



ARTS COUNCIL  
**TOWN  
HALLS**



FINDINGS  
& SUPPORT



GREATER PITTSBURGH  
ARTS COUNCIL  
**Arts loud and clear**

**The general public, artists, and cultural workers are all interested in receiving 101-education in arts and business practices, as well as resources to better connect the public with the arts.**

I just want to second the need for entrepreneurial support for artists, especially business plans and resources for documenting, archiving, and marketing work.

It would be nice to see more talks by creators about their work, or more events that bring an understanding of art to the general public.

I kind of feel like Pittsburgh, we are very cultured in arts. I also feel that we could be more cultured in arts. Arts to me is literally everywhere. I even teach art to children at times and just really re-integrating how arts is a part of our daily life. And a lot of times I don't feel like people value arts as much as we should. You know [they're] constantly trying to push children into 'oh, get a degree in chemistry; go to school to be a lawyer, doctor,' and no one really says 'go to school to be an artist.' Me growing up, it was always shunned. 'What are you going to school for?' You know you were always afraid to say, oh, I want to take an art class or do this. So that's one thing I would really like for us to push, and I know that takes a lot of time, you know, just reintegrating arts, especially when arts has been taken out of public education.

Needs include auditing our procedures [...] HR policies and create more formal procedures and contingencies around those, reviewing our facility and security needs, an insurance audit, and additional governance and finance.

Artists have been sharing that they are also lonely and some, struggling to find an audience, buyers and peers to share art exploration with.

Variability in getting the arts back to public participation

I've done some trying to learn on my own, but like a 'how to look at dance 101' class or like a "how to listen to a symphony 101' class or like 'how to dissect a visual arts painting or collage' could be an interesting idea for the general public.

I know that one thing that you guys are big on is trying to get the word out for grants in communities of color. And also I know there are workshops to help some artists who may not be in the grant world learn how to write a grant or help them out with grants and things like that. So I do think that is a positive step that you guys are taking, but I think still think word needs to get out even more so.

[If I could create a program, I'd create...] An established organization presenting the work of local artists exclusively.

**Artists need access to resources and exposure. A primary need is accessible, inclusive, and affordable space for creation and presentation of work.**

## Space

It is still difficult for us smaller groups to find funding and venues.

Affordable studio spaces with spray booth capacity.

Open space to exhibit, more calls for artists.

In the dance world, I think that similarly, space is really important. And I think we've commented on it multiple times, not just to present but also to rehearse.

I'm currently trying to seek art galleries to display dance, and actually, and it is a struggle... in the dance world, space is important.

It would be nice to have a program that provides subsidized studio rehearsal spaces for emerging artists who are arts new to the area.

...That there would be even small amounts of funding available to theaters, venues, galleries to be able to pay for an audio describer to provide the service.

I'm most interested in finding more places to exhibit and access to gallery opportunities or venues downtown and all around the city.

## Resources

The Arts Council is one of the only places I know of that has a research department.

What the Arts Council means to me, I feel more so like it's a community a place for support, a place for resources.

Finding resources for burnt out staff is key, you know? It's been brought up so many times, but I think that's a capacity issue, too. Just everyone's tired, and everyone's changing.

I notice with most artists there's like three gaps. 1) Effort gap, resulting in confidence and willingness to put their work out there; 2) skill gap, encouragement, practicing, comparing their artwork to other people; and 3) quality gap – to make sure the end result is recognizable to other artists and recognizable to other artists and recognizable to the public.

Outside fund-raising.

There are so many artists and people I know who, for one, they don't know that you guys exist, which is not necessarily your fault or their fault. They don't know the resources out there [or might be intimidated or hesitant to interact].

**Artists need access to resources and exposure. A primary need is accessible, inclusive, and affordable space for creation and presentation of work.**

## Resource Formats

Some programs are expensive for a new artist, or they are offered at times that are not conducive to artists who work other jobs to stay afloat.

Making things interactive, making things different, formatting them different and doing mixes of like video, live, panel, and then artist talk, or then open floor. I like seeing a mix of formats in that way.

## Exposure

[Our scene] is not representing art from around the world.

Pittsburgh has such a vibrant arts presence, but it's not international, inter-cultural. I think that a lot more of that is needed here.

[I'd like to see] A fellowship program for artists to be matched with an arts organization, without any age or medium restriction.

There is often conditioning to younger artists to fit into rubrics and guidelines that are built on the foundation of white supremacy, when younger artists are . . . redefining what it means to be good in a variety of mediums rooted in smashing the patriarchy.

Something that is that I don't really see a lot of is finding and showing opportunities for new artists or artists who don't have like, you know, very long resumes.

**The people that make up the arts and culture community are not okay and are feeling the weight of a lack of social safety net.**

I want to learn from you all, as an artist. One of the things that I feel like would rejuvenate me and that I've started doing this year is not doing theater, you know, I want to draw, I want to sing I want to do stuff with you all.

Artists have been sharing that they are also lonely, and some are struggling to find an audience, buyers and peers to share art exploration with. I have felt extremely - and I think it's related to the some comments from the first question - but I feel really lonely.

I'm not seeing enough of normalizing not being okay. And so I spend a lot of time spaces with professionals like focusing on like the job part of their lives. So I just wanted to normalize not being okay. And voicing into the space. I'm not okay.

More and more, I guess maybe it's running a bunch of experiments about what kinds of ways can we be together; Making art using art, using these gifts that we have, so that we can process what's happening to us and what agency we have. To move through it together in a way that is not just like I'm [name], the executive director at [organization], but I am a whole person experiencing a whole lot as everyone on this call. So that's something I'd love to see.

We need better staff benefits such as healthcare, retirement, family leave etc. And we also need someone to administer it.

You know, [funders] want to fund the art, they want to fund the project, they want to fund this thing. But if you go to them and say, 'hey, I need a bookkeeper,' they're like, 'yeah, okay. No.' So it's just really getting that operational support back.

There is a lack of a social safety net. And I'm not looking for the Arts Council to obviously fix the federal government or Pennsylvania State problems. But perhaps some advocacy in that way. I think even when it comes to like maternity leave or paternity leave.

I worry arts organizations are going to start losing great individuals due to burn out and feeling ignored by larger governing bodies, the same way healthcare is.

## Small organizations seek operations support.

I think a lot of small, smaller or arts organizations, all arts organizations are in need of, you know, a marketing expert, or an accounting expert.

Would love to see the work of small-medium arts orgs in Pittsburgh elevated in the media. I come to these meetings and learn about new groups! A list online isn't enough. I would love to see them showcased, especially not the "typical" or well-known ones.

How to handle the pandemic, just in a very practical sense in terms of like best practices, like . . . do we require masks? Should we not? How many people should be allowed in? You know, how do we communicate this to our patrons? And audiences? Or, you know, or for individual artists going into a space? Do they understand what they need to observe? Or not? Or what's required of them? And how that's all communicated? And, I know, there's so many different standards and everything.

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Conflict management mediation. We were looking for some of those during COVID and had trouble finding those or just looking for recommendations for those.

Community Management: It would be great to know more about what my fellow arts orgs are up to and participate or support in more ways. For example, is there a performance group in need of a space? or a theater lobby in need of art? We could work together better.

I don't think we know how to build capacity. And there's so many different like umbrellas or categories that falls into as far as marketing and that kind of thing, like accounting...

How to put programs online, particularly for live performance. [Organization], as an example, they did one person shows and put them online. Right. But that is not necessarily easy, it wasn't easy for them. And they had done it before. I can only imagine how it would be for individual artists or small organizations.

## Small organizations seek operations support.

Shared services for retirement, HR, and insurance for small arts organizations.

I was hoping the Arts Council would be a hub where I can come with questions on how to begin a small business; how to help artists with disabilities; just to have all my arts questions answered.

It is still difficult for us smaller groups to find funding and venues.

[Our organization has struggled to build capacity in] strategic and consistent marketing, PR.. Honestly, my team is tired. [We are facing] the daily practice of being realistic of what we can truly hold and what we need personally and professionally.

One thing that's come up for [small/medium visual arts organization] specifically is HR resources. And I know at one point in this pandemic I called Mitch and he told me what HR Advisors is, but within the small arts, org, I can't hire an HR specialist, nor can I pay the fee for an HR specialist, and I'm having conversations that I've never had before.

And [name] brings up so many good points that I think about, like, you know, acknowledging the humanity of our arts workers, and our artists, and conversations around long COVID or resources that they need that I was never equipped to have as an someone who didn't study in that field. And so for me, as an arts administrator, that is something that I need way more help, and personally.

**Arts industry workers seek community, connection, collaboration (like networking, mentorship, and information sharing).**

We're not islands. We're a strong voice together.

We are in need of some consultants. We are in need of marketing assistance, for example, and we have had a heck of a time. We've been looking since last September.

It would also be great to have a shared calendar for fundraising events.

Bringing together an interesting group of arts professionals, and the ability to network informally.

A number of us were lucky enough a couple of years ago to be supported by Bloomberg Philanthropies. And there's this wonderful coming together that happened with those sessions, where we really talked in depth around like issues in the field.

[I could use ] benchmarking for local rates for paying artists including activities like artist talks, installation, exhibition honorariums/ stipends, open gallery hours.

Personally I'm in a few different FB groups that connect folks which has been nice. FB itself is awful but the groups function has been helpful to find makers like myself. None are local, tho.

Mentorship and relationship building would be awesome.

I would say that we are, I feel like we're desperate to give our audiences like one big message. I'm sure the Arts Council communications team wants that more than anyone. And I don't know if we can, and I wish we could.

I have felt extremely - and I think it's related to the some comments from the first question - but I feel really lonely.

There is like a general, 'we're back,' 'we're not back,' 'come wait for us,' 'don't wait for us,' 'stay inside, 'don't stay inside.' And so it just really quickly got splintered.

I just feel like there's some customer confusion around like, 'your favorite arts organization is back, and they're back to normal, and everything's back to normal.' And then there's other places that are like, 'everything is different now.

...Bringing back those sessions where we all kind of can get in the same room and talk to each other and share insider secrets.

I found that I was having a distinct level of difficulty having enough time to contribute to developing my own website.

I think a lot about redundancy. I want someone to do a really great program that I really want to go to because it's the best one, and I don't want to go to like three different people. Like say the Arts Council does something, the Cultural Trust does something, and somebody else does something, and it's all sort of the same sort of thing. I wanna just go to one that's like better. So like could we just combine all of those resources into one thing, so that it's like a really excellent thing, sort of like what [other participant] was saying about having expert teachers or [experts with] high name value - nationally known teachers or nationally known speakers - to come here for a visit.



**The Arts Council  
needs to clarify its  
audience and  
offerings.**

...Making things interactive, making things different, formatting them different and doing mixes of like video, live, panel, and then artist talk, or then open floor. I like seeing a mix of formats in that way.

I would say that we are, I feel like we're desperate to give our audiences like one big message. I'm sure the Arts Council communications team is wanting that more than anyone. And I don't know if we can, and I wish we could.

What are the benefits for being a member organization for the Arts Council? I can join all the working groups and give you all the info, but it's like, what happens next? I would just love to know what will the Arts Council do next with this information.

Programs I have participated in often feel like the aim to support too wide of an audience and therefore end up being not relevant / helpful - the Arts Council should define who their audience is and work for them and not try to cater to the whole public.

And I just feel like there's some customer confusion around like, 'your favorite arts organization is back, and they're back to normal, and everything's back to normal.' And then there's other places that are like, 'everything is different now.'

I think a lot about and a few others have said around storytelling. I think a lot about like a member. In many ways don't understand what I or what my organization gets from being a member of the Arts Council.

**The Arts Council has a reputation for offering accessibility support, resources, and education. There is interest in this work continuing and/or reigniting.**

...Audio describer for the blind and visually impaired equipment available for theatres...

The Arts Council has been very supportive of those efforts for live performance here in the community, particularly with having the equipment available for theatres, which is absolutely wonderful.

There has been a great accessibility group. It's met in the past but I would look forward to seeing that group meet again and that we support having that available to add more venues and more theaters, in particular, and venues of all kinds too.

**Easily accessible and transparent industry data continues to be useful to arts organizations, artists, and other stakeholders.**

I'm really grateful for this like townhall format to be able to share feedback and have this like opportunity to engage with you all and hear what other people in the community are thinking.

Data and reporting on 1) The demographics of who is working in arts organizations. How does the demographics of leadership compare to front-line or non-management workers? 2) The state of equity in Pittsburgh arts sector - are Minority-led organizations receiving less funding? 3) Wage scales

I would just love to know like, what happens to this, like, what goes what, like, what are the results like, what, what will GPAC do next with this information? Like those action steps? Because it's like, I can join all the working groups and give you all the info but it's like what happens next, and sometimes that's lost?

The Arts Council is one of the only places I know of that has a research department, or, you know, research and policy.

**Staff is seen as most effective when actively engaged with the community.**

The staff is always helpful, caring and professional.

Positive note. I really believe our patrons are trying so hard to support us. Which makes my heart happy.

The PEOPLE there. Several key personnel aren't there any longer, but the impression they've made on me personally and professionally remains. There are also several people at the Arts Council who I hold in very high esteem and who have made positive contributions to my professional development. Staff is a major resource for grant information, trainings and seminars.

Can Arts Council employees be encouraged to visit and attend arts programming at even the smallest of orgs that are members so they can see for themselves what we might need? I expect you to be reaching out to us more often since you're suppose to be serving us.

Arts Council programs have always been positive experiences for me personally and professionally.

I would want to see some of the artists that you guys have helped fund, especially the [small organizations.

**Artsburgh is not the  
“one-stop shop” for  
arts audiences or  
organizations, as it  
was intended to be.**

Since I'm of the older generation, I guess it would be helpful to have more workshops or whatever on current technology type things. You know, whether it's not even so much website, I mean, that's part of it.

We need to have some kind of media presence that talks about what's happening in our arts community. They should talk about it regularly, talking about it in depth, broadly, in every facet of the arts, behind the scenes.

Publicity is huge right now. And like it's all dried up, I mean, the Post-Gazette - [writer] left. And then [writer] was doing some coverage. And now that's for theater. And now that's not happening anymore.

I'm just gonna say Artsburgh, right, like, we need that to work better for us. And so if the Arts Council is gonna keep doing that, it needs to be better. And I can talk to you at length about that. But instead of having something new, how can Arts Council get rid of things that aren't working?

I know that Artsburgh exists, but I don't know how often it's utilized. I don't know how much the general public knows about it specifically for dance. Maybe it works really well for other music, theater events, or music and musical theater venues, I don't know.