

Equity & Access Priorities at the National Arts Action Summit

POLICY SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

This is a summary of the federal Issue Briefs that compose the 2022 National Arts Action Summit legislative portfolio and the equity and access focus that is integrated into each topic. The issue briefs this year were assembled by the Cultural Advocacy Group, a collaboration of arts and culture stakeholders working collectively to advance federal policy. The “asks” of Congress and the current Administration are arrived at through a consensus-based approach, ensuring that the stakeholders have timely input into the process.

All organizations and advocates are welcome to use the Issue Briefs in pursuit of pro-arts policy change.

Language use is a key element of access, equity, and inclusion work, and can help or hinder efforts in this area. We have used the term Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) to describe individuals from prioritized communities. We recognize that this term is not universally used but felt it was specific for the purpose of these Issue Briefs and consistent with the language being used by the Biden-Harris Administration. We encourage you to familiarize yourself with language that your community members use to describe themselves.

ACTION NEEDED

We urge Congress to take action in these policy areas:

- **Federal Cultural Agencies:** Ensure, through increased funding, the National Endowment for the Arts’ reach to millions of people in thousands of communities through grant awards such as 40% direct to 56 states and territories, and regional arts agencies; that the majority of grants go to small and medium-sized organizations (budgets less than \$2 million), which tend to support projects that benefit audiences that otherwise might not have access to arts programming; that at least 40% of NEA grants take place in high-poverty neighborhoods; and 35% of grants reach low-income audiences of under-resourced populations such as people with disabilities, people in institutions, and Veterans. Similarly increase grantmaking for museums and public broadcasting.
- **Education:** The White House and Congress should affirm arts education as a right for all children and encourage state and local education authorities to use federal funding to provide arts education. As Education Secretary Arne Duncan stated in 2012 about arts education, “This is absolutely an equity issue and a civil rights issue.” Access to arts education drastically decreases in schools where 75% or more of the students can access free lunch, in schools that are in rural settings, and in schools eligible for Title I funding, most of which are majority-BIPOC.

- **Creative Economy:** Congress should invest in the country's creative economy and promote economic inclusion to recognize artists, entrepreneurs, and nonprofit arts organizations as contributors to the small business community and to improve and revitalize rural, remote, and underserved areas by supporting the set of arts-related bills pending in Congress. These bills would strengthen equity in the allocation of federal resources for the creative economy, particularly the creative workforce.

Racial and cultural equity, particularly through expanded support for artists and culture bearers, narratives from marginalized groups, and access to arts education, are central to this legislative agenda. Five of the bills address racial, geographic, economic, and cultural equity.

These bills include specific calls to commission narratives from marginalized populations, center funding for arts education for all, including the support of culture bearers who carry traditional knowledge forward. There is also provisions to ensure Indigenous artisans and musicians earn fairer revenue from creative work and protects Native heritage, and expands access to capital for creative entrepreneurs, particularly in rural settings.

A focus of these provisions is directed toward self-employed workers, single-person (nonemployer) businesses, and low employer businesses. Data shows that a third of all nonemployer businesses have Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) owners; BIPOC-owned nonemployer businesses are growing at four times the national rate; and 40% of all nonemployer businesses are owned by women.

- **Transportation:** Ensure local control is returned to transportation projects by removing the prohibition on the U.S. Department of Transportation from supporting the expenditure of funds for public art in local transit projects. This would enable local artists and design teams to integrate artistic elements into transit-related projects that reflect the cultural preferences of the community, improve feelings of safety and community pride, and reduce incidences of graffiti and vandalism.
- **Tax Policy for Individual Artists:** Support the provisions in the PLACE Act that address a fair-market tax deduction for artists, update the Qualified Performing Artist Tax Deduction, and pass the Help Independent Tracks Succeed (HITS) Act to harmonize the tax treatment of music production, in order to address fairness and equity in tax treatment for individual artists. Over 40% of all creative workers are independent workers, and overall, creative workers average \$40,000 in income each year, although that number is lower for BIPOC creative workers (\$37,000).