



2022 Cultural Sector Needs Assessment Executive Summary

Introduction

The Cultural Council for Palm Beach is the local arts agency for The Palm Beaches, Florida's Cultural Capital®. The 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization is dedicated to promoting cultural activities, fostering the growth of the sector, encouraging opportunities for professional artists, and enhancing local arts education. In this leadership role, the Council administers a portion of the local Tourist Development Fund ("bed tax") under contract with Palm Beach County to promote the destination's cultural offerings through grants, advertising, and public relations programs.

The Council's headquarters in Downtown Lake Worth Beach, The Robert M. Montgomery, Jr. Building, is a venue highlighting works by Palm Beach County visual and performing artists in its galleries and store, and a premier resource for tourists and residents seeking information about arts and culture in The Palm Beaches through its Visitor Information Center and signature Cultural Concierge program.

Priorities

- Promote cultural tourism
- Provide grants to cultural organizations and professional artists
- Advocate for cultural issues and funding at the local, state, and federal levels
- Offer support services to build capacity for cultural organizations and foster growth of the sector
- Create opportunities for creative professionals (artists, musicians, dancers, actors, writers, etc.)

Mission

Champion. Engage. Grow.

Fulfilling the need for arts and cultural experiences in Palm Beach County.

Equity Statement

We believe that everyone has cultural traditions that are inherently valuable. We seek to honor and value creative expression of all people through the work of the Cultural Council for Palm Beach County. Creating an art-filled community means seeing, celebrating, and serving all. Cultural equity is essential to a sustainable arts and cultural sector and a vibrant and thriving community.

About the Needs Assessment

The Cultural Council for Palm Beach County engaged consultant Surale Phillips of Decision Support Partners, Inc. through a competitive RFP to facilitate and assess a research project to understand the needs of the cultural sector and the specific role that the local arts agency can play to enrich the cultural vitality of Palm Beach County, economically advance artists and creative professionals, and support cultural organization growth and success. Palm Beach County-based marketing organization, The Mosaic Group, was retained to assist in expanding the outreach to new audiences, especially in the Hispanic and Haitian communities for the survey and focus group processes.

The Needs Assessment consisted of two parts: a robust online survey widely distributed to Palm Beach County cultural organization representatives as well as artists and creative professionals, and a series of focus groups held in various locations throughout the county. The focus groups were designed to provide further information and insight on questions raised in the survey including information on issues of equity, diversity, and inclusion in the arts. The project was made possible through a grant from the Cornelia T. Bailey Foundation.

The Survey

The Cultural Council staff and Surale Phillips developed the survey to understand the needs of the cultural sector now and into the next several years. The Cultural Council distributed the survey to internal lists of organizations and artists, through community partner organizations, and through the Mosaic Group's outreach team, to reach as many creative professionals and BIPOC-led organizations as possible around the county.

The survey system included processing logic to qualify and code respondents as Palm Beach County creative professionals, individuals working for or contracted by Palm Beach County arts and cultural organizations, or both. This logic ensured that respondents received appropriate questions based on how they self-identified. Participation in the survey offered entry into a drawing for a \$250 Amazon gift card. Since the universe of potential respondents was unknown, so was the response rate. The research effort exceeded its target goal of 400 surveys with a total of 601 surveys collected. A portion of the collected surveys (81) were deemed unusable due to lack of geographic notation or professional status, leaving a final total of 520 qualified respondents.

The Focus Groups

After reviewing initial survey results, the Cultural Council staff, with support from the consultant, developed a discussion guide for focus groups to further explore ideas and suggestions around top needs expressed in the survey and other questions that the survey did not ask. Focus groups were recruited through a question on the survey and by personal outreach by Cultural Council staff. A total of 49 people attended the focus groups. The consultant facilitated six focus groups at three locations in different parts of the county. Cultural organizations participated in the 2 p.m. sessions, and artists and creative professionals participated in the 5 p.m. sessions each day. Efforts to secure additional focus group times and participants

were unsuccessful in Belle Glade. One local artist was interviewed by phone and those results were added to the focus group information.

Total focus group participants from organizations: 21

Total focus group participants identifying as creative professionals: 28

The focus groups took place on the following days and times:

- May 9, 2-4 p.m. / 5-7 p.m.: PBSC - Eissey Campus Theatre (Palm Beach Gardens)
- May 11, 2-4 p.m. / 5-7 p.m.: FAU – Arts & Humanities Bldg. (Boca Raton)
- May 18, 2-4 p.m. / 5-7 p.m.: Armory Art Center (West Palm Beach)

Needs Assessment Findings

Artists / Creative Professionals – Career Support Needs

Emerging Creative Professionals (1-5 Years of Experience)

- Opportunities to show and/or sell my work
- Access to equipment or workspace
- Marketing or promotional resources
- Networking with event producers, art collectors, or curators
- Networking with other artists and creatives

Mid-Career Professionals (6-10 Years of Experience)

- Opportunities to show and/or sell my work
- Networking with other artists and creatives
- Access to equipment or workspace
- Marketing or promotional resources
- Grants to support the cost of doing business

Mature Creative Professionals (10+ Years of Experience)

- Opportunities to show and/or sell my work
- Grants to support the cost of doing business
- Gallery representation
- Marketing or promotional resources
- Networking with event producers, art collectors, curators

Top Needs - Visual vs. Performing Artists

Visual Artists

- Opportunities to show and/or sell my work
- Gallery representation
- Networking with event producers, art collectors, curators
- Marketing or promotional resources
- Networking with other artists and creatives

Performing Artists

- Grants to support the cost of doing business

- Networking with other artists and creatives
- Access to equipment and workshops
- Marketing or promotional resources
- Fundraising strategies

Artists / Creative Professionals - Top Needs

Generating Income

The 300+ creative professionals responding to the survey and 28 participating in focus groups are in most need of programs and services that provide them with opportunities to earn income through their creative practice. The ability to make a living was the top need expressed in the survey by more than half of the respondents, followed by 40% or more who selected “marketing or promotional support” and “gallery representation” as the areas they most need assistance. It is important to note that while “fundraising strategies” ranked 11th on a list of 23 support areas tested, performing artists' need for fundraising was double that of visual artists.

Funds to Off-set the Cost of Doing Business

More than 40% of creative professionals responding to the survey need “grants to support the cost of doing business.” For the creative professionals selecting this option, the cost of doing business included recording studio or services, studio/rehearsal space, and marketing or branding. Visual artists most need funds to support the cost of supplies/materials/framing, marketing or branding, studio space, and shipping or transporting their work.

Meaningful Networking

Creative professionals of all kinds reported regular opportunities for networking as a significant need. Roughly 40% of creative professionals responding to the survey would like networking support to bring them together with potential buyers or presenters of the work and other artists and creatives. More than half of emerging artists (those with one to five years professional experience) need both forms of networking. Mid-career artists (those with six to 10 years of professional experience) need networking with other artists more than with event producers, art collectors, or curators. However, both cohorts still ranked that among their top 10 needs. More than half of mature professionals (those with more than 10 years professional experience) expressed a need for both types of networking.

The topic of networking was explored in more depth through the focus groups. Artists and people working in cultural organizations strongly urge the Cultural Council to facilitate abundant and strategic networking within the creative community and with people and businesses that can benefit their careers and organizations. Among participants in all focus groups, there was a consensus that the sector suffers from the lack of a cohesive creative community. These artists and workers thrive on the energy of being together, learning from one another, and sharing ideas, experiences, and resources. Being separated during the pandemic has only increased their craving to connect. They see “creating a sense of arts community” as a critical function of a local service organization and something currently lacking.

The priorities for networking are 1) strategic – putting the right people together intentionally with a mutually beneficial purpose; 2) consistency – rebuilding the habit of gathering and anticipation of regular high-impact events; and 3) familiarization – both for newcomers to the county and new staff at organizations to meet one another.

Many shared that their organizations have seen significant employee turnover due to staff reductions during the pandemic. As hiring ramps back up, there are many new professionals in cultural organizations who are also newcomers to Palm Beach County. Organizations expect the Cultural Council to play a lead role in helping these new people learn about Palm Beach County cultural resources and the function of the Cultural Council, but also about our region's social and business culture, particularly for people working in development and fundraising.

Many study participants also encouraged professional development activities and other official meetings to include more social networking time to improve the sector's sense of community.

Envisioning Creative Professional Success and Support Needs

Creative professionals described what success looks like in their own words and the types of assistance they need to realize that success. Most comments reiterated the needs summarized above and focused on the ability to earn enough from their creative practice to earn a living being a full-time artist, continuing to grow their business, or elevating their reputation. Along with many personal stories of ambition, several other topics were mentioned frequently and are summarized here:

- Bringing their art or music to underserved areas
- Opportunities to collaborate on projects with other artists and organizations
- Resource listings such as performance venues, exhibition opportunities, and businesses and people who are in search of artists and performers (e.g., a reverse artist directory)
- Affordable studio, retail space, cost-sharing opportunities
- Access to administrative resources, insurance, financing
- Access to professional art supplies and services
- Residency opportunities
- More promotion by and through affiliation with the Cultural Council

Cultural Organizations - Top Needs

Cultural organizations were asked open-comment questions about the most critical needs now and what they expect their most significant needs will be within the next three to five years. Their responses were summarized into the following six categories.

Funding

- Operating support (the top need of organizations across all budget levels)
- Identifying new funding sources, minimizing competition for fundraising
- Lobbying for state and federal funding
- Offering competitive salaries for staff
- Diversifying funding sources for long-term growth and stability

Board Recruitment and Management

- Developing and diversifying boards
- Training boards on best practices and procedures
- Addressing legacy and term-limit issues

Staffing Issues

- Training leaders on how to manage boards
- Recruiting and maintaining competent staff
- Retaining staff as housing costs rise
- Rebuilding staff after pandemic layoffs

Audience Development

- Aging audience and audience attrition
- Remaining relevant in a rapidly changing social and cultural landscape
- Reviving school field trip audiences
- Collaborating with others to increase audiences
- Diversifying audiences

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

- Expanding diverse programming and staff
- Increasing competency in working with diverse audiences
- Resources for evaluation of EDI efforts
- Training for board and staff on EDI
- Opportunities for advancement for emerging and mid-career professionals of color

Venues and Facilities

- Increasing, improving, and enhancing spaces
- Finding permanent venues
- Adapting for immersive experiences

Survey Respondent Characteristics

- Most survey respondents (54%) were artists, performers, or other types of creative professionals. The next largest respondent group was self-employed creatives working in Palm Beach County (32%), followed by employees of Palm Beach County nonprofit cultural organization (26%). *Some respondents self-identified in two categories (artist or creative professional employed at a cultural institution).*
- Board members, contractors, volunteers, for-profit creative businesses, and those working in municipalities represented the remaining respondent groups, none of which was more than 19% of the sample.
- The majority of creative professionals responding to the survey (71%) were mature professionals with more than 10 years of experience. Mid-career professionals (6-9 years) make up 11% of the sample, and emerging professionals (less than six years) make up 16%.
- Survey respondents were overwhelming visual artists/sculptors (55%), with the next largest group being crafts artists at 17%. Creative professionals from 16 different disciplines are represented in the sample.
- Organizational respondents vary across 20 different types of organizations, with the largest group being represented by performing arts producing/presenting organizations (19%) and arts centers (18%). Fewer than 10% were from other organization types, with museums and performing arts presenting/facilities represented the most in this tier and libraries, competitions, municipalities, and fairs/festivals the least.
- The primary role of the individual responding on behalf of an organization was board/governance (25%). Between 8% and 12% of respondents were in administrative, education, executive, or artistic roles, and fewer than 5% were in various other functions.
- Nearly a third of organizations responding to the survey did not report an annual operating budget. Survey respondents fall into all budget groups ranging from less than \$25,000 to \$5,000,000 or more.
- Survey respondents were predominantly ages 55 to 74 (44%), with the next largest age segment (29%) ages 35 to 54.
- 83% of survey respondents were White. The remaining 17% were a combination of Black or African American, Hispanic, Latino/a/x, Caribbean, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian or Asian American, Middle Eastern or Northern African, and Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander.
- 72% of respondents identified as women, 26% as men, and 2% as non-binary.
- 32% of respondents self-identified with specific communities. Of those who responded, 42% self-identified as English language learners, 41% as LGBTQ+, 27% as within a disability community, 24% within a specific ethnic community, and 19% as military or veteran communities.
- Individual and organizational respondents represented more than 50 Palm Beach County ZIP codes.

How Is the Council Responding?

An Early Action Plan

The Cultural Sector Needs Assessment will be instrumental in the development of the Cultural Council's new strategic plan (set to be unveiled in early 2024). In addition, the assessment has been impactful in planning the FY23 season. During a series of retreat-style meetings throughout the summer, the staff took immediate action in planning a series of programs and services that are in direct response to the information gathered in the needs assessment. Below are a few select programs and initiatives that will be included in the Cultural Council's FY23 programming.

For Artists and Creative Professionals

New program: Open Studios event

The Cultural Council will work with professional artists and visual art organizations such as Zero Empty Spaces to present a first-ever event designed to bring artists and audiences together in a day-long open studios event throughout Palm Beach County on May 20, 2023.

New event series: Collector events

The Cultural Council will host intimate events prior to the main gallery exhibition openings for serious art collectors, curators of the exhibits, and participating professional artists. The goal of the program is to connect artists and patrons directly and spur additional sales of artworks.

New networking events

The Cultural Council will bring artists in all disciplines together more frequently in FY23. Sessions will include an expansion of our artist-led crit group series (providing peer critique sessions for visual artists in various locations throughout Palm Beach County) and an expansion of our year-end celebration for the cultural sector.

More professional development opportunities

Artists and creative professionals have been attending Institute for Cultural Advancement (ICA) sessions since the inception of the program and, most recently, in larger numbers than cultural organization representatives. In addition to sessions covering a wide range of specific topics (generated by staff and results of annual ICA surveys), the Cultural Council will also present skill-building ICA sessions, called Fundamentals, that aim to increase the capacity and knowledge base of artists. The Cultural Council also plans to create an Artist Ambassador program to align with the launch of our new website. Subject matter experts in many artistic disciplines (dance, music, visual arts, etc.) will be selected to contribute to a new resource page on the Cultural Council's website that will be a lasting repository of links, information, workshop videos, and other helpful information for artists in all genres.

For Cultural Organizations

Staff and Board Management

The effects of the COVID pandemic were clearly evidenced in the responses by cultural organization personnel especially as it related to finding and retaining qualified staff and board members. With an acknowledgement that there is a great deal more to do and that work in this area will likely span several years, Cultural Council staff identified some 'quick wins' that could aid cultural organizations in this area. As the Council is working on the development of a new website (to be unveiled in late 2023), a searchable job bank is being planned. Cultural organizations should be able to upload position listings and the Council will market this free service to both cultural organizations and job seekers.

Understanding that communicating to all tiers of administrators at cultural organizations will require new strategies and tactics to reach deeper into the cultural organizations. The Council, in FY23, will create a master database (to be updated annually) of key organization personnel and contact information. Previously, this had been housed in several different databases and communication systems. Council staff will work to consolidate these lists to assist our communication efforts.

A key theme of the Needs Assessment was the need for additional networking opportunities and harnessing the Cultural Council's ability to convene groups easily and efficiently countywide. The organization will create a new Coffee & Culture series (offered twice a year) for new employees at cultural organizations to learn about the Cultural Council, the Tourist Development Council, and the cultural sector. The first one is scheduled for October 20, 2022.

Audience Development

The Cultural Council will continue its programs and services around audience development including new ICA sessions on this topic, as well as devoting more dollars to institutional marketing to build awareness about its programs to the field. As with artists, networking opportunities for cultural organization representatives was also identified as a key need. The new Coffee & Culture sessions will provide opportunities for new employees to network, networking time will be built in before and after ICA sessions throughout the year, and a reimaged end of year celebration is being planned. The Cultural Council is looking at other opportunities to build a sense of community in the cultural sector, provide opportunities for interaction and collaboration, and highlight our programs and services to assist in the growth of the cultural sector.

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

Assistance in undertaking programs and building equity, diversity, and inclusion into the cultural sector was identified at all budget levels of cultural organizations as a key need. Central to the Cultural Council's work in this area is the second Arts & Tourism Summit on Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion that is scheduled for late August 2023. In addition, we will continue to plan and schedule ICA sessions around issues of EDI and share best practices.