



NEWS AND INFORMATION

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

08/04/2005

Americans for the Arts Announces New Exemplar Program

Awards \$2.1 Million to 12 Cultural Organizations in 10 States

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Americans for the Arts, the nation's leading nonprofit organization for advancing the arts in America, announced today a new initiative called **The Exemplar Program**, which will provide \$2.1 million in awards to 12 small to mid-sized arts and cultural organizations nationwide. The groups are being recognized for outstanding cultural work in their communities and in the field, based on their participation in the **Animating Democracy** program of Americans for the Arts and the **Working Capital Fund**. Supported by the Ford Foundation, the two-year Exemplar Program will enable the selected organizations to sustain and advance the extraordinary work for which they are being recognized. The Exemplar Program is being implemented in collaboration with LarsonAllen Public Service Group of Minneapolis, MN, which also managed the Working Capital Fund.

Animating Democracy and the **Working Capital Fund**, both supported by the Ford Foundation, were rigorous and groundbreaking programs. Animating Democracy supported cultural organizations to develop artistic activity that encourages civic dialogue and engagement on important contemporary issues. The program has stimulated fieldwide, cross-disciplinary exploration of the philosophical, practical, and aesthetic aspects of arts- and humanities-based civic engagement activity. The Working Capital Fund has helped mid-sized African-American, Latino, Native-American, and Asian-American arts groups build sustainable organizations that support their artistic and community missions. The program has contributed to fieldwide thinking about the capacity and capital development requirements of mid-sized and culturally specific nonprofit organizations.

The Exemplar Program provides two years of support totaling \$150,000 to be used for operations and programs that sustain and advance outstanding work. Additional resources enable grantees to define special initiatives outside of their regular work that build

organizational knowledge and/or capacity or enhance approaches to creative, civic engagement, or organizational work in the long term. The Exemplar Program will facilitate collective and collaborative learning that will include and benefit the broader field while also supporting the learning interests of Exemplar participants. The joining of Animating Democracy and the Working Capital Fund in this Exemplar Program aims to foster a holistic and integrated approach to organizational health, institutional growth, civic engagement, and aesthetic investigation. Exemplar Program awardees are:

- **Arte Público Press, Houston, TX**
- **Cornerstone Theater Company, Los Angeles, CA**
- **East Bay Center for the Performing Arts, Richmond, CA**
- **Intermedia Arts, Minneapolis, MN**
- **Institute of American Indian Arts, Santa Fe, NM**
- **Liz Lerman Dance Exchange, Takoma Park, MD**
- **Mexican Fine Arts Center Museum, Chicago, IL**
- **National Black Arts Festival, Atlanta, GA**
- **Social and Public Art Resource Center (SPARC), Los Angeles, CA**
- **Sojourn Theatre, Portland, OR**
- **Urban Bush Women, Brooklyn, NY**
- **Wing Luke Asian Museum, Seattle, WA**

These exemplary organizations demonstrate superior leadership in the field. They use artistic and cultural expression as the primary catalyst for engagement around civic, social, and community issues. This resourceful leadership energizes the field despite chronic undercapitalization as small and mid-sized groups. The committed leadership within these organizations has successfully encoded true diversity into its core values, mission, and practice.

According to Robert Lynch, president and CEO of Americans for the Arts, “mid-sized and small arts organizations like those supported by Animating Democracy and the Working Capital Fund provide a critical function in the ecology of the arts as incubators of emerging artists’ work, sites of artistic experimentation and innovation, and leaders in community engagement for many reasons, including their size, location, flexibility, and mission-driven approaches.”

“Significantly, these types of organizations are where cultural diversity has been concentrated with the greatest commitment,” said Roberta Uno, program officer for Arts, Media and Culture at the Ford Foundation. “By supporting the Exemplar Program, the Ford Foundation is investing in the development of leadership that is actively responding to the changing

demographics of America, the increasingly complex interplay of local, national, and international cultures, and the powerful voice of the arts in sociopolitical discourse.”

Americans for the Arts is the leading nonprofit organization for advancing the arts and arts education in America. With offices in Washington, D.C. and New York City, it has a record of more than 50 years of service. Americans for the Arts is dedicated to representing and serving local communities and creating opportunities for every American to participate in and appreciate all forms of the arts. Additional information is available at www.AmericansForTheArts.org.

LarsonAllen Public Service Group provides consulting, training, audit and accounting services to nonprofits, foundations, educational institutions, and government entities with a team of highly skilled professionals in business, law, public affairs, finance, accounting, social services, and the arts. Over the past 20 years, they have consulted with hundreds of nonprofits and foundations throughout the country in areas such as strategic and business planning, leadership transitions, board development, financial and organizational assessments, financial systems analysis and design, program design and management, evaluation, and industry studies.

###