

## DCLA ANNOUNCES CREATENYC DISABILITY FORWARD FUND

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By NYC Department of Cultural Affairs

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New York – The NYC Department of Cultural Affairs (DCLA) today launched the CreateNYC Disability Forward Fund, a pilot initiative designed to support new and ongoing efforts to engage people with disabilities as artists, cultural workers, and audience members. This new fund builds on recommendations made in the CreateNYC cultural plan released by Mayor de Blasio in July 2017, and reflects DCLA's commitment to working with cultural organizations to provide opportunities for all New Yorkers to engage in the arts.

"During the CreateNYC public engagement process, advocates from the diverse disability communities of NYC made their voices heard loud and clear, expanding our understanding of the significant barriers to participation faced by artists, cultural workers, and audiences with disabilities," said Cultural Affairs Commissioner Tom Finkelpearl. "The CreateNYC Disability Forward Fund is a direct effort to address these barriers. It's an opportunity for us to build on the great work already being done in this area by NYC's cultural organizations, and a chance for us to encourage new, creative approaches toward a more meaningful inclusion of those with disabilities in all aspects of cultural life. We are eager to see what new ideas cultural organizations respond with, and to deepen our engagement with this vital and diverse community of New Yorkers."

"Recommendations from CreateNYC shine a light on areas for us to make improvements in the City's cultural landscape," said Council Member Van Bramer, Chair of the City Council's Committee on Cultural Affairs and Libraries. "The Disability Forward Fund will go a long way to ensure that those with disabilities have increased access to and engagement with the arts including as artists, employees, and audiences."

"Increasing opportunities for the nearly one million New Yorkers who have self-identified as having a disability to work within cultural organizations is a focus of many of our initiatives especially NYC: AT Work," said Victor Calise, Commissioner of the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities. "The CreateNYC Disability Forward Fund is a tremendous asset to assist cultural organizations to deepen the engagement of people with disabilities in all aspects of cultural life, including employment, education, and entertainment, which advances our goal of becoming the most accessible city in the world."

"As Chair of the Committee on Mental Health, Disabilities, and Addiction I am looking forward to the work that will result from the CreateNYC Disability Forward Fund. This initiative will encourage people with disabilities to engage in New York City's cultural life, support the artistic talent that already exists within the community, and amplify their representation. The contributions of people with disabilities deserve to be recognized in all aspects of life and I thank the Department of Cultural Affairs for supporting this vital, yet historically underrepresented group of New Yorkers," said Council Member Diana Ayala.

The goals of the CreateNYC Disability Forward Fund are to:

- support substantive projects that deepen cultural organizations' engagement of people with disabilities, including artists, cultural workers, and/or audience members;
- support new work created by and/or with people with disabilities;
- advance the employment of people with disabilities working as artists and cultural workers;
- encourage the cultural sector to think creatively and resourcefully about the equitable representation and inclusion of individuals with disabilities in its program offerings;
- promote exemplary models of diverse and creative approaches to engaging disability communities through cultural programming.

The Disability Forward Fund will provide \$350,000 to arts organizations and cultural institutions. Grants will range in size from \$10,000 to \$35,000 and will be awarded through an application process open to the over 900 organizations currently supported by DCLA through the Cultural Institutions Group or the Cultural Development Fund. Applications must be received by 6:00 PM on June 1, 2018. Awarded projects will be completed between July 1, 2018 and June 30, 2019.

During the public engagement process for CreateNYC, a strong contingent from the disability community – including practitioners and supporters of disability arts – offered several recommendations for how the plan could address barriers to cultural participation for New Yorkers with disabilities. Several of these informed recommendations in the published plan, including the CreateNYC Disability Forward Fund. DCLA has also earmarked \$2 million in funding for capital projects addressing physical accessibility to arts venues, and hired a new staff member to strengthen DCLA's connection with the disability community and promote greater accessibility and inclusion for people with disabilities in all DCLA activities.

"It's exciting to see another cultural plan recommendation translated into concrete benefits for New Yorkers, especially one that responds so directly to the remarkable advocacy of the disability community," said Ben Rodriguez-Cubenas, Chair of the CreateNYC Citizens' Advisory Committee. "Diverse perspectives are essential to a thriving arts landscape like New York's, and the CreateNYC Disability Forward Fund increases concrete support for the vital yet often overlooked contributions people with disabilities make to all aspects of the cultural life of our city."

#### About NYC Department of Cultural Affairs

The New York City Department of Cultural Affairs (DCLA) is dedicated to supporting and strengthening New York City's vibrant cultural life. DCLA works to promote and advocate for quality arts programming and to articulate the contribution made by the cultural community to the City's vitality. The Department represents and serves nonprofit cultural organizations involved in the visual, literary, and performing arts; public-oriented science and humanities institutions including zoos, botanical gardens, and historic and preservation societies; and creative artists at all

skill levels who live and work within the City's five boroughs. DCLA also provides donated materials for arts programs offered by the public schools and cultural and social service groups, and commissions permanent works of public art at City-funded construction projects throughout the five boroughs.

#### About CreateNYC

Released by Mayor de Blasio in July 2017, CreateNYC is the first-ever comprehensive cultural plan for the City of New York. Based on input from nearly 200,000 New Yorkers, the plan will serve as a roadmap to a more sustainable, inclusive, and equitable cultural sector that all residents have a stake in. The plan's strategies for supporting arts and culture throughout the city include stakeholders at all levels –from residents on a single block to City agencies that encompass all five boroughs. Visit [www.CreateNYC.org](http://www.CreateNYC.org) to learn more.

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