

NCAPER RECOMMENDED PRINCIPLES FOR ARTS FUNDING IN THE COVID-19 CRISIS AND IN OTHER CRISES

*Please look for future advisories from us regarding application
guidelines, building readiness and resilience and more.*

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The National Coalition for Arts' Preparedness and Emergency Response (NCAPER) was founded in 2006 by arts service organizations, funders and individuals nationwide after Hurricane Katrina revealed the complete absence of a safety net to serve this country's artists, arts organizations and cultural workers before, during and after disasters. Some of its members, like the Actors Fund and CERF+, have been providing emergency support to artists for over 100 years and 35 years respectively. Others have been providing emergency funding to artists more recently and some cut their teeth in the arts disaster management space of 9/11 and Hurricane Katrina. Together, we have worked to build a vision for a nationwide network of networks and a coordinated safety net in order to serve all members of the arts and cultural sector in a coordinated way through the development of resources, education and advocacy.

Over the years, NCAPER and its activities have been supported by the NEA, the Joan Mitchell Foundation, the Nathan Cummings Foundation and in a leading 3-year grant in 2017, by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, whose funding enabled NCAPER to hire a part-time Executive Director, as well as other staff, to strengthen its capacity and stability. A complete list of our Steering Committee Members, all of whom serve in a voluntary capacity, as well as committing funds annually to support the Coalition, is at the end of this document.

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In the spirit of serving our nation's artists, cultural workers and arts and culture organizations, as well as the funders that seek to support them during emergencies in general and during this current coronavirus crisis in particular, NCAPER has articulated guiding principles we have learned over the past 14 years. Based on the combined experience of members of NCAPER's Steering Committee, these principles have evolved from responding to individual and large-scale emergencies in the arts and cultural sector every day for many years. They are informed by our collective knowledge that any crisis further exacerbates the systemic economic fragility of our sector.

Only with more thoughtful planning and financial stabilization of the field, including a focus on readiness and resilience, can we adequately prepare for the inevitable crises that continue to occur all too frequently. Moreover, NCAPER recognizes that however critical immediate support for any national, regional or local crisis may be, we must work towards strengthening the general safety net for our sector in alliance with others working with similarly economically vulnerable populations and sectors.

We realize that many of you have provided arts emergency funding in the past, while others are new to the field, and that support mechanisms are arising daily at the individual, microgrant, private foundation, and local, state and federal government levels. The development of new pooled funds and increased commitments from private philanthropy, in concert with public support in response to present needs suggests this is a moment when our awareness of the vulnerabilities of our field has been heightened. Accordingly, it is with the collective wisdom NCAPER has amassed that we offer these guiding principles.

We believe that cultural workers, artists, their small businesses and the nonprofit sector will be in need for months to years to come and we hope that these principles can help guide you as you think through the programs to create. It is only through working together and with knowledge of other support that we will be able to best serve the needs of the most without duplication of effort and with parity and equity.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

DISASTER PHILANTHROPY IS A MARATHON, NOT A SPRINT

Yes, the need is urgent now, but the need will be there for months to years to come so funders must pace themselves and stage funding in waves to ensure that there will be funds available for those that need them in the future. New needs will emerge. Thinking strategically as a field about how, when and where to onboard funding could be vital. We will be issuing further recommendations shortly about how to think strategically as a sector about this issue.

DISASTER PHILANTHROPY SHOULD BE NEED, NOT MERIT-BASED

While arts funding is often related to evaluation of the work of an individual or organization, in disasters we recommend that what is evaluated is legitimacy as an organization, artist or cultural worker, as well as actual needs and losses. What constitutes a working artist may be individually determined by each funder. A standard NCAPER has often seen implemented is regular and ongoing work in the field as evidenced by exhibitions, sales, performances and the like; training; teaching; receipt of grants, awards or honors; or simply an ongoing track record and commitment to one's practice. Please also remember that artists who are great mentors and those who practice in folk and traditional communities or disciplines, e.g., those in Native American communities, may not exhibit these criteria. Please take account of them, as well.

Note, too, that the commercial success of an organization is not the only measure of its legitimacy.

MEET THE NEEDS OF ARTISTS, CULTURAL WORKERS AND ARTS ORGANIZATIONS MORE EQUITABLY

We understand that some funders can only fund individuals, others can only fund organizations and others have the ability to fund both. As a sector, we must seek to meet the needs of artists, cultural workers and organizations in proportion to the numbers of people and groups impacted in the field and in recognition of current imbalances in our arts and cultural ecosystem. Consider:

- Guidelines and applications -- as well as ability to process them -- in languages other than English. Ensure these correspond to your community's makeup
- Accessible guidelines, applications and application processes: ex: Large-Type, Audio Recordings of information, ability to process applications over the phone, TTY, TRS, VRS See, <https://www.ada.gov/effective-comm.htm>
- Alternative means to reach those who don't have computers or broadband at home: ex: snail mail, PSAs
- How and where artists and organizations locate trusted news and information
- Timing of processes, including how long you will accept applications and whether you will process them on a rolling basis or reserve funds to take account of those that take longer to become aware of the application process or are not impacted until a later date: e.g, those ill with covid-19; a second wave of illness; those in rural areas; communities that take longer to recover

OFFER EDUCATION, ADVOCACY AND IN-KIND AID AS WELL AS FINANCIAL SUPPORT

In order to meet the individual needs that exist and achieve the systemic changes that are necessary to

serve the entire sector, we must work on several fronts simultaneously. Financial support without the guidance people need to navigate the larger relief system may cause them to rely solely on the arts and cultural sector relief system, which cannot fully meet their needs. Collective advocacy is vital to educate the policymakers about our field and its needs. In-kind aid is a bulwark and supplement to financial aid. Ensure that you offer accessible accommodations for your educational offerings and language translation as necessary. Be prepared to act as an intermediary on behalf of your constituents with the government and as an interpreter of government programs for them.

Some suggestions about the types of education and advocacy that will be needed and you can provide include:

- Technical assistance in applying for relief from government and private sources, including your own
- Information on available professional resources, tools and advice
- Encouraging participation in relevant surveys to ensure needs and impacts are being captured
- Raising awareness of and advocating for artist eligibility for government relief, including the pandemic unemployment assistance and SBA loan programs -- particularly in light of the number of artists earning their income as freelancers and self-employed people
- Guidance on how to communicate with elected officials in support of the field's needs

**BEING AWARE OF AND ACTING IN
COMPLEMENTARY AND SUPPLEMENTARY
WAYS WITH EXISTING PROGRAMS WILL
ENSURE GREATER EQUITY IN THE
DISTRIBUTION OF FUNDS**

Know that the federal pandemic unemployment assistance program that has been enacted *is* suitable for individual artists and that the SBA loan program may be suitable for some as well. The loan programs will be suitable for artist businesses and for the nonprofit arts sector.

**ENCOURAGE ALL TO APPLY TO EITHER OR
BOTH. LET THE GOVERNMENT DETERMINE
THEY DON'T QUALIFY, NOT THEY
THEMSELVES.**

New federal programs may be coming onboard, as well as programs at local and state government levels, other private foundation and individual donor, Go Fund Me-type and additional programs. *Understanding the existing landscape of relief and how you can fill gaps or meet the needs of those who might not qualify for any of these other programs can ensure that support will be more equitably distributed.*

**EDUCATE ARTISTS AND ARTS
ORGANIZATIONS ABOUT THE PROGRAMS
THAT ARE OUT THERE, PARTICULARLY THE
GOVERNMENT ONES. IT IS ALSO A GOOD
IDEA FOR FUNDERS TO UNDERSTAND
WHERE ELSE PEOPLE HAVE APPLIED AND
RECEIVED RELIEF**

People will need guidance about these programs and you are a great place for them to get that knowledge. It will lessen the need they have of your support, and the disaster unemployment program can provide them ongoing support for lost income for up to 39 weeks (and we expect this timeframe to be extended). Similarly, as your funds may be limited, you may want to direct them to those who haven't gotten relief elsewhere and/or don't qualify for the government programs. This will assure that more people and organizations are helped.

There may be a need to identify other existing artist-centered or general organizations in impacted communities who are responsible for developing up-to-date information resources and who are capable of providing technical assistance to help artists, cultural workers and arts and cultural organizations gain access to other opportunities. Ensure that your constituents see themselves not just as artists, cultural workers or arts organizations, but simply as people and businesses in need so that they apply for support from the widest range of general programs.

OPERATE FROM A PLACE OF TRUST, BUT DESIGN FOR FRAUD

Operating from a framework of trust is always the preferred approach, but several longtime arts emergency funders have found that fraud can occur in disaster relief funding. Additionally, charities may need to comply with IRS reporting requirements. "Trust and verify" is a good approach. Ways to do this are to ask people to sign attestations that the information they have provided in their applications is true and to ask for verification of losses or situations.

Many funders with ongoing emergency relief grants establish systems and commit significant staff time to better understand needs and to mitigate fraud. In moments of immediate crisis and great urgency, and as new funders enter the emergency relief space, questions will emerge as to which fraud protections are necessary and which could potentially create barriers of access to artists in need. There are many different approaches to professional and financial verification. We recommend taking some time to consider these approaches in order to reach a decision about what is appropriate.

BE NIMBLE, BE FLEXIBLE, DO OUTREACH TO THOSE WHO ARE NOT IN THE CENTER OF THE ARTS WORLD

Needs will change and shift and the ability to be nimble and flexible enough to pivot to meet them will aid the field immeasurably. The more you can work with your Board or government oversight agencies to adjust what might otherwise be organizational limitations about whom you can fund, the better off artists, cultural workers and organizations in need will be. Can you help artist businesses? What about immigrant artists who are not citizens? Remember that many who need your support the most may not be connected to the communication – including social media – channels many of us use day-to-day. Do your best to do outreach through non-traditional channels and organizations, including non-arts community organizations that have connections to these populations.

THE CHARITABLE SUPPORT YOU PROVIDE, SO LONG AS IT IS TO A CHARITABLE CLASS, IS NOT TAXABLE INCOME

Internal Revenue Code section 139 provides that all "qualified disaster relief payments," i.e, those that "reimburse or pay reasonable and necessary personal, family, living, or funeral expenses incurred as a result of a qualified disaster" are not part of gross income and are not taxable, so long as payments from from charities to individuals go to a "charitable class" (e.g., 'all artists negatively impacted by COVID-19 in the United States').

COLLABORATION AND COORDINATION WILL BE KEY. SHARING DATA IS A STRATEGY TO CONSIDER, AS IS A COMMON APPLICATION FORM

We are very excited to see the emergence of so much collaboration and coordination, even the creation of unified funds bringing together a variety of service organizations and funders nationwide. Not to discourage individual efforts at all because the need is vast and emerging, but we recommend as much collaboration and coordination, even the sharing of data among funders, as possible – while always preserving privacy. This is one of the only strategies that will ensure that some do not receive aid from 5 sources and others from none. There are models for this.

We have long discussed the idea of creating a common application form for disaster funding from arts and cultural funders. Such forms are invaluable for gathering and sharing data about common needs across the arts and cultural sector and with other sectors as well. Creating one for artists and one for arts organizations is something we are working on. Watch this space for a future communication from us dealing with this issue and providing some guidance based on the experience of our members who have been longtime providers of emergency assistance to artists and arts organizations. ■



www.NCAPER.org

COORDINATE

NCAPER serves as the national arts responder: using both high touch & high-tech methods to facilitate phone calls, webinars and onsite visits that connect the arts sector with funders and service organizations to support the field with noncash assets during the response and recovery phases after disasters and crises.

CONNECT

NCAPER seeks opportunities with national partners (PAR, CERF+, The Actors Fund, MusiCares, etc.,) to foster more programming, funding, and services that support and build the resilience of the arts industry.

COMMUNICATE

NCAPER collects lessons learned and case studies from arts and cultural leaders and publishes and produces materials that communicate the need for different types of responses to promote better disaster preparedness and training.

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