PUTTING CREATIVE WORKERS TO WORK:
Reimagining Our Nation’s Creative Workforce

December 1-2, 2020
Virtual Event

BRIEFING BOOK
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Cover image: Shepard Fairey, Americans for the Arts Artists Committee member, ARTSVOTE 2020
It is my pleasure to welcome you to the 15th annual convening of the Americans for the Arts National Arts Policy Roundtable. The Roundtable was conceived in partnership with Americans for the Arts Artist Committee member and Sundance Institute founder, Robert Redford, as a gathering of high-level decision makers and thought leaders where new ideas and strategies for the arts in America could be catalyzed through convening innovative thinkers from across sectors. Since then, participants have recommended policies and blueprints that have been critical to the role of the arts and creative sector in advancing our nation. Until this year, our Roundtable took place annually, over the course of three days, at the Sundance Resort, nestled in the majestic Wasatch Mountain Range of Utah. In addition to manifesting innovative ideas and proposals, we were able to enjoy nature, live performances, and each other’s company over stimulating days and evenings. This year we have gone virtual because of the COVID-19 pandemic. While our Roundtable experience will be more utilitarian this year, the subject of our discussions has never been more urgent.

This year’s topic, *Put Creative Workers to Work: Reimagining Our Nation’s Creative Workforce*, will examine the ways in which we can advocate for policy at all governmental levels as well as for funding to support the re-envisioning of our nation’s creative workforce. The COVID-19 pandemic has had wide-ranging effects on the creative sector. Despite that, cultural consumption and the production of art by creatives to help people struggling with today’s challenges has been more essential than ever. Putting creative workers back to work is critical to the health and wellbeing of our nation. As the creative sector begins to build itself back, it is time to contemplate strategies of recovery and reimagination.

I would like to thank Brian Stokes Mitchell, who is serving as Co-Chair of this year’s convening. Stokes, a Tony Award-winning actor, singer, and music producer is an Americans for the Arts Board Member, as well as the Chair of our Artist Think Tank program, which was formed immediately after the pandemic lockdown, as a gathering place for artists and creatives to talk about critical issues affecting our field. Many of the issues we will discuss over the next two days came up during our Artist Think Tank conversations. Americans for the Arts also gratefully acknowledges The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation and The Ruth Lilly Fund of Americans for the Arts for their support of the 2020 National Arts Policy Roundtable.

The key to the success of the National Arts Policy Roundtable program is you, the participant. The stories and perspectives that you will share during our time together will launch us into new ways of thinking and viewing our collective way forward. We are deeply grateful for your time and willingness to exchange and share your insights.

Robert L. Lynch  
Co-Founder, National Arts Policy Roundtable  
President and CEO, Americans for the Arts
Introduction

Times of crisis can manifest positive change, as they unsettle systems and loosen up foundations that seemed previously set-in stone. The chaos and challenge of cataclysmic moments opens the opportunity to reimagine something better.

COVID-19 has brought us to such a moment—one which our country has not experienced in over 100 years. Unlike a natural disaster, this is a prolonged, grinding haul which is affecting our social, cultural, educational, and economic infrastructures. It has laid bare the systemic inequities that undergird our economies and communities. The tenets of our nation’s founding rooted in subjugation and religious and enterprise traditions deeply skeptical of anything but the most pragmatic value of things—are still present today. They appear in the disproportionate impacts of the COVID pandemic on BIPOC and other marginalized populations, the dysfunctional governmental response, the strain of individualism and self-determination that keeps our communities from being able to overcome transmission of the disease in a cohesive way, and the increased polarization of our communities and lack of perceived common ground.

In all of this, the cultural sector sits within a set of conundrums: it is essential and ubiquitous, yet dismissed and undervalued; egalitarian and universal but prejudiced in form and inequitable in access; preoccupied with fair treatment and “getting to the table,” but inhospitable to the fair treatment of the workers who are its backbone and burdened with a common societal misperception that those who work in the arts aren’t “workers” with the same needs and wants as those who labor in other sectors.

“"The future – who we are – lies in the arts. It’s the expression of our soul... We have to reclaim the soul of this country and build on it.””
President-Elect Joe Biden
August 18, 2020

It is at this moment, as hopes of recovery rise dimly over the horizon, that we convene this year’s National Arts Policy Roundtable to examine how we, as a country and a field, can equitably put creative workers to work as part of the national recovery. This, of course, is not the first time the integration of creativity into crisis has occurred in the U.S.—in fact, as you will see in the pages that follow, every national socioeconomic crisis from the last century has come with a robust integration of culture. But this is a new moment, more solidly aware of and focused on remedying the inequities on which our country was founded, and with the potential for reimagining new opportunities and new models for change. The National Arts Policy Roundtable is the culmination of almost a year of conversations with constituent groups ranging from public and private sector leaders to members of our Artist Think Tanks.

In preparation for the National Arts Policy Roundtable, we recently held two resource seminars, specific to our topic, with experts in the field. One was focused on policy proposals and the other on funding opportunities. Here is a quick snapshot of what those revealed:

* An urgent need to shift narrative around the nature and value of creative workers.
  A dominant theme of both seminars related to various ways in which major narratives
around arts, culture, creative economy, and creative workers devalue the sector and disadvantage it in moments of crisis. On the one hand, we must work to ensure that artists and creatives are valued as, and treated equally to, other laborers—that creative work is viewed as work—and that the products and services they deliver are compensated for appropriately. On another hand, there was discussion about where culture fits, both during a crisis and generally, in the hierarchy of “essential,” and the need to reframe the arts and artists as vital to community. This must play out in narrative shifts within policy making, philanthropy, public opinion, advocacy, and partnerships that move from a “sympathy story” (help artists who are suffering) towards a narrative that aligns creatives work as essential to a complete recovery (put artists to work as they have much to give, and pay them appropriately).

- **Resiliency and risk.**
  There was a feeling that our solutions for this crisis, and for the significant reset in the treatment of creative workers going forward, will most likely be found in new innovations. This will require a higher tolerance for, and deliberate investment in risk, failure, and innovative and boundary-pushing practice. What does it mean to fund research and development, invest in social impact, and potentially exercise non-grant-based financing such as venture capital, no-interest loans? What does it mean to skill-build within the field in next-generation areas of need, like videography, coding, virtual reality, hybrid performance? How can we reset the sector to be less risk-averse at scale—and to perhaps make the pairing of creativity, innovation, and risk a positive and ubiquitous attribute of the creative sector as a whole?

- **The intersectional role of creativity within the broader economy.**
  Within the U.S., the position of creativity within, among, and alongside other aspects of the economy has always been murky. Both for the recovery of the creative economy (and the broader economy), and to position creative workers better post-pandemic, an effort must be made to understand and inspire understanding in the role of creativity in the whole economy, as well as to bolster and coalesce a coherent creative economy. Moreover, through research, practice, funding, and messaging, we need to lean into the intersectional (and inter-sectoral) role of creativity, and reinforce that, fundamentally, the U.S. is a country that requires utility to find value, and that culture is threaded through all things and has utility and impact in all sorts of intersectional ways. Finally, as we work to reframe the arts, we must look at workforce development and corporate engagement with creativity in the workplace as places to lean into.

- **Putting creative workers to work requires organizations to be operational.**
  While recognizing the unique, highly independent nature of much of the creative workforce, we must also recognize and consider the interplay between those workers and the health of the organizations that employ them. The overall creative infrastructure relies heavily on the non-profit sector, much of which is struggling or going dark. Non-profits must be supported to be reactivate and engage with infrastructure work. Meanwhile, 90% of creative businesses are small businesses, many solo entrepreneurship. In all cases, the nature of this prolonged shutdown, paired with a business model that requires upfront
cash outlays to create product prior to revenue, may require investment in restart
runways, incentivized hiring, low or no-interest loans, and other temporary interventions
to kickstart the creative engine.

- **Issues with how we value workers within our own field.**
  Seminar participants boldly laid out the various ways in which the challenges of making a
  living and a life as a creative worker, while certainly situated in larger systemic inequities,
  are strongly reinforced by bad practice when it comes to paying and caring for creative
  workers within the creative sector. They pointed to pay inequities, a proclivity for
  underpaying (or not paying) for creative product, recent advocacy efforts that have put
  creative organizations on the wrong side of workers' rights, challenges related to equity
  and mobility within the workplace, and the inadvertent reinforcement of such practices
  through funding models that prioritize projects and product over people. They also
  recognized that many of the reasons why creatives were so immediately and profoundly
  impacted by the pandemic and the economic shut down were centered in long standing
  bad practices which existed pre-COVID. To create a healthier and more equitable creative
  economy post-pandemic, these must be addressed.

- **Systemic inequities for independent workers of all types.**
  The systems, policies, and regulations of our economy were not built for a workforce that
  includes, at last count, 55 million independent workers, including a significant portion of
  the 5.1 million creative workers in the United States. This means that there are pervasive
  systemic issues for independent contractors and gig workers in local, state, and federal
  policy as well as system inequities with the creative system itself. These range from
  inequitable access to unemployment, health insurance, and family leave, to unfair
  requirements around accessing capital, regulating and compensating work, treatment
  during and after disasters, adequate food and housing assistance, and more. While not
  necessarily arts-specific issues, these systemic challenges must be addressed for the
  creative sector to thrive.

- **Creatives are ready.**
  Throughout the pandemic, it was noted, despite significant hardship and massive
  unemployment, creatives have continued to make work, stay engaged with their
  communities, and create in ways that explore our current conditions, provide comfort,
  and drive civic dialogue. Engagement and innovation are happening, despite the
  challenges of today. Artists continue to make great work and will be ready when there is a
  vaccine, and it is safe to reopen. It was the universal belief of those in the seminars that
  this moment has the potential to lead to a brilliant renaissance, as has happened
  following other similar large-scale crises.

Within this Briefing Book, you will find information in four sections following this introduction: a
research-based portrait of the impact of COVID-19 on the creative sector; a selection of proposals
and pilot programs occurring now to put creative workers to work as part of recovery; a timeline of
policy related to arts and culture in America over the past hundred years; and a conclusion and
call to action. We have also, for those of you who seek a deeper exploration of the history,
included two appendices covering, in more detail, two federal interventions into creative workforce: The Works Progress Administration’s Federal One projects, and the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act.

Our hope is that this gathering will allow us to think aspirationally and to lean into the opportunity that this moment in time presents. We seek, together, to not only prepare to place creative workers in the country squarely in within local, state, tribal, federal, and private sector recovery efforts, but also to use this as a new beginning—to sink fresh foundations that center equity and set creative workers onto a brighter, healthier, and more just path moving forward.

**Setting the Stage: The Impact of COVID-19 on the Creative Economy**

The coronavirus continues its devastating impact on America’s arts sector. Since the first U.S. case was reported in January 2020, cancellations and closures have taken place at virtually every arts organization in the country and territories and artists/creative workers are among the most severely affected segment of the nation’s workforce.

**Impact on Artist/Creative Workers**

Excerpted from *The COVID-19 Impact Survey for Artists and Creative Workers*, conducted by Americans for the Arts Artists (25,000 responses)

- 63% of creative workers have become fully unemployed, which is 3x the national rate.
- Creative workers, on average, anticipated income in 2020 of $38,900. They now anticipate, on average, income of $17,000—and expected loss of $22,000 per person, or $50.6 billion.
- Top 5 needs for creative workers:
  - unemployment insurance
  - food/housing assistance
  - forgivable business loans
  - access to affordable healthcare
  - paid sick leave
- Of creative workers, during the pandemic:
  - 95% report a loss of income
  - 79% experienced a decrease in creative work that generated income
  - 75% have experienced chronic troubled sleep or tiredness, or insomnia
  - 67% have been unable to access necessary supplies, resources, spaces, or people
  - 64% have carried or are carrying debt over $2,000
  - 49% have not visited a doctor due to lack of insurance or inability to pay
  - 49% have experienced food insecurity
  - 39% have not visited a psychiatrist due to lack of insurance or inability to pay
  - 32% have been faced with the threat of eviction or evicted
  - 30% have been unable to pay for medication
• 23% have been the sole or primary caregiver for a dependent
• 17% have experienced mental, physical, or sexual abuse

• 78% have no post-pandemic financial recovery plan.

• Prior to COVID, 63% of creative workers had savings for 2 months or fewer. Now, 81% have savings for 2 months or fewer (and 55% have no savings at all).

• In general, Black and Indigenous artists, as well as other artists of color, (1) were worse off prior to COVID and (2) have been more negatively impacted by the pandemic. This includes:
  • More BIPOC creatives have become unemployed (69% vs. 60%).
  • BIPOC creatives started out anticipating less income in 2020 ($37,700 vs. $40,500), and now anticipate losing or have lost a larger percentage of their 2020 income (61% vs. 56%). On average, a BIPOC creative now anticipates making $14,900 in 2020.
  • More BIPOC creatives now have no savings (65% vs. 47%).
  • Fewer BIPOC creatives have health insurance (53% vs. 73%), homeowners/renters insurance (34% vs. 60%), or insurance to cover creative necessities (9% vs. 13%).

**Impact on Creative Economy Organizations**
From “Lost Art: Measuring COVID-19’s Devastating Impact on America’s Creative Economy” by Richard Florida and Michael Seman

• The full creative economy has lost $150 billion and 2.7 million jobs (one-third of all jobs in those industries), including 50% of all fine and performing arts jobs.

• While all regions, states, and metropolitan areas of the country will be seriously impacted, the effects of the COVID-19 crisis will hit some places harder than others. The South is estimated to suffer the most losses in employment, while the West and the Northeast will be hit hardest in terms of estimated losses of sales revenues for the creative industries.

• Of the 50 states, California, New York, and Texas will experience the largest absolute losses. When looking at the share of losses instead of absolute losses, the biggest losses occur in smaller and/or less populated states, including Alaska, Nevada, New Mexico, Louisiana, and Hawaii.

• The 53 metropolitan areas with populations over 1 million are estimated to account for more than three-quarters (80%) of total estimated losses in sales and two-thirds (68%) of all estimated job losses in creative industries across the United States. New York and Los Angeles will suffer the worst absolute losses, but smaller metro areas such as Las Vegas, Nashville, Tenn., New Orleans, Orlando, Fla., Memphis, Tenn., Baltimore, Jacksonville, Fla., Tucson, Ariz., and Austin, Texas will suffer larger losses in percentage terms.
From Americans for the Arts’ “COVID Impacts on the Nonprofit Arts & Culture Sector”

- Nationally, financial losses to nonprofit arts and cultural organizations are an estimated $13.9 billion, to date.
- 96% of nonprofit organizations have cancelled events—a loss of 467 million admissions and $14.8 billion in audience spending at local businesses (e.g., restaurants, lodging, retail, parking).
- 29% of nonprofit arts organizations have laid off or furloughed staff.
- 63% of nonprofit arts organizations have made their cultural product available online or through social media.
- 10% of nonprofit arts organizations (12,000) are “not confident” that they will survive.
- 89% of nonprofit arts organizations have closed during the pandemic, and 59% remain closed.
- The top 4 barriers to reopening are:
  - customers unlikely to attend
  - government restrictions/guidelines
  - staff/board do not feel it is yet safe
  - impractical to produce art product in current environment

From Americans for the Arts’ “Analysis of Arts and Culture Organizations’ Access to the Payroll Protection Program”

- Of the total 4.9 million PPP loans, 173,243 of them were made to broad arts and creative economy businesses worth $13.7 billion, which preserved 1,124,138 jobs.
- Of the 173,243 arts loans, 9,917 went to nonprofit arts organizations and 163,326 went to for-profit arts and creative economy businesses.
- Within the $13.7 billion in arts and creative economy loans, $11.9 billion were awarded to for-profit arts businesses and gig workers, and $1.8 billion were awarded to nonprofit arts organizations.
- Of the 1.12 million jobs reported as retained in the arts and creative economy, 176,261 jobs were by nonprofit arts organizations and 947,877 by for-profit arts businesses and gig workers.

**Imagining New Creative Workforce Programs**

Since the demise of the Works Progress Administration in the 1940’s (see Appendix 1 on page 17), there have been calls of varying strengths for a revival of a federally funded workforce program for artists. In the 1970’s the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act offered a related, but more localized, model. With the arrival of COVID-19, however, and the ensuing massive and sustained unemployment of creative workers, calls for how to reimagine a new cultural workforce program have strengthened, and certain efforts to construct frames around those ideas, instigate federal, state, tribal, local, and regional pilots, and even innovate variations of the original workforce idea using private sector or philanthropic funding have started to take root.
Below are highlights of proposals and programs that have been put forward in reaction to COVID-19. They range from national to hyper-local, include both public and private sector interventions, and cross a wide variety of forms and functions.

**PUT CREATIVE WORKERS TO WORK POLICY PROPOSAL**

Initially developed by over 100 members of the creative community through the Getting Creative Workers Working Coalition, a coalition of National Arts Service Organizations and Regional Arts Organizations, and Americans for the Arts' various networks, including the State Arts Action Network and the United States Urban Arts Federation, this proposal outlines 16 policy areas that, if taken up, would allow federal, state, local, tribal, and private sector leaders to put the creative economy to work as part of a national recovery effort. It has been endorsed by over 2,200 creative businesses and creative workers.

We include a summary of the 16 policy proposals within *Put Creative Workers to Work* here. To view the full proposal on the web, with citations, footnotes, and a running list of endorsements, visit [www.AmericansForTheArts.org/CreativeWork](http://www.AmericansForTheArts.org/CreativeWork).

**Engage in, and drive, direct employment of creative workers**

1. Create positions within the Office of the President to coordinate activities related to arts, culture, and creative economy, with particular attention to relief and recovery efforts.
2. Use executive action to advance direct employment of creative workers within federal agencies and programs.
3. Use executive action to direct federal departments to commission artists and community arts organizations.
4. Put artists to work addressing public and mental health in communities.
5. Use executive action to implement an ArtistCorps within AmeriCorps.

**Drive local, state, and tribal, and private sector activation of creative workers**

6. Incentivize private businesses and local and state agencies and tribal governments to integrate creative workers to envision successful business structures in recovery and beyond.
7. Prioritize and incentivize public and private sector support, access to capital, and equitable funding of arts producing organizations, small creative businesses, community cultural centers, and collectives.
8. Utilize and provide resources to local- and state-level Workforce Investment Boards to develop and deploy creative entrepreneur support programs.

**Adjust existing policies to recognize creative workers as workers**

9. Through executive action and in partnership with Congress, ensure that the creative economy is explicitly included in existing policy, rules, and regulations.
10. Overhaul outdated employment, insurance, food, and housing policies to make them more inclusive of the more than 55 million independent workers, including the bulk of the 5.1 million creative workers in the country.

**Integrate creative interventions into response, recovery, and resilience programs**

11. Through executive action and in collaboration with Congress, direct and incentivize the integration of creative workers and creative organizations at the municipal, county, state, and tribal levels during disaster relief and recovery efforts.

12. Through executive action or policy modification, integrate artists and culture workers into critical, long-term community recovery planning.

13. Improve treatment of creative workers and businesses within the federal disaster response structure for all declared disasters.

**Support access to arts, culture, and arts education, including in the digital space**

14. Expand opportunities and lower barriers for public access to cultural experiences and venues.

15. Support and incentivize private, state, local, and tribal philanthropic investment in arts-based education and educators.

16. Prioritize digital training, access, and connectivity to enhance the connection between artists and all Americans.

**NATIONAL PROPOSALS**

- **Recommendations from “Lost Art”**
  This report, authored by Michael Seman and Richard Florida for the Brookings Institution, argues that the creative economy is one of three key sectors that drive regional economies and that damage to the creative sector will drastically undercut well-being and quality of life. In addition, it argues that a substantial and sustained national creative-economy recovery strategy, led by local public-private partnerships between a broad consortium of partners—municipal governments, arts and cultural organizations, economic development and community groups, philanthropy, and the private sector—and with support from federal and state levels of government, national philanthropy, and large corporations, is necessary.

- **Cultural New Deal for Cultural and Racial Justice**
  A call, spearheaded by ArtChangeUS, the Center for Cultural Power, First Peoples Fund, the National Association of Latino Arts and Culture, Race Forward, and Sipp Culture, designed to encourage a transformation in how culture is considered within the creative field and society. It is built around five core tenets:
    - The support, recognition, and prioritization of the leadership of Black people, Indigenous people, and people of color.
    - The reversal of long-term inequities in funding, hiring, and resources in the arts and culture sector.
    - Investment in arts and cultural ecosystems for Black, Indigenous, and communities of color.
    - Investment in building healthy communities through center cultural and racial equity.
Accountability, commitment, and integrity in the pursuit of cultural and racial justice.

- **Standing for Cultural Democracy**
  A platform, developed in 2016 by the (non-governmental) U.S. Department of Arts and Culture, designed to advance a vision of a future grounded in cultural democracy, equity, and engagement, in which everyone has full cultural citizenship, and the right to cultural expression, participation, and recognition is a universal underpinning. It proposes 10 planks, of which are included the creation of a new public services jobs program, the integration of community cultural development and the work of artists into all social programs, the support of artistic response to natural and civil emergencies, and the re-conception of education to center creativity.

- **A 21st Century WPA**
  An argument, in general, for a 21st century WPA, with a particular emphasis on how such a thing might resonate with, but be different from, the original 1930’s model. Notable differences include the utilization of arts and culture as a mechanism to forward cultural and racial equity, a focus on education and long-term job sustainability alongside immediate recovery, the integration of environmentalism and sustainability as both a core value and a 21st century stand-in for the industrial engine that was powered by the original WPA, and an opportunity for an expansion and revitalization of the union movement.

- **Arts and Culture within the (Proposed) Green New Deal**
  The goal of the Green New Deal is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in order to avoid the worst consequences of climate change while also trying to fix societal problems like economic inequality and racial injustice. As part of launching the concept, proponents released two posters inspired by WPA-era art and argued that “the Green New Deal must be about changing people’s minds: about where power should come from and who has the right to generate it; about what a just transition for workers and affected communities should look like; about what constitutes a good life...We need hope for a damaged people and planet. And to give it to us, we need an Arts Project for the Green New Deal.”

- **The People’s WPA**
  The People’s WPA is a cultural organizing and storytelling project that seeks to uplift essential forms of labor to build an inspiring vision of our shared future. In addition to crafting a credible vision, we seek to rally communities, educate organizers, and guide decision-makers to enact ambitious policies. It will occur in the first half of 2021, and will be centered around 6 themes, all focused on deep government investment in forms of labor that “repair the damage wrought by unchecked industrialization, consumerism, and an extractive, colonial economic model.” These six areas are: healing, nourishment, liberation, regeneration, remembering, truth telling, and deepening democracy.

**LOCAL/STATE PROPOSALS**

- **Artists at Work**
  Unique for its emphasis on private sector and philanthropic support, Artists at Work is a regional-level WPA-style workforce program developed by THE OFFICE Performing Arts & Film in collaboration with the FreshGrass Foundation and piloted in western
Massachusetts. Its three core tenets are (1) living wages for living artists, (2) public art for healthy communities, and (3) long-term recovery together. It is a new program designed to give artists resources to continue to produce work during the immediate crisis and build new structures and partnerships that will help sustain the creative sector in post-pandemic America. It is billed as “a WPA for the arts reimagined into a modern context that is sensitive to the 21st century landscape (now drastically changed) of every artistic discipline’s place in the culture.”

- **Californians for the Arts’ Jobs Creation Strategies and Actionable Items for the Arts Sector**
  A set of policy proposals developed by Californians for the Arts to address the state-level crisis for creative workers, this document is comprised of six recommendations:
  - Employ artists and arts organizations for local communication strategies for public health mandates.
  - Generate jobs through a statewide training program called CA CreativeCorps.
  - Repurpose existing cultural facilities as classrooms, childcare facilities, sites for homeless services, and facilities for testing.
  - Provide low or no-cost access to the arts and compensate artists and arts organizations for their services.
  - Employ artists and community cultural organizations in neighborhood revitalization, infrastructure projects, and housing initiatives.
  - Embed artists-in-residence across various agencies and departments in state government.

- **San Francisco’s Creative Corps**
  The San Francisco Creative Corps pilot will provide economic opportunities for 60 San Francisco performance artists and visual artists who are underemployed due to COVID-19. The program is part of Mayor Breed’s ongoing focus on economic recovery and slowing the spread of COVID-19 in San Francisco. Performing artists, including actors, musicians, and dancers, will be deployed as Community Health Ambassadors to creatively promote COVID-safe behavior. They will be deployed to streets with outdoor restaurants, parks, and other high foot traffic areas, and will also beautify storefronts with public health-themed murals in neighborhoods experiencing high rates of COVID-19. The City is funding the SF Creative Corps with $250,000 from the Office of Economic and Workforce Development (OEWD) and is working with Yerba Buena Center for the Arts (YBCA) and Paint the Void to administer the program.

- **Santa Monica’s Art of Recovery Program**
  A set of initiatives spearheaded by the Santa Monica Office of Cultural Affairs, to put creative workers to work on various public health and safety initiatives to help the city boost participation in pandemic mitigation efforts and recover economically. Projects funded through Art of Recovery will focus on three main priorities: economic recovery, community connectedness & restorative justice, and public health & safety, with the goal of creating lasting change in the community’s health through vibrant public spaces. The program aims to strengthen the local network of artists, nurture connections between artists and other sectors, and build cohorts of learners focused on integrating the arts and artists into community efforts.
• New York State’s (Proposed) Works Progress Administration-Pandemic Recovery Act
A piece of state legislation introduced in May and currently in committee that would create a jobs program within the New York State Department of Labor to train younger age groups on new jobs such as contact tracing, conservation and climate mitigation. Specific emphasis in lobbying has been placed on the support of New York’s creative industries through the prospective program, particularly to “lead WPA-like projects that bring excitement and momentum to our cities and towns right now, while adding to the long-term livability and cultural vibrancy” of the region.

• Arts Wisconsin’s We’re All In Creative Workforce Program
A workforce engagement and development program to put creative workers back to work in the state, this project was developed by Arts Wisconsin and funded by the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation and other public and private funders. The program connects community development organizations and local government agencies with self-employed creative workers to design and complete cultural and creative projects that advance their communities and highlight civic pride, safety and community, capitalizing on the artistry and entrepreneurship of the state’s currently under-employed creative workers to aid in the recovery, unity, and healing of Wisconsin’s economy and communities, large and small.

• New York City’s Culture@3 Consortium
A gathering of over 300 cultural leaders in New York City who, from the onset of the pandemic came together for daily (and now weekly) meetings to share information, create a community of practice, and explore collective action to mitigate the crisis, address health and insurance concerns for the field, and pursue advocacy and policy efforts.

• City of Seattle’s Hope Corps
Hope Corps is an opportunity to connect Seattle’s extensive creative workforce with our emergent civic needs following the triple pandemic of COVID-19, economic recession, and racism. This program will leverage the experience that creatives have, while expanding skill sets in preparation for the new economy. Opportunities will center the recovery on BIPOC creatives with public benefit projects that center the needs of communities of color.

Arts and Culture in 20th Century America: A Timeline
While the purpose of our gathering is to reimagine, rather than rebuild, we felt it was important to at least provide a snapshot of past governmental programs which centered the arts. To that end, a brief timeline of some important arts and culture-related events from the last 100 years follows. A fuller exploration of the history of arts and culture in the United States can be found in “Arts & America: 1780-2015” by Clay Lord.
A Brief History of Public Support for Creative Work in America

1929-1956:
The Great Depression, WPA Arts Projects, and Rise of Community Arts
See more on page 17

1956-1969:
Recognizing Diverse Cultures and Founding the NEA
See more on page 24

1969-1981:
CETA and Government Subsidized Creative Employment

1981-2000:
Decentralization, Disinvestment, and the Rise of the Local Arts Agency

2000-Today:
Embracing Art as a Creator of Place and Driver of Social Impact
See more on page 4

1928
1935: President Roosevelt creates the Works Progress Administration (WPA) by executive order
The WPA Arts Projects, employed at their height 40,000 artists, operated in all 48 states, generated more than 100,000 paintings and murals and over 18,000 sculptures, and created a new awareness of and appreciation for the arts in America.

1939: Stock Market Crash leading to The Great Depression
1967: There are more than 450 community arts councils across the U.S.

1943: The Federal One program is discontinued due to the Red Scare
1969: More than $200 million was distributed this year alone to arts-oriented community development organizations through CETA

1966: The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) is inaugurated
1973: The Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) is enacted by Congress
Intended as another jobs bill, federal money flowed to local communities to alleviate long-term unemployment by placing the unemployed in full-time positions with government and community-based agencies.

1979: More than 50 community arts councils across the U.S.
1981: President Regan significantly cuts funding of the NEA, CETA, and the Community Development Block Grant program

Late 1980’s and 1990’s: Public and private funding directed towards building major urban cultural venues (focused on predominantly white and Western-based artforms and artists) as a way of “uplifting” neighborhoods.

2008: Stock Market Crash leading to The Great Recession
2015: There are more than 100,000 art organizations, and over 4,500 local arts agencies in the U.S.

2016-2020: President Trump calls the NEA to be defunded which was defeated with bipartisan support in both houses of Congress all four years.

2020: The COVID-19 pandemic impacts the U.S. creative economy while major racial unrest sparks a broader social movement.
The CARES Act provides over $13 billion in support to the creative sector.
Conclusion

As we rebuild from this fractious moment, with an eye on equity and social justice, we must ensure that the connective glue that makes communities whole is one that is recognized and comfortable for all. 100,000 arts organizations were created over the past six decades, many of them supported by the nearly 5,000 local art agencies which grew during the same period. Today’s economic realities are that not all will survive. We are at a moment of reckoning and opportunity, during which we must reflect on the systems and organizations that worked in helping to galvanize the bond between culture and community, and to reimagine systems and programs which did not. We must speak more urgently to the needs of today’s citizen and to the future of social justice, our democracy and freedom of expression.

Creativity has always been essential to recovery. To thrive post-pandemic in both the short and long-term, our nation must leverage its creative power, putting creative workers to work in every state and territory, as well as within tribal lands. Such investment can heal the country, center equity in national dialogue, create unity, expand and improve infrastructure, address community health, and drive innovation, economic recovery, and begin the reimagining of a more inclusive society.

Activating the creative economy to stimulate recovery just makes sense. The creative sector, an $878 billion industry that contributes more to the GDP than transportation, agriculture, or construction, is a powerful economic driver, and that is what our communities need now. It is also what can help to heal our collective trauma and address our community and cultural health moving forward.

“We want to “build back better” and if that doesn’t include the arts, it simply won’t work.”

Vice President-Elect Kamala Harris
September 29, 2020

As we saw in 1935, and again in 1973, audacious federal policy efforts—one by a Democrat, one by a Republican—sparked national recovery at two critical moments of economic hardship. What can 2021 bring? As we gather for this year’s National Arts Policy Roundtable, we look forward to our reimagining together. We hope you will come prepared to share both aspirational and practical ideas as well as potential ground-level steps towards change. Thank you for all you have contributed to your respective communities and sectors, and for all that we hope to manifest together. Let us think through what it means for creative workers to work alongside all others who stand ready to help rebuild and reimagine our communities. The whole country will be made better for it.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. New Deal Cultural Programs: 1934-1942
excerpted, adapted, and updated from “New Deal Cultural Programs: Experiments in Cultural Democracy” by Don Adams and Arlene Goldbard

Introduction: Federal Cultural Programs of the 1930's
Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal cultural programs marked the U.S. government's first big, direct investment in cultural development. Their goals were clearly stated and democratic; they supported activities not already subsidized by private sector patrons, rather than following private patrons' leads; and they emphasized the interrelatedness of culture with all aspects of life, not the separateness of a rarefied art world.

The main federal cultural programs of the '30s were based on concern for a labor market: professional artists and others engaged in cultural work. The skyrocketing popularity of media like the phonograph, radio and movies had recently supplanted many thousands of live performers. These new electronic media resulted in "technological unemployment" for workers in the live media.¹

The concern for professional artists' employment dovetailed with the federal programs of the 1930s. Chronic unemployment was the central and most persistent feature of the Depression: by 1932, estimates of the total number unemployed ranged from 8 to 17 million workers, out of a total U.S. population of just 125 million. A variety of federal efforts were taken to address unemployment in cultural fields.

Early New Deal (Non-WPA) Programs
Prior to the creation of the Works Progress Administration, in Roosevelt’s first term, various smaller-scale federal efforts were undertaken to provide federal support for arts and culture.

- The Public Works of Arts Project (PWAP) 1933-1934
  An initial proposal to produce a set of murals in the new Justice Department building in Washington, D.C., eventually transformed into the Public Works of Art Project (PWAP) within the Department of Treasury. PWAP was part of the Civil Works Administration (CWA), an experimental program in federal work relief, providing the unemployed with public service jobs during the bitter winter of 1933-34. PWAP employed artists to create works to embellish public buildings -- including one painting for each member of Congress as well as for public schools, orphanages, libraries, museums and practically every other type of public building. PWAP ended in April 1934 along with the rest of the CWA.

- Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) – 1933-1938
  Established in 1933, the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) made federal grants to bolster efforts of state and local governments. Some units of artists receiving support from state and local governments also received funds from FERA; these included some PWAP artists whose work was continued under FERA after PWAP's demise.

¹ Hallie Flanagan, Arena (New York: Duell, Sloan & Pearce, 1940), p. 13
• **Treasury Section of Fine Arts (The Section) – 1934-1943**

The Treasury Section of Fine Arts (The Section), created in 1934 as a follow-up to PWAP, was responsible for fitting out federal buildings with artwork. Funds for artwork were allocated on a case-by-case basis to selected facilities until 1939, when The Section adopted a “1% for art” provision that set aside 1% of overall construction costs for the purchase or commissioning of artwork (the first instance of such a program at the federal level in the United States). Many Treasury Section artists were chosen by competition; 190 competitions were held; entries included more than 40,000 sketches by some 15,000 artists. Eventually, the Treasury awarded 1,371 commissions.

• **Treasury Relief Art Program (TRAP) - 1935-1939**

In the spring of 1935, the Treasury Section introduced another program: The Treasury Relief Art Program (TRAP). TRAP was established with a $530,000 grant to the Treasury from the Works Progress Administration. The program initially attempted to overlook the WPA's requirement that 90% of the artists employed with its funds be drawn from the relief rolls, insisting, "There are not enough artists on relief to do our job and maintain the quality for which we stand." This reverence for the elusive notion of "quality" opened the Treasury Section to the heaviest criticism of all New Deal programs from what was then a highly organized and politically conscious community of artists. When the WPA enforced its requirement to draw artists mainly from the relief rolls, TRAP hiring slowed, sparking protests by artists' unions throughout 1936, which ultimately forced TRAP to increase its hiring pace. The program, while nominally discontinued in 1939, was defunded within 2 years of implementation.

**The Works Progress Administration (WPA) (1935-1942)**

The largest and most important of the New Deal cultural programs was the Works Progress Administration (WPA), a massive employment relief program launched in the spring of 1935, when Roosevelt entered his second term with a renewed commitment to long-range and sweeping reform of American institutions, emphasizing social justice. Persistent unemployment was a continuing concern, and Roosevelt felt that simply doling out relief payments would mean "spiritual and moral disintegration destructive to the national fiber." On May 6, 1935, through executive order, Roosevelt established the Works Progress Administration with a philosophy to put the unemployed back to work in jobs that would serve the public good and conserve the skills and the self-esteem of workers throughout the United States.

The WPA's Federal Project Number One (Federal One), was unique among all U.S. government efforts, before or since, in attempting to articulate and accomplish broad public cultural goals. The designers of the WPA rejected the idea of setting up a program of subsidy for existing arts organizations. Instead of providing direct federal grants to these institutions, WPA leaders sought to break new ground with federal cultural support. Federal One authorized $27 million of the total initial $4.88 billion ($500m of $90b in 2020 dollars) associated with the WPA to employ artists, musicians, actors, and writers. Over the full life of the WPA, from 1935 to 1943, the

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2 The federal percent-for-art model was discontinued in 1943 with the demise of The Section and was not revived until 1963 (until 1966) and then again until 1972 (and still today), when the General Services Administration (GSA) inaugurated the Art in Architecture program (originally called the GSA Fine Arts program) with a .5%-for-art provision. This program continues to exist today.

3 Rauch, p. 158.
WPA spent $13.4 billion ($250b in 2020 dollars), an estimated five percent ($670m) of which went to art-related work.4

The apparent contradiction between the WPA cultural programs' centralized direction and their exceptional ability to support truly diverse regional work is resolved in part by a closer look at their basic premises. WPA projects took place all over the country, wherever unemployed artists could be found. Federal Art Project, as having “helped to stem the cultural erosion which in the past two decades has drawn most of America's art talent to a few large cities,” “brought the artist closer to the interests of a public which needs him, and which is now learning to understand him, and “made the artist more responsive to the inspiration of the country.”5

In terms of the arts, work began immediately on Federal One, which was comprised of five major divisions: the Federal Art Project, the Federal Music Project, the Federal Theatre Project, the Federal Writers Project, and the Historical Records Survey. Each was headed by a national director. Just one year after the five national directors first met in Washington, some 40,000 WPA artists and other cultural workers were employed in projects throughout the United States.

- **The Federal Art Project (FAP)**
  At its height in 1936, the FAP employed 5,300 visual artists and related professionals. A murals project executed more than 2,500 murals in hospitals, schools and other public places; an easel painting division produced nearly 108,000 paintings; a sculpture division produced some 18,000 pieces; a graphic arts workshop and poster division were created; a photography project documented the WPA; a scenic design division provided models of historic stage sets and architectural models for planning and educational use; and a stained-glass division was centered in New York.

  The Federal Art Project also compiled a 22,000-plate Index of American Design, dispatching artists to record a wide variety of American designs in furnishings and artifacts from the colonial period on. The Arts Service Division provided illustrations and the like to the WPA's writers, musicians and theaters. The Exhibitions Division organized public showings of all WPA artists and students.

  Hundreds of teachers were employed by the Art Teaching Division in settlement houses and community centers; in the New York City area alone, an estimated 50,000 children and adults participated in classes each week. The FAP also set up and staffed 100 arts centers in 22 states; these included galleries, classrooms and community workshops and served an estimated eight million people. These local centers also received some $825,000 in local support.

  Many artists who have since become famous were part of FAP. Philip Guston, Moses Soyer, Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko, Jacob Lawrence, Ivan Albright, Marsden Hartley, Philip Evergood, Mark Tobey -- these were just a few of the painters for whom the FAP

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provided a living and the chance to find "a new orientation and a new hope and purpose based on a new sense of social responsibility."

- **The Federal Music Project (FMP)**
  Employing around 16,000 musicians at its peak, Federal Music Project ensembles (orchestras and chamber groups; choral and opera units; concert, military and dance bands; and theater orchestras) presented an estimated 5,000 performances before some three million people each week. Music projects had local co-sponsors – schools, colleges, government or civic groups -- and small admissions charges helped meet costs.

  The Federal Music Project also provided classes in rural areas and urban neighborhoods; in 1939, an estimated 132,000 children and adults in 27 states received instruction every week. A Composers Forum Laboratory afforded composers in several major cities the opportunity to hear their work performed with complete instrumentation. The Index of American Composers paralleled the Design Index, cataloguing 5,500 works by 1,500 composers; WPA ensembles performed every one of these catalogued works. Extensive recording of folk music was carried out, especially in the Southeast and South Central regions. WPA workers also pioneered in music therapy experimentation. Finally, Federal Music Project workers also served as copyists, arrangers and librarians, expanding the availability of musical work.

- **The Federal Theatre Project (FTP)**
  The Theatre Project employed 12,700 theater workers at its peak. State units were established in 31 states and New York City, with most states in turn creating more than one company or unit within their own jurisdictions. Federal Theatre units presented more than 1,000 performances each month before nearly one million people, and 78% of these audience members were admitted free of charge, many seeing live theater for the first time. The Federal Theatre Project produced over 1,200 plays in its four-year history, introducing 100 new playwrights to the country.

  In addition to its production units, the Federal Theatre Project reached an estimated 10 million listeners with its "Federal Theatre of the Air," broadcast over all the major networks. The FTP’s National Service Bureau provided research, consultation and play-reading services to all the units. The Federal Theatre Magazine united the disparate FTP components, describing and criticizing the work of units nationwide.


- **The Federal Writers Project (FWP)**
  The Federal Writers Project employed 6,686 writers at its peak in April 1936, with active projects in all 48 states and the District of Columbia. The Writers Project had produced 3.5 million copies of 800 titles by October 1941.

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The Federal Writers Project is best-known for its American Guide Series, intended to produce comprehensive guidebooks for every state, plus Alaska, Guam, Puerto Rico and Washington, D.C.; similar guides were published for many localities. Each guide included detailed descriptions of towns and villages, waterways, historic sites and the like, often along with extensive collections of oral history and folklore, essays about local life, photographs and other artwork. The American Guide Series for many decades after constituted the most comprehensive encyclopedia of Americana ever published.

Other activities of the Federal Writers Project included studies on such topics as architecture, science for children, and Indigenous peoples. Among the most important are oral history archives created by FWP workers, including priceless archives like the Slave Narratives and collections of folklore. In addition to working on FWP projects, writers provided research, writing and editorial services to other government agencies.

Among many other participants in the FWP were Ralph Ellison, Richard Wright, Studs Terkel, John Cheever, Saul Bellow, Margaret Walker, Arna Bontemps and Zora Neale Hurston.

- The Historical Records Survey (HRS)
  The smallest component of Federal One, the Survey employed archivists to identify, collect and conserve historical records throughout the United States.

Thanks to archivists who have retrieved WPA documents from warehouses and garbage dumps, and to Federal One veterans who have produced memoirs and analyses, the projects are extensively documented; and they reveal a difficult history of Federal One. There are plenty of anecdotes illustrating the insensitivity of bureaucrats, the clumsiness of politicians' interventions, the attacks of censors and the perils of centralized control. Federal One didn't effect a complete transformation of the cultural landscape; when it was over, cultural production and distribution returned to something very much like the patterns they had taken earlier. It has been argued that the projects served as pacifiers, containing a potentially radical and threatening artists' movement by converting it to a form of government service.

Nonetheless, Federal One created opportunities for artists who would have had the greatest difficulties sustaining their work otherwise; and for thousands of people who might never have been able to paint or write or attend live theater themselves. Though these Federal One projects were mandated nationally, they were conceived with local cultural situations in mind. The compilation of regional and oral history collections, the music and art projects' composers and design indexes, the collection of slave narratives, the photographic documentation of the period, as well as many other WPA documentation initiatives would not have been undertaken without Federal One.

While the racial legacy of Federal One, like many efforts from this period, is very complicated and imperfect, special emphasis was placed on preserving and promoting non-dominant cultural forms. Black theater companies were established in Birmingham, Boston, Chicago, Hartford, Los Angeles, New York, Newark, Philadelphia, Raleigh, San Francisco and Seattle -- all places where economic and social conditions had made it impossible for Black theater to exist outside of the fast-disappearing vaudeville stage. Similarly, foreign language companies performed works in French, German, Italian, Spanish and Yiddish; though eager audiences existed for these productions, mounting them for profit had become impossible.
The WPA cultural projects also enabled a great deal of experimentation in the form and content of artwork. Designed in consultation with artists’ unions, commercial producers and other arts community leaders, Federal One projects made possible work that was acknowledged as important but impossible to undertake in existing private settings. In many cases, this placed the federal government in the role of taking risks for private entrepreneurs no longer willing or able to gamble on new material.

The Theatre Project introduced important formal innovations. The "Living Newspaper" is perhaps the best-known of these, emerging as the hallmark of the FTP’s work. The Living Newspaper began with WPA journalists researching social issues of the day. The material they gathered was transformed into a new form of documentary theater -- large-cast, multimedia productions, innovatively staged. Living Newspapers pioneered techniques that are still seen as part of "experimental" theater; for instance, photographs, animation sequences and short films were projected onto scrims, adding layers of visual information to the dimensions provided by live actors and fixed scenery. Amplified voices and offstage loudspeakers supplemented the live voices of actors, commenting on the action, posing questions, adding factual information and crowd noise. Living Newspapers were often produced simultaneously in several cities, sometimes with local variations. The most famous "edition," One-Third of a Nation, was produced in 11 cities. It gave dramatic form to FDR's famous statement, "I see one-third of a nation ill-housed, ill-clad and ill-nourished."

The Problem of Censorship and the End of an Era

The New Deal cultural programs were marred by censorship. Despite an initial pledge to keep creative work “subsidized by the government...free of censorship,” censorship of the works began almost immediately and continued throughout the course of Federal One. In fact, the first notable censorship came straight from the White House and imposed a rule that banned the impersonation of any foreign leader on the Federal Theatre stage.

State and local WPA officials were the most frequent censors. The New York City WPA director, upon viewing a four-panel mural, had three panels burned after seeing a figure he believed looked like Lenin and a plane with a red star on it. The artist, Arshile Gorky, was fired, though he brought in his source photos disproving both assertions. Illinois’s WPA administrator shut down Paul Green's Hymn to the Rising Sun, the second production of the Chicago Negro Company, while the opening night crowd was milling around in the lobby. The play dealt with the use of chain-gang labor in the South; it later opened in New York, to rave reviews.

Despite the reservations of censors, WPA projects were highly popular with audiences and critics, and reviews were generally favorable. Press was divided: accounts in liberal newspapers urged the establishment of permanent local projects upon foundations laid through Federal One support. But papers opposed to the New Deal capitalized on every act of censorship or problem in the programs.

Artists, too, envisioned a future for the projects; in the words of painter Stuart Davis, then secretary of the American Artists’ Congress, "The artists of America do not look upon the art

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7 Flanagan, p. 28.
projects as a temporary stopgap measure, but see in them the beginning of a new and better day for art in this country. 8

Unfortunately, as the '30s drew on, the WPA became the most frequent target of New Deal critics in Congress and the press. Federal One, as a highly visible and controversial part of the larger agency (despite its relatively small budget), provided an especially good target for FDR's enemies. Their attacks led to the ultimate censorship: the termination of the projects.

By 1938, a coalition of Republicans and conservative Democrats began to press their opposition to New Deal cultural policies. Late in July 1938, Representative J. Parnell Thomas presented the House Committee to Investigate Un-American Activities (HUAC) with "startling evidence" that the Theatre and Writers Projects were "a hotbed of Communists" and "one more link in the vast and unparalleled New Deal propaganda network." He announced that an investigation would be launched.

In its first six weeks of investigations, centering on Boston, New York City and San Francisco, HUAC commanded some 500 column inches in The New York Times (as well as extensive coverage in other media) with no chance for rebuttal from either project. The Committee produced a small parade of disaffected former WPA workers who testified that the Projects were tools of the Communist Party designed to breed class hatred in the United States.

Just as the Dies Committee report was being issued and a further investigation launched, Rep. Clifton Woodrum declared his intention to "get the government out of the theater business." In June 1939, the House Appropriations Committee, which Woodrum chaired, successfully barred future use of WPA funds for theater activities of any kind, bringing the Federal Theatre Project to an end virtually overnight, just four years after it was begun.

The chilling effect of continuing Dies Committee hearings, headlines about "red artists," and the rumblings of World War II brought a reorganization of Federal One in June 1939, signaling its final decline. Greater authority was handed over to the states, where projects suffered delays or derailments as local censorship took its toll. Each project was given two months to come up with local sponsors who would pick up 25% of project costs. Though these projects survived beyond 1939, their work had been transformed by the storm of controversy and the reorganization which followed in its wake. Ultimately, Work War II put an end to all federally subsidized artwork save that related directly to the war effort.

The WPA was formally ended by a presidential proclamation in 1942.

Adapted from Encyclopedia.com, Wikipedia, and The New York Times

The Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) was enacted by Congress in 1973 to consolidate several existing federal job training programs to help unemployed, underemployed, and disadvantaged individuals. Prior to CETA, federal job training was fragmented and complex, with numerous programs targeting specific groups, such as disadvantaged youths, unemployed

older adults, or welfare recipients. Services overlapped, but because administration of each program was distinct, coordination was difficult.

CETA was not explicitly or deliberately a creative workforce program. It replaced this fragmented situation with federal government block grants providing funds to state and local governments, "prime sponsors," who were responsible for identifying training needs and delivering the training following federal guidelines. Services funded via CETA included on-the-job training, classroom training, and public service employment. Public service employment was a program of federally subsidized jobs and was the most controversial aspect of CETA.

CETA funds were administered in a decentralized fashion by state and local governments, on the assumption that they could best determine local needs. The program offered work to those with low incomes and the long term unemployed as well as summer jobs to low-income high school students. Full-time jobs were provided for a period of 12 to 24 months in public agencies or private not-for-profit organizations. The intent was to impart a marketable skill that would allow participants to move to an unsubsidized job.

Inspired by the WPA's employment of artists in the service to the community in the 1930s, the San Francisco Arts Commission utilized CETA funding to expand its existing Neighborhood Arts Program, which employed painters, muralists, musicians, performing artists, poets and gardeners to work in schools, community centers, prisons and wherever their skills and services were of value to the community. The program was so successful in San Francisco that it became a model for similar programs, nationally. The Cultural Council Foundation Artists Project in New York City was one of the largest.

Over the lifetime of CETA, $41 billion ($247b in 2020 dollars) was distributed from the federal government to municipalities and states to create federally subsidized jobs for the unemployed. At its height, it was distributing more than $200 million ($1.2b in 2020 dollars) per year towards arts-based community development enterprises. CETA, over its existence, gathered significant controversy, particularly as the program ballooned in cost. This plus questions about program effectiveness and controversy over public service employment led President Reagan to discontinue CETA (impacting over 300,000 CETA-funded jobs), and to replace it, in 1982, with the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA). JTPA furthered the decentralization of federal job training to the state and local levels. JTPA eventually evolved into the Workforce Investment Act (1998), and from there into the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (2014), which is currently active.

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