

This meeting summary was produced by City Bureau Documenters, in accordance with our editorial independence policy, with financial support from the city of Chicago. If you believe anything in these notes is inaccurate, please email City Bureau at documenters@citybureau.org with "Correction Request" in the subject line.

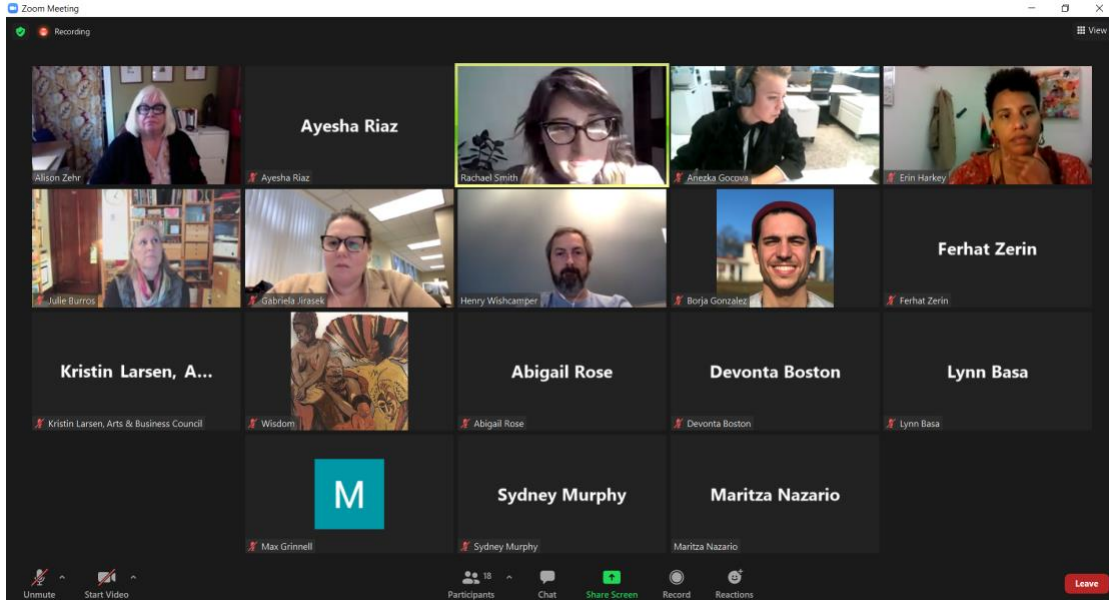
Arts and Culture Meeting #6

November 1, 2021, 4:00 PM | 2 hours

Documented by: Ayesha Riaz

ATTENDEES

- Alison Zehr
- Rachael Smith
- Anezka Gocova
- Erin Harkey
- Julie Burros
- Gabriela Jirasek
- Henry Wishcamper
- Borja Gonzalez
- Ferhat Zerín
- Kristin Larsen
- Wisdom Baty
- Abigail Rose
- Devonta Boston
- Lynn Basa
- Max Grinnell
- Sydney Murphy
- Maritza Nazario
- Kim Jay



MEETING GOAL

To redefine the previous objectives and policies related to arts and culture.

WHERE WE ARE



Step 1
We Are
Setting the Stage



Step 2
We Have and Need
Develop A Policy Toolkit



Step 3
We Will
Set Policy Framework

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1

In reimagining funding and supporting the workforce, there was distinction between *how to support a diverse and varied creative workforce* and *equitably allocated a sustainable level of investment* into 1) support for individual workers 2) support for small organizations and 3) understanding the needs and what support looks like.

2

Inclusive programming (culturally competent leaders, alternative art forms, demographic-specific opportunities), physical access (available location and proximity to transit) and redefining existing partnerships (between DCASE, organizations, and the city) would help expand access to arts and culture.

3

Arts education and promotion included exposure in schools (requiring art as a culturally responsive and fundamental part of education), for youth (identifying business partnerships/apprenticeships, creative workforce development), and for adults (intentionally creating links to fight cultural barriers).

CONVERSATION HIGHLIGHTS

"We talked about our countries and the country of origin of a lot of the Latinos that live in the Hermosa area and how we come out as one community even though we come from everywhere. How it is loud, colorful, festive, the smells of the food, the music, and the coming together to celebrate ... that we can be outside in a place that is safe and everyone feels welcome. That's the type of Hermosa that I'd like to see."

Maritza Nazario | En Las Tablas Performing Arts, Executive Director

"There is a disconnect in the arts world with what is available, programmed, and what the people are interested in. There is more access for mainstream Western arts ... A barrier to accessing different art forms is because it doesn't have a place to be consumed."

Julie Burros | Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, Senior Planner

"Every community needs different things. Support looks different. Support should be led by the people who are trusted in their community through partnerships, nonprofits, and informal projects."

Wisdom Baty | Honey Pot Performance, Artist-Organizer

NOTES

- Alison Zehr presented the redefining objectives approach, which included condensing similar ideas and grouping together. Explaining the difference between an objective (the “what” as a specific measurable outcome) and a policy (the “how” as an action).
- Wisdom Baty, artist-organizer, talked through needing interventions in the proper spaces, and resources that are culturally competent, addressing concerns of racism in health care and previous distrust of city government.
 - Mentorship/internship/work opportunities
 - Talk with Inger Burnett-Zeigler about her book *Nobody Knows The Trouble I've Seen: The Emotional Lives of Black Women*, the psychological challenges faced by Black women, and the importance of investing in equitable and safe space for mental health support and reallocation of resources.
 - These can be done by systemic shifts (physical locations, transportation, childcare, insurance coverage, culturally competent providers) and psychological (overcoming stigmas, feeling safe enough to access, outcome concerns such as documentation and records)
 - Access
 - Support artist residency programs that are specific to populations that have been left outside of artist frameworks (like [Wild Yams Black Mothers Artist Residency](#)) and create demographic-specific arts equity.
 - Connecting artists and communities with the Department of Streets and Sanitation for beautification and providing trash cans to reduce littering. (Like Affirming A Safer South Side: Community Plant Day, where they planted plants and crystals as an intentional spiritual process)
 - Social capital and healing
 - Encourage healing and partnerships with informal holistic health providers (like [Haji Healing Salon](#)), to emphasize spirituality and ritual in regards to relationship-building.
 - Cultivate connections between Black cultural productions, events, and funding to create regenerative practices, both physically and virtually. There should also be efforts to reclaim and revitalize cultural and economic hubs.
 - Arts education (for primary and secondary schools as well as adults and community)
 - Acknowledgement of Black/African/Aboriginal cultural connections in schools to build cultural competency and joining with groups ([360 Nation](#)) that focus on building relationships and self-determination. The stripping away of cultures is systemic oppression. This is not in regards to religion, but spirituality, ancestry, and how to reconnect to rhythm to help mend the cultural break.
 - Hiring of culturally competent instructors and specifically Black male teachers as not solely for disciplinary purposes.

- Flow to Thrive, Embodied Visions program: Participants gathered to talk about what it means to be well and to collectively imagine with intentional guided movement and meditation, including breathing techniques.
- Building awareness and removing barriers to access
 - Implementing a street team of youth workers to canvas and post information on a local level and utilizing CTA to advertise programs.
 - Critical analysis of state and local government needs assessments: equitable reallocation of city budget, hyperfocus on South and West Side financial and development needs, reclamation of time for overworked community members, potential satellite locations for established arts programs (like Marwen), and the long-term effects of the Black Tax (pothole repairs due to road disinvestment, stress-induced anxiety from police surveillance).
 - “Intentionally broaden the diversity of the We Will research team immediately, as to reflect demographics of the city and rhetoric surrounding access and equity.”
- Breakout 1: Supporting the Workforce and Reimagining Funding (presented by Erin Harkey)
 - Kristen Larsen responds to the language used to describe the sector and how it should be expanded to include all cultural/creative makers.
 - Erin Harkey speaks in favor of keeping the two guiding questions separate but adding more language (“*how to support diverse and varied creative workforce*” with “*equitably allocated sustainable level of investment*”) because the discussion is about capital infrastructure. There should be a distinction between 1) support for individual workers, 2) support for small organizations, and 3) understanding the needs of the creative workforce (what that support looks like). Additionally, a lot of points mentioned could be changed into objectives by altering the word tense to read as affirmative.
- Breakout 2: Access, Benefits and Barriers (presented by Anezka Gocova)
 - Physical access: to define what is proximity, what makes a space accessible and barriers such as cost and transportation.
 - Julie Burros talks about the physical location of arts programs. Some neighborhoods are so large that having one location is not enough, or it is not easily accessible by public transit. Additionally, there are some areas that you feel like you can go to because they have been cleaned.
 - Wisdom Baty agrees and explains that city beautification and city design go hand-in-hand and there is the history of the projects and stacking people. She encourages the group to be open to the idea of “radical welcoming” in how to reimagine relationships with the chamber of commerce and alderman’s office (where bureaucracy makes progress slow, like taking several years to open a grocery store on the South Side.)
 - Maritza Nazario asks how to encourage ideas between these groups.

- Inclusive programming: Start with existing partnerships that are already doing ground-level work, making sure processes are inclusive from the beginning, and continuing to check in with the process itself (regarding the lack of diversity in the We Will Arts and Culture research team).
 - Alison Zehr, asks if “inclusive programming is just the same thing as physical access.”
 - Wisdom Baty disagrees, stating that the “frameworks miss the problem and while it was not quite an ‘epic fail’ ... there was an area of grayness about the connection between DCASE and the community.” After meeting with other artists, it was a shared concern.
 - Alison Zehr suggests checking in on the process itself.
- Access to information, improving communications between artists and the city, and how to shift power away from the government to make sure funding doesn’t come from one source.
 - Julie Burros addresses the disconnect in the arts world between what programming is offered and what the people are interested in. Mainstream Western art has greater access, while different art forms may not have a place to be consumed.
 - Maritza Nazario asks how to best empower community organizations that have been doing this work since the beginning.
 - Wisdom Baty insists that the anti-colonial mindset has to begin immediately in order to bridge the hierarchical disconnect and get equity.
 - Alison Zehr states that the city already relies on partnerships for devising and implementing arts programs.
 - Maritza Nazario explains that people are upset that they are not part of the program, and specifically about the relationship between the city and community organizations. “I don’t know if money will be the answer. We already know how to collaborate. That’s how we survive.”
 - Wisdom Baty: “Every community needs different things. Support looks different, and support should be led by the people who are trusted in their community” through partnerships, nonprofits, and “informal projects.”
- Breakout 3: Arts Education and Promotion (presented by Kim Jay)
 - Arts exposure: Opportunities for the youth to see art as an income-generating career. They need real life examples, such as “A Day in the Life Of,” business partnerships, union apprenticeships, and overall cultural support for creative career paths.
 - Art in schools: Require art as a fundamental part of education and be culturally responsive. The role of the arts facilitator in public spaces could be expanded to be a cultural mentor to introduce art into other practices within the same school or community.

- Art exposure for adults: intentionally creating links to fight cultural barriers. There is already a synergy and it makes sense to link with spaces that things are already happening. Examples: Combining art with dance, culturally appropriate tattooing, or art with fashion and headdresses.

RESOURCES

Art Residency For Black Mothers Moving Forward With Ambitious Plans Despite Pandemic Setbacks

[Block Club Chicago article about the Wild Yams Black Mothers Artist Residency](#)

Nobody Knows The Trouble I've Seen: The Emotional Lives of Black Women

[WGN interview with author Inger Burnett-Zeigler](#)

Haji Healing Salon

[Wellness center based in Bronzeville](#)

360 Nation

[An arts, education and mutual aid organization based in North Lawndale](#)

NEXT STEPS

- For the next meeting, (November 29, 2021) the group will continue further conversation on objectives and policies in breakout rooms to fully work out objectives and policies. Rachel Smith announces that the working group process has officially been extended to 14 weeks.
- Maritza Navario asks if there would be a chance for a conversation with other community organizations to share their experiences on the street level.
 - Alison Zehr asks whether Navario means that community groups and artists gathering feedback would talk amongst each other or if the larger research team also joins.
 - Navario likes both ideas.
- Ferhat Zerín asks when the lifelong learning group will hear about what the arts and culture group has been talking about, due to mass overlap.
 - Rachel Smith answers that logistically it might happen in between Meetings 8 and 9. Once there is a list of objectives, the research leads from each group will connect and assign specific overlapping objectives to their respective groups.