EXECUTIVE SUMMARY





Strengthening Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in the Arts and Culture Sector for All Los Angeles County Residents



"Given that Los Angeles is arguably the most diverse County in the country, as well as the creative capital of the nation, the Los Angeles County Arts Commission should play a leadership role in implementing model programs and leading discussions about how to ensure that arts organizations appropriately reflect the diversity of our communities..."

—Resolution by Supervisors Hilda L. Solis and Mark Ridley Thomas November 10, 2015

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

THIS REPORT IS THE CULMINATION OF 18 MONTHS OF WORK AND REFLECTS THE IDEAS AND INPUT OF MANY PEOPLE ACROSS LOS ANGELES COUNTY. BY DESIGN, THIS REPORT REFLECTS THE VISION AND VALUES OF THE CULTURAL EQUITY AND INCLUSION INITIATIVE (CEII) PROCESS.

Many diverse voices have been incorporated, including members of the Advisory Committee as well as participants in the Town Halls and Working Groups. Their numbers are so great that we cannot list all of them here. We are grateful for their time and the thoughtful insights they shared. We are confident that this report offers workable strategies for how to intertwine the goals of achieving diversity, equity, inclusion and access so that all residents and all communities in LA County can experience the benefits of the arts.

As with any significant product emerging from an inclusive public process as ambitious and forward-thinking as this one, the process of collecting and distilling their wisdom into a coherent and readable narrative was led by a number of key individuals whose time, energy, and commitment to the CEII process and vision must be acknowledged.

With gratitude,

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CEII CO-CHAIR
Helen Hernandez
CEII CO-CHAIR AND ARTS COMMISSIONER
Maria Rosario Jackson
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FOR ORGANIZATIONAL AFFILIATIONS SEE APPENDIX A

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FOR ORGANIZATIONAL AFFILIATIONS SEE APPENDIX B

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"...the aspiration for equity has galvanized communities, advocates, government leaders, organizers, scholars, business leaders and philanthropists to rethink priorities, refocus strategies, and forge new partnerships to create a more equitable nation. There is growing consensus that equity is a win for everyone, not a zero-sum game, and it is essential for prosperity as America bolts toward becoming a majority people of color."

—Angela Glover Blackwell, Chief Executive Officer, PolicyLink



¹ Blackwell, A.G. (2016). Equity Is... Retrieved from http://putnam-consulting.com/philanthropy-411-blog/equity-is.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THE BENEFITS OF THE ARTS ARE MANY, AND EVERYONE DESERVES
TO HAVE EQUAL ACCESS TO THEM. FROM ARTS EDUCATION
FOR YOUNG PEOPLE TO ARTS PROGRAMMING FOR SENIOR
CITIZENS, THE ARTS HAVE BEEN PROVEN TO MAKE INDIVIDUAL
LIVES BETTER AND TO STRENGTHEN COMMUNITIES.

The Arts improve health and well-being, and they improve cognitive skills. Even more, the arts can bring people together across demographic, economic and social lines. They are places where people can both see and express themselves, their communities and their cultures in public performances and exhibitions. The arts also offer important career and leadership opportunities.

In a County as ethnically and culturally diverse as well as geographically sprawling as Los Angeles, what can be done to ensure that all the benefits of, and opportunities provided by, the arts are available and accessible to all residents, no matter who they are or where they live? This includes everything from jobs and serving on boards of directors, to improvements in health and education, to reflective and illuminating content and programming. This question is at the heart of the Cultural Equity and Inclusion Initiative (CEII).

While Los Angeles County has invested in arts and culture for more than a century, there are concerns that all County residents do not have equal and meaningful access to the arts and the benefits they provide.

In November 2015, Los Angeles County
Supervisors Hilda Solis and Mark RidleyThomas introduced a resolution that was
unanimously passed by the Board of
Supervisors, directing the Los Angeles
County Arts Commission to conduct "a
constructive County-wide conversation
about ways to improve diversity in cultural
organizations" for all LA County residents.
The Board specifically directed the Arts
Commission to focus on four key target
areas: Boards of Directors, Staffing,
Audience/Participants, and Programming.
To this the Arts Commission added a fifth:
Artists/Creators.

In addition to being a national leader in arts and culture, LA County is one of the largest and most diverse counties in the United States. The population of LA County has been majority "people of color" since the late 1980s. According to the U.S. Census Bureau², 48 percent of residents are Latino or Hispanic, 14 percent are Asian or Pacific Islander, 8 percent are African American, 1 percent are Native American, Alaska Native or Other, and 2 percent are Two or More Races. The remaining 27 percent are White.

From Diversity to Inclusion

Data collected about the arts and culture workforce as part of the CEII process show there is much work to be done. The work that arts institutions funded by the County have already done toward greater diversity constitutes a strong base to build upon, but there is a growing recognition that it is necessary to move beyond simple measures of diversity to address deeper issues of cultural equity, inclusion and access in the arts. Lack of diversity, equity, inclusion and access may not be intentional, but may be due to a lack of priority within an organization, or simply continuing past practices without considering their full effects. In passing the CEII resolution, the LA County Board of Supervisors has created a historic opportunity to maximize LA County assets including the institutions it funds, the wider arts ecology throughout LA County, and the diversity and creativity of its residents, to improve lives and communities for all.

For most people, "diversity" first brings to mind concepts of race and ethnicity.

However, the term includes other important areas of diversity such as socio-economic status and gender, and people experience them as intersectional rather than separated and hierarchical. In LA County, for example, 19 percent of LA County residents live at or below the poverty line

- 14 percent are unemployed or under-employed
- 56 percent speak a language other than English at home
- 6 percent report they are living with a disability
- 51 percent are women

Today, the arts ecology of LA County includes major cultural institutions, nonprofit arts organizations of all disciplines and sizes, and private businesses. In passing the CEII resolution, the Board of Supervisors committed itself to being at the forefront of a national conversation about how arts and cultural organizations can and should reflect and embrace diversity in all the ways it is experienced and understood, in all communities across LA County.

To conduct the CEII initiative, the Arts Commission engaged in a comprehensive series of strategies that included

- An Advisory Committee reflecting diversity in race and ethnicity, socioeconomic background, gender, age, physical ability, LGBTQ status, arts discipline and geography across LA County, led by three Co-Chairs who are leaders in the LA County arts ecology,
- Fourteen Town Hall meetings in locations across LA County where 650 participants shared their experiences and ideas for improving cultural equity and inclusion in the arts,
- Working Groups formed around each of the five key target areas that honed ideas that emerged through the town hall process into formal recommendations,
- The first-ever survey of arts organizations across LA County to measure the diversity of boards, staff, volunteers and contractors,
- Consultation with peers in New York and other cities to identify best practices in diversity, cultural equity and inclusion in the arts,

- Opportunities for the public to share their ideas anonymously, through an artist-led project,
- A literature review that showed the current state of knowledge and conditions in the field, and
- Input from other LA County cultural institutions as well as local arts funders.

Through this process 13 actionable recommendations to improve cultural equity and inclusion in the arts emerged. These recommendations open the doors to resources and promote tools that can break down barriers of exclusion in a way that fosters and promotes arts and culture – as well as the benefits they provide – for all residents of LA County.

Some of these recommendations build on work already being carried out by the LA County Arts Commission or other County institutions; others would constitute new initiatives. Some build on existing partnerships with non-County organizations, while others would create new partnerships. All of the recommendations presented in this report are conceptual, and will require further development for implementation. Although each recommendation is presented according to the working group that developed it, almost all would impact more than one of the issues the Board of Supervisors identified as priorities for the CEII initiative. Fuller details on each recommendation presented here in the Executive Summary can be found in the Recommendations section of the full report.

RECOMMENDATION FROM THE CEIL CO-CHAIRS

Full details on each of these recommendations begins on page 56 of the CEll report.

1. Los Angeles County Cultural Policy

Establish a cultural policy for LA County with concrete elements focused on equity, diversity, inclusion and access that would solidify the gains made through the CEII process and recommendations, and will serve as a road map for how all LA County departments can contribute to cultural life. This cultural policy would position LA County as a national arts leader in advancing cultural equity and inclusion in every sector of our civic lives.

RECOMMENDATION FROM THE BOARDS OF DIRECTORS WORKING GROUP

2. Inclusive Language, Policies and Infrastructure to Recruit and Retain Diverse Staff and Boards in LA County Arts and Cultural Organizations

Initiate a requirement that all cultural organizations receiving LA County funds have written, board-adopted statements, policies or plans that outline their commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion and access, and monitor progress.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE STAFFING WORKING GROUP

3. College Arts Pathways: Paid Arts Internships for Community College Students
Double the existing LA County Internship Program to increase the number of paid
arts internships with the additional positions set aside for community college
students emphasizing inclusivity of those from communities of color, low-income
neighborhoods, persons with disabilities, and other communities that experience
barriers to arts access.

4. Teen Arts Pathways: Employment and Learning Opportunities in the Arts and Culture for High School Students

Develop an LA County initiative creating access to work-based learning and leadership opportunities for all high school students, particularly students of color, low-income students, LGBTQ students, disabled students, current and former foster youth, and youth on probation, as well as others who experience barriers to participation, to prepare youth for careers in the arts and creative industries.

5. Creative Workforce Development Center(s)

Establish center(s) that link students and mature workers, especially those from communities of color, low-income, LGBTQ and disabled communities, and other communities that are under-represented in the arts, to educational, training and networking opportunities to help them gain skills to work in creative jobs.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE ARTISTS/CREATORS WORKING GROUP

6. Neighborhood Bridges: Municipal Grants to Expand Arts and Cultural Programming to All Neighborhoods and Communities

Implement an LA County grant program to provide funds to municipal funders that includes diversity, equity, inclusion and access requirements, for re-granting to fiscally sponsored organizations, collectives, traditional and folk artists, and individual artists, especially those from communities of color, low-income, LGBTQ and disabled communities, and other communities that are under-represented in the arts.

7. Artists Working Cross-Sector to Address Social Problems

Place artists, arts administrators or other creative workers who are representative of diverse constituencies in LA County departments in paid positions as creative strategists to develop innovative solutions to social challenges.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE PROGRAMMING WORKING GROUP

8. Increasing Diverse, Inclusive and Equitable Cultural Opportunities and Programming in Unincorporated Areas

Provide new cultural opportunities and funds particularly for residents of unincorporated areas of the County by extending LA County's civic art requirement to private developers and enacting ordinances that encourage the creation of cultural assets.

9. Grants to Organizations Serving Diverse Communities

Expand LA County's Organizational Grants Program, which supports arts and culture organizations that have been historically or are currently underfunded and under-resourced, including those that represent communities of color, low-income communities, LGBTQ and disabled communities and other communities experiencing barriers to participation in the arts.

10. Parks and Libraries Arts Partnership

Establish grants and professional development services to parks and libraries in areas of LA County with the least arts programming, to support production and marketing costs of arts events with a focus on communities of color, low-income communities, LGBTQ and disabled communities, and other communities that experience barriers to participation in the arts.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE AUDIENCES/PARTICIPANTS WORKING GROUP

11. Connecting Audiences to Cultural Information

Establish a five year LA Countywide communications initiative that shares information about the arts with all LA County residents through both traditional and nontraditional methods, taking into account language barriers, geographical concerns, and economic divides that require different forms of outreach.

12. Connecting Organizations to New Audiences and Participants

Establish LA County planning and implementation grants to small and mid-sized arts organizations to build their capacity to reach new audiences and participants including those in communities of color, low-income communities, LGBTQ and disabled communities and other communities that experience barriers to arts participation.

13. Equitable Access to Arts Education: A Three Part Strategy for All Students in Public Schools

- Grants to fund dedicated arts coordinators who both reflect and promote the diversity of the student population, to serve every school district in LA County,
- Grants to school districts in support of their arts education plans
- Alignment of in-school and out-of-school arts learning opportunities



"We know that the arts play a significant and meaningful role in sparking vitality in communities of all sizes and shapes. We want to bring this country closer to a point when all communities are safe, lively, inclusive and economically vibrant. Every American deserves to call such a community home."

—Jane Chu, Chair, National Endowment for the Arts



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