ARTS AND CULTURE: DISASTER RESPONSE AND RECOVERY
IMPROVING SUPPORT FOR CREATIVE WORKERS AND EMPLOYING THEIR SKILLS

ACTION NEEDED

We urge Congress to:

- Improve the support for creative workers after disasters by making permanent reforms enacted during the COVID-19 pandemic affecting self-employed workers, nonemployer businesses, and low employer businesses.
- Build resilience in the “gig economy” by directing the Small Business Administration, the Department of Labor, FEMA, and other federal agencies to create resilience and disaster recovery programs responsive to the needs of creative workers, single-person (nonemployer) businesses, and businesses with under 20 employees.
- Take steps to enable FEMA to fully-integrate the arts and culture sector into disaster planning, mitigation, response, and recovery efforts.

TALKING POINTS

- Make permanent low interest/forgivable disaster recovery loans. Calculate loans to nonemployer businesses based on Gross Business Income rather than payroll or Net Profit (or loss).
- Reform the antiquated unemployment compensation/insurance system to be responsive to needs of a changing workforce.
  - Make permanent federal add-ons to Disaster Unemployment Assistance (DUA) to enable workers to support their families while they recover their livelihoods.
  - Make permanent DUA for workers suffering secondary economic impact such as loss of markets and venues.
  - Assure equitable compensation for “mixed earners” by basing compensation on the total of all income sources.
  - Build a better safety net for self-employed workers by allowing them to buy into an insurance program to provide sick leave, family leave, and other programs that are commonly available to other workers, to support the needs of the growing “gig economy.”
- Make permanent the recognition that the timely return to work and reestablishment of income is a critical need for self-employed workers impacted by disaster by enabling FEMA to make Other Needs Assistance (ONA) grants for tool replacement and repair and exempting that assistance from means testing.
- Incentivize the integration of arts organizations, artists and other cultural workers in our national emergency management system managed by FEMA by including them in the definition of “cultural resources” enabling them to leverage their specialized skills utilizing the arts in the recovery of individuals and communities within the Emergency and Recovery Support Function frameworks, FEMA Corps, and in other appropriate ways; and include the arts and culture sector in the planning of our disaster management system architecture.
  - Integrate arts into FEMA’s Emergency and Recovery Support Functions.
  - Name National Coalition for Arts Preparedness and Emergency Response (NCAPER) as a Support Organization.
  - Fund dedicated emergency-focused employees at NEA and HENTF.
- In all the above, ensure that principles of economic inclusion, equity, and the utilization of local artists are guaranteed.

Arts Advocacy Day 2021
BACKGROUND

Arts and culture have long played a critical role in community recovery after disasters. Projects initiated by individual artists, arts organizations, and public agencies have reinforced pride in the community, created a much-needed respite from stress, helped families cope with loss, and signaled a return to normalcy. While the value of this work has often been recognized, it would be assured and strengthened by codification in the federal disaster recovery infrastructure; by participation of the arts and culture sector, including individual artists, in disaster planning; through federal support of key enabling measures; and through recognition of the vulnerabilities and recovery needs of individual artists, other cultural workers, and arts organizations in all disciplines.

As we plan pandemic recovery programs, it is critical to consider how they can contribute to our long-term resiliency both nationally and within the arts sector. Resiliency demands an assessment of how our disaster recovery system can be more responsive, inclusive, and effective for the full range of disasters, across all segments of our society. This is a unique opportunity to formalize and facilitate the participation of the arts in the disaster planning and recovery process, and to begin building the infrastructure to accomplish that goal.

As a disaster, the COVID-19 pandemic has been unique among those in living memory in scale and scope—affecting virtually every person on Earth in some way. Yet, during this unprecedented disaster, “normal” natural disasters, exacerbated by climate change, have continued with increasing frequency and intensity. Unlike most disasters, the pandemic has commanded an unprecedented and sustained level of public attention and governmental action. It has exacerbated long standing issues of lack of readiness and resilience, and exposed shortcomings and inequities in our emergency response, relief, and recovery structures. There have also been new and successful recovery strategies that should be made permanent and/or built upon.

The arts and culture sector is among the segments of our economy hardest hit by the pandemic. Before the pandemic, this vital sector contributed $878 billion to the economy annually or 4.5% of the GDP. Performing arts venues, museums, and galleries were closed, arts festivals and craft fairs were cancelled, resulting in the loss of jobs and halting income to individual artists who are 3.5 times more likely to be self-employed than other U.S. workers.

Small Business Support. As forgivable loan programs like the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) and Economic Injury Disaster Loans (EIDL) were rolled out, many of these self-employed artists’ businesses were passed over because those programs were based on size of payroll and most artists work either alone or with very few employees. Only in March of 2021 were PPP loan calculations modified to benefit the single person businesses which constitute 75% of all the businesses in America, including the majority of minority and women-owned businesses. The inclusion of self-employed workers and the federal add-ons to Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) was one of the few bright spots in pandemic relief for these workers. While PUA did not provide any assistance for covering fixed business expenses like rent, utilities, and insurance it was a vast improvement over previously available Disaster Unemployment Assistance (DUA).

We urge Congress to enact changes that will build upon lessons learned in the pandemic to improve disaster response and relief to this sector, especially the many self-employed workers that exemplify the “gig economy,” improve resilience within the creative economy, and to take actions that will enable artists and arts organizations to more effectively bring their skills to bear on the recovery of their communities after disasters.