creating vital public spaces that drive visitation, enhancing the success of retail and restaurants, and raising real estate values and tax rolls—economic development strategies in New York City and the State have historically overlooked the role of the creative workforce in community development and regional economic growth. New York State’s Regional Economic Development Council Initiative (REDC) has awarded over \$7.9 billion to over 9,900 projects, but only a small share of creative economy investments (under 4% in 2021).

New York State’s Regional Economic Development Council Initiative has awarded *over \$7.9 billion to over 9,900 projects, but only a small share of creative economy investments (under 4% in 2021).*

What is the action and what is required?

The proposed action is increasing investment in economic development projects integrating arts and culture. Economic development projects that integrate arts and culture can include the development of cultural facilities, creative incubator spaces, artist live-work spaces, arts programming such as local arts festivals, exhibitions, or performances, or commissioning public art or other publicly-accessible creative work that enlivens an area and helps attract economic investment. There are well-documented examples to draw from, including those researched by The Reinvestment Fund in [Creativity and Neighborhood Development: Strategies for Community Investment](#) and by the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco in [Transforming Community Development through Arts and Culture](#).

New York Forward, the Downtown Revitalization Initiative, and Restore New York are sources of economic development funding that present an opportunity to advance the state’s goals for job creation, increased retail activity, and sustained economic vitality in New York communities by promoting strategies that invest in the local creative workforce. Every year, New York Forward and the Downtown Revitalization Initiative select two to three communities for project funding through the State’s Regional Economic Development Councils (REDCs). To better evaluate and prioritize projects that integrate arts and culture, the REDCs should have a greater representation of people with affiliations to arts and culture and creative industries. To begin, the New York State Council on the Arts should reestablish its presence on each regional council and advocate for more representatives from arts and culture organizations.

In addition, economic development policymakers can provide REDCs an incentive to nominate projects that integrate arts and culture with guidance about how to unlock complementary funding through Arts Pluribus Unum, Governor Hochul's commitment to strategically allocate tourism and place-making investments to bolster the region's arts and culture assets. This action can also be linked to the implementation of [New York Senate Bill 2023-S253A](#), which will establish a process for designating arts and cultural districts throughout the state.

Who works together?

The Governor's Office, Empire State Development, New York State Council on the Arts, New York State Senate Arts & Culture Committee, the New York State Assembly Economic Development Committee, all ten Regional Economic Development Councils, New York City Mayor's Office, New York City Economic Development Corporation, and the Federal Reserve Bank of New York. These should also include other local economic development policymakers throughout the state and relevant non-governmental organizations like the Upstate Alliance for the Creative Economy, Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) New York, and Center for an Urban Future.



POLICY RECOMMENDATION 13:

Invest in the capacity of Community Development Financial Institutions to expand access to capital for arts organizations and creative entrepreneurs.

Why this action?

Arts organizations and creative entrepreneurs need help accessing capital and financial expertise, which limits their potential to create and sustain jobs for other creative workers and to contribute to broader community economic development goals. The most critical capital gaps involve arts organizations facing real estate challenges, arts organizations that are miscalcipated and require “change capital,” and creative entrepreneurs in need of micro-loans to start or expand creative businesses.

Community development financial institutions (CDFIs), which are designed to plug capital gaps in communities, can be critical partners in the flow of capital and financial expertise to arts organizations, creative entrepreneurs, and the broader creative economy. There is growing momentum behind the idea that arts and culture is a [viable investment for financial institutions](#). But on the whole, New York’s CDFI sector is not yet equipped to meet the needs of New York’s creative economy. Even the CDFIs that are interested in increasing their lending in this space are reporting that they do not yet have sufficient in-house expertise to build a sustainable pipeline of investments, they need introductions to establish relationships with patient capital interested in investing in the arts and need to build their internal capacity to support arts organizations with financial modeling, capital stacking, due diligence, and underwriting.

What is the action and what is required?

The proposed action is for Empire State Development and the New York State Department of Financial Services to make grants through the New York State CDFI Assistance Program to select CDFIs to not only train their staff in how to finance arts organizations, but also to greatly increase their lending capability for arts organizations, creative entrepreneurs, and other creative economy enterprises throughout the state.

The design of the CDFI capacity-building grant program should address key capital gaps, beginning with the needs of arts organizations that are facing real estate challenges. While not an option for all arts organizations, facility ownership is a path that some can and should consider, provided proper capitalization, expertise, and organizational capacity. This aspect of the program can draw lessons from the New York City Inclusive Creative Economy Fund, which Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) managed and through which it invested more than \$13M; and the Rainin Arts Real Estate Strategy implemented by the [Community Arts Stabilization Trust \(CAST\)](#) in San Francisco, which enables arts and cultural nonprofits to buy or lease real estate by matching funding with the right site and deploying low-cost financing that freezes the price of the real estate against market escalation. Building up expertise around these types of strategies among New York’s CDFIs will have a meaningful impact on their ability to help arts organizations secure affordable real estate and a path to ownership. This can be a powerful step to ensure that our local creative economies can make the most of culturally inclusive economic development investments and are not threatened by the displacement pressures that can sometimes be the result of local economic growth.

Another key aspect of the capacity-building program can be focused on creative entrepreneurship. It is very difficult for creative workers to access financing opportunities to support launching creative ventures and small businesses. In addition to providing affordable financing, CDFIs should also provide expertise and guidance to creative entrepreneurs so that they can access programs such as the New York Forward Loan Fund, the New York State Small Business Revolving Loan Fund, and the Micro-Enterprise Loan Fund Program. This aspect of the capacity-building program can draw from efforts like [ArtCap](#), a program managed by a CDFI outside of New York that helps artists quickly access loans under \$10,000, and provides a loan navigator and business development coach to loan applicants. This mix of financial support and technical assistance could be an effective catalyst for the creation and expansion of small creative businesses in New York State that would otherwise be excluded from small business financing, either through eligibility requirements or cumbersome application requirements.

Who works together?

The Governor's Office, Empire State Development, the New York State Department of Financial Services, Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) New York, and other community finance partners, and arts service organizations can collaborate on this action. Community finance partners can help to ensure this action will be something they can implement, and arts service organizations like ArtBuilt and IndieSpace—both of which have experience helping creative organizations navigate financing—can inform how the design of the capacity-building program leads to beneficial outcomes for creative organizations.



A Cross-Sector Policy Framework

POLICY RECOMMENDATION 14:

Expand navigation support to identify resources for creative and cultural spaces at risk of displacement.

Why this action?

Many creative and cultural spaces in New York are facing displacement at an alarming rate because of rising rents. In New York City alone, hundreds and hundreds of music venues, galleries, and theaters have closed in the last decade. This has left many creative workers without access to affordable rehearsal, performance, and exhibition spaces, limiting opportunities to sustain creative practices and contribute to community economic vitality.

The City of New York’s Mayor’s Office and the Department of Cultural Affairs have started working to support creative and cultural spaces that are facing imminent risks of displacement through a digital hub and one-on-one navigation support that helps organizations identify resources to help them stay in their current space or move to a more affordable space. These nascent efforts—which have included connecting organizations to resources offered by the Mayor’s Office of Media and Entertainment, the Mayor’s Office of Non-Profit Services, NYC Economic Development Corporation, and the Department of Small Business Services, among other City and State offices and agencies—have been limited, but are showing promise and would benefit from additional resources to expand their reach.

What is the action and what is required?

The proposed action is to allocate additional resources to expand the NYC’s “Culture At Risk” initiative, including hiring dedicated navigators to work closely with cultural and creative organizations and workers facing imminent risk of displacement to identify resources that can address their need for affordable space. This expansion of the initiative’s capacity can also happen by

procuring the services of an organization that can administer pro bono navigation support, in addition to executing a robust needs assessment to confirm program priorities and service delivery models.

The goal is for the “Culture At Risk” initiative to expand who it serves to include not only creative and cultural organizations, but also informal collectives and individual creative workers with urgent space needs. Additional resources could also support expansion of how the initiative convenes and serves as a “matchmaker” to connect private real estate owners, particularly those with vacant office and commercial holdings, with creative and cultural organizations in need of affordable space.

Who works together?

The New York City Mayor’s Office Innovation Team, New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, the Mayor’s Office of Media and Entertainment, the Mayor’s Office of Non-Profit Services, NYC Economic Development Corporation, and the Department of Small Business Services can work together to articulate a shared plan for expanding their commitment to the “Culture at Risk” initiative. A dedicated working group that includes non-governmental organizations with real estate expertise and property owners can inform the City’s plans for public-private partnerships around this issue.

Arts & Culture Policies

Arts & Culture Policies

Goal

Increase public investment in arts and culture, and ensure those dollars reach individual artists and small, culturally diverse organizations.

Recommendations

15. Legislate prevailing wage standards for artists working on publicly-funded arts and cultural projects
16. Scale up direct, flexible, and equitable public funding for individual artists, culture-bearers, and creative workers
17. Increase public funding for culturally diverse arts and culture organizations
18. Reform tax policy to create dedicated revenue for arts and culture

Overview

Artists and the arts and cultural organizations who employ them are underresourced across the state. Many organizations cannot pay artists appropriately, and most cannot offer benefits to their employees. Increased funding for arts and cultural organizations and direct funding for artists are two timely ways to resource individuals and organizations. The strategies in this section provide innovative ways to accomplish this by building on legislative efforts and programs. These recommendations could be transformative for our region, and its artists and their families, making New York competitive with other states that are boldly investing in their creative economies.

POLICY RECOMMENDATION 15:

Establish prevailing wage requirements for arts and culture organizations on projects funded with public dollars.***Why this action?***

While public funding in other sectors often carries certain requirements related to wages (New York sets a floor for wages and benefits for workers under public work contracts), public grants to our arts and culture institutions do not require payment standards for either full-time, part-time or contract workers on publicly-funded projects at those institutions.

What is the action and what is required?

The proposed action is to advance a set of sequential efforts to amend the state's laws to require cultural institutions that receive funds from the New York State Council on the Arts or publicly-funded local arts agencies to pay professional creative workers at least the prevailing minimum compensation for their professions.

The first step is to advance [Senate Bill S1648A](#), which applies to large and mid-size non-profit theaters and enforces minimum compensation standards for employees (performers and supporting personnel) working on publicly-funded productions. This bill has been crafted with input from labor organizations and requires that theaters enter into an agreement with at least one labor organization.

The next step is to introduce follow-up legislation that applies to an expanded set of cultural organizations (beyond non-profit theaters) and covers an expanded set of creative workers, including independent contractors working on publicly funded projects. This expansion would require adopting a new approach to setting industry compensation standards for the diverse array of roles that creative workers can play in producing and circulating creative work.

There is considerable work to build on, including the [Skills Calculator](#) developed by Working Artists for the Greater Economy (W.A.G.E.), which enables creative workers to define their skills with precision and price them according to prevailing wages. The W.A.G.E. calculator merges an art field skills categorization system developed by the organization with occupational data from the SOC system and matches skills to regional wage and salary rates drawn from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. New York could potentially license this calculator.

As a national precedent, the National Endowment of the Arts and the National Endowment of the Humanities have established similar requirements for recipients of federal grants. [Federal requirements for prevailing minimum compensation](#) apply to professional performers, artists, and anyone whose work supports their activities on projects funded by the NEA or NEH.

Who works together?

New York State Senator Hoylman-Sigal, the sponsor of Senate Bill S1648A, can continue to work with Senator Serrano, Senate and Assembly colleagues, New York State Council on the Arts, New York State Department of Labor, Actors Equity Association, and other relevant labor organizations representing theater workers. Efforts involving follow-up legislation can bring together a broader set of labor organizations, cultural organizations, artist services organizations, artist collaboratives, and W.A.G.E.

POLICY RECOMMENDATION 16:

Scale up direct, flexible, and equitable public funding for individual artists, culture-bearers, and creative workers.***Why this action?***

Many artists in New York need help accessing direct and flexible funding opportunities. Most government agencies that make arts and culture grants do not directly support individual artists. Government arts grants largely fund cultural organizations, and many of those organizations that re-grant to artists do so through programs and processes that are overly selective, burdensome, and otherwise function as barriers.

What is the action and what is required?

The proposed action is for the New York State Council on the Arts, New York City's Department of Cultural Affairs, and the arts agencies of other New York localities to scale up direct and flexible funding to artists. This can begin by reintroducing and scaling up New York City's City Artists Corps program and updating statewide programs like the New York State Council on the Arts's Support for Artists program and the New York State Council on the Arts/New York Foundation for the Arts Artist Fellowship by replicating key attributes of the City Artists Corps program. [New York City's City Artists Corps](#) was a pandemic-era program that provided one-time unrestricted grants to individual artists, musicians, and other performers to create works across the city through public art, performances, pop-up shows, murals, or other community arts projects. The program demonstrated the government's ability to provide direct, flexible, streamlined funding to individual artists. It had a racial equity mandate and was administered in collaboration with over a dozen re-granting and arts service organizations that engaged in a robust outreach process to ensure the program reached a diverse set of grantees. Eligible artists applied through a simplified

process and were selected for the grant by a lottery system that prioritized funding to individuals from or serving underserved communities. Through these tactics, the program succeeded in assisting individual artists in New York City who had been left out of previous city, state, and federal programs.

Policymakers can also draw from CRNY's Guaranteed Income for Artists program to inform program design. The program delivered direct cash to artists across all of New York State. As described in its [process evaluation](#), CRNY's program offered an accessible application and an equity-driven lottery selection process.

New York State Council on the Arts can ensure that public art commissions made through its upcoming Arts Pluribus Unum initiative are directly funding artists. Arts Pluribus Unum is a Hochul administration commitment to provide \$50 million for capital projects to be dispersed through New York State Council on the Arts to invest in public art that accelerates local revitalization efforts through public art and cultural programming. Public art requires collaboration and arts organizations can be helpful partners in mediating collaborations between artists and government for this purpose. However, collaboration with and funding of intermediary arts organizations for these purposes should not come at the expense of adequately compensating artists, who are often last to be considered when it comes to compensation.

Who works together?

New York State Council on the Arts has an opportunity to convene the regional arts councils, New York City's Department of Cultural Affairs, New York Foundation for the Arts, and the other non-profit organizations that have helped to implement the City Artists

Corps program. New York State Council on the Arts can engage the arts organizations that served as pass-through entities for the City Artists Corps to understand what worked well about the program design and how it can be improved.



A Cross-Sector Policy Framework

Carlos Chediak / Grupo Cultural Latinos En Rochester, Inc.
Photo Credit: Grupo Cultural Latinos En Rochester, Inc.

POLICY RECOMMENDATION 17:

Increase public funding for culturally diverse arts and culture organizations.***Why this action?***

Overall, culturally diverse arts and culture organizations receive very little public funding in New York. The lion's share of public funding for arts and culture in our region flows to larger cultural institutions that underserved communities of color. In their [survey of POC-led arts entities across New York State](#), Hue Arts New York State found that 66% of respondents had budgets under \$100,000. Respondents noted an apparent lack of public funding, with 38% stating they received no public funding and 50% stating that less than half of their funds came from public sources in their last fiscal year.

What is the action and what is required?

The proposed action is to advance a set of parallel efforts to increase public funding for culturally diverse arts organizations statewide. First, by advancing [Senate Bill S5714A](#) (passed the Senate in the 2023-2024 legislative session), which would amend the state's arts and cultural affairs law to increase access to resources for culturally diverse arts and culture organizations. The current laws favor organizations that can more easily claim to promote tourism while hindering organizations that prioritize the health and welfare of communities of color, which are also drivers of regional prosperity. Senate Bill S5714A takes as its premise that "certain communities have more cultural funding and resources than others, and that those inequities are often skewed along lines of race and class." This legislation would expand the consideration of grants and contracts to benefit organizations that focus on the health and welfare of communities of color, including using arts and culture as a tool to address racial and social justice issues.

A parallel step is to ensure the implementation of the Hochul Administration's Arts Pluribus Unum to reflect a transformation of funding norms that prioritize cultural organizations that focus on the health and welfare of communities of color, similar to the goals of SB S5714A. For both Arts Pluribus Unum and the future implementation of SB S5714A, the New York State Council on the Arts should streamline application processes for culturally diverse organizations serving communities of color. New York State Council on the Arts can use data-driven selection processes that incorporate metrics based on both the economic circumstances of organizations and the demographic and socioeconomic conditions of the communities they serve.

Who works together?

New York State Senator Cleare, sponsor of Senate Bill S5714A, can continue to work with Senator Serrano, Senate and Assembly colleagues, the New York State Council on the Arts, and Empire State Development. Going forward, policymakers can invite deeper participation from groups like Hue Arts and other POC-led arts entities across New York State. Policymakers can leverage HueArts' work to collect data on POC-led institutions across the state.

What else can this build on?

The New York City Department of Cultural Affairs recently completed a set of reforms to the [Cultural Development Fund](#) that advance equitable funding practices, including more funding stability for organizations serving communities of color. These reforms can inform the New York State Council on the Arts grantmaking rules and practices.

POLICY RECOMMENDATION 18:

Reform tax policy to create dedicated revenue for arts and culture.

Why this action?

Statewide public investment in arts and culture has declined in recent decades. Meanwhile, other regions are creating dedicated revenue streams to increase and sustain public investments in arts and culture.

What is the action and what is required?

The proposed action is to lay the groundwork to amend the tax law by conducting a comparative study of various tax policy reforms that could lead to a sustainable source of revenue to fund public investments in arts and culture in New York. The goal is to compare estimated revenues and identify any unintended consequences.

The recommendation is for the evaluation of scenarios to include a general sales tax, similar to Minnesota which passed a constitutional amendment creating a 3/8-cent sales tax to create permanent funding for its Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund. Over its 25-year life, this tax will **generate \$1.2 billion** for arts and cultural heritage projects and programs. These funds are distributed to traditional arts and culture agencies, non-arts government agencies to support arts and cultural programs, and the state’s Indian Affairs Council.

More focused taxation strategies should also be evaluated. This can include a tax on high-end art dealers as proposed by [Senate Bill S5317](#). This bill is strategic because it also has a narrow focus on where to direct the funding: arts programming in schools. This is a policy outcome with multiple powerful constituencies, and the long-term impacts on New York’s cultural identity and economic competitiveness should be included in the comparative evaluation. In addition, the recommendation is to include in the review a Broadway seat tax, an advertising tax, and a hotel room tax, as proposed in the [New York](#) report.

Who works together?

This requires leadership from the Governor’s Office, working with the New York State Senate and Assembly colleagues, the New York State Council on the Arts, the Empire State Development, the New York State Department of Taxation and Finance, and the New York State Division of the Budget.

The recommendation is for the evaluation of scenarios to include a general sales tax that will generate *\$1.2 billion* for arts and cultural heritage projects and programs.

CONCLUSION

We call on leaders in government to create an intergovernmental working group to advance the recommendations in this Playbook as part of a coordinated, ‘whole-of-government’ approach to investing in the health and growth of New York’s creative economy.

There is a gap in policies to support our creative workforce that threatens to erode the vitality and strength of New York’s communities, the strength of our creative economy (a strategic asset of our state), and our broader economic competitiveness as a region.

We need champions within State and local government—both in the executive and legislative branch—to come together to create a Statewide Creative Economy Strategic Plan that helps to advance a holistic set of policies that draw on the capacities of a wide range of public agencies and institutions.

The framework and set of recommended policies that anchor this Playbook represent a strong starting point for this proposed working group and strategic plan; and all of this emerged from a process of convening a diverse set of individuals and organizations from inside and outside of government representing a range of perspectives.

We now look to New York’s leaders to affirm the significance of the state’s creative workforce by taking creative steps forward!

APPENDIX

Methodology

The recommendations in this document are the result of a year-long process that included policy research, budget analysis, case study research, interviews, and convenings with policymakers, artists, creative workers, and cultural organizers. HR&A and CRNY led this analysis through three phases: an opportunity assessment, a co-design process, and a synthesis phase that culminated in the development of this Playbook. We detail those phases in this methodology section.

Phase 1 - Opportunity Assessment

HR&A and CRNY began phase one by inventorying existing policies in New York State and New York City that broadly impact the creative workforce and economically precarious workers. We analyzed this policy landscape to understand the scope and scale of existing programs and identify important gaps that affect the creative workforce. The next step was identifying relevant policymakers, government departments, and leaders inside and outside of government.

The initial scan led to a prioritization of policy focus areas, which resulted in prioritizing workforce development, worker protections, economic development, and cultural funding. Over 30 interviews with policymakers, advocates, funders, and artists led to several policy goals under each policy focus area and to specific policy ideas. These focus areas, goals, and ideas were packaged as part of an initial briefing packet that was provided to the “co-designers” participating in the next phase of the process.

Phase 2 - Co-Design

With these preliminary policy goals, HR&A and CRNY kicked off a series of six virtual convenings and one in-person convening that brought together policymakers, cultural organizers, funders, and artists across New York and the US. These convenings brought together the following stakeholders to inform, validate, and refine the recommendations in this playbook:

- 6 representatives from State government agencies and departments;
- 5 representatives from State legislators’ offices;
- 9 representatives from New York City agencies;
- 2 representatives from New York City Council offices;
- 1 federal representative;
- 4 research and policy organizations;
- 25+ artists, arts organizations, and artist service organization representatives;
- 2 philanthropy representatives; and
- 3 practitioners from other states.

With this group of over 50 participants, HR&A and CRNY confirmed policy focus areas and goals, workshopped policy actions, co-developed new policy actions, and prioritized policy actions based on their feasibility and impact. In the final in-person convening, breakout groups helped to evaluate the policy goals and actions. They identified critical steps for implementation, key infrastructure to build on, and important considerations to ensure equity.



A workshop to refine policy goals and recommendations included state and local policymakers, artists, and leaders across public, private and non-profit sectors. This workshop was held at Teatro Sea at the Clemente Soto Véllez Cultural & Educational Center on May 15th, 2024. Photo Credit: HR&A Advisors

Phase 3 - Synthesis

HR&A and CRNY began an iterative process of refining the policy recommendations that came out of our co-design labs. This included conducting additional research on policy precedents and identifying opportunities for policy ideas to build on each other. For each idea, the team identified important equity and implementation considerations and who could work to advance the concept inside and outside of government. As the team finalized recommendations, key stakeholders were engaged to ensure alignment and continued buy-in.

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