

Houston Area Arts Industry COVID-19 Needs Assessment

Organizations

Visual Arts

- Envision a time when they can reopen.
- Currently and for the foreseeable future, rely on digital platforms for patron engagement.

Performing Arts

- Have trouble seeing a path forward.
- Need guidelines for reopening.
- See 25% capacity is not sufficient income.
- Find digital programs do not provide the shared experience so valued in their work.

Both Types

- Need new, sustainable business models.
- Need advocacy and financial support.
- Lack clarity about moving forward.
- Feel anxious about the loss of City funding.
- Fear losing staff permanently, particularly among small and mid-sized organizations.

Source: Individual & Group Interviews May/June 2020

Most Requested Services



Source: Individual & Group Interviews May/June 2020

Experience with SBA Loans

| Applied for PPP, 52.17% | | Did Not Apply, 35.19% | |
|--------------------------|---------------|---|---|
| Approved, 83.33% | | Lack of Knowledge or Capacity, 22.22% | |
| | | Financial Choice, 14.81% | Don't need the money as bad as others, 11.11% |
| Still Waiting, 12.50% | Denied, 4.17% | Disqualified due to staff or budget, 11.11% | Other, 11.11% |
| Applied for EIDL, 20.37% | | | |
| Approved, 72.73% | | | Still Waiting, 27.27% |

Source: Small Business Loan Survey for the Arts May 2020

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Individual Artists

Public Assistance

- The majority have applied for assistance and are waiting for response.
- Less than 10% do not intend to apply for assistance.
- Only 1% who applied for SNAP were denied.

Unemployment

- More than 30% report application trouble, such as complex phone trees or an overburdened system.
- 10% were denied unemployment for "low wages," a first step to receive disaster benefits.
- Only 5% had been approved for unemployment.

Source: Emergency Relief Fund Applications April/May

About Mental Health

While mental health is not highly ranked among needs, the pandemic's effect on mental health is staggering. A Kinder Institute [poll](#) from April 2020 found that "23% of respondents say they are exhibiting moderate to severe anxiety." This is also true among arts professionals, who say they feel isolated, scared, and without direction. Many artists have confirmed that these feelings result in less art making, which leads to even lower revenue. In this way, the pandemic creates an expanding problem of lost income, increased mental crises, and even greater professional losses.

Source: Kinder Institute COVID-19 Registry Report April 2020

Most Requested Assistance



Source: Houston Arts Town Halls May/June 2020 and Mid America Arts Alliance COVID-19 Continuing Impact Survey July 2020

Greater Houston Area Artist Relief Fund as of 6/19/20

486

People Have Requested Local Emergency Funds

416

People Have Received Emergency Funds

\$249,575

Grand Total Awarded

Applications are still open & being awarded.

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Analysis

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| COVID-19's Impact Will Sustain | This realization leads to anxiety about how to innovate and survive in a new operating environment. |
| Needs To Resume Work Are Still Unmet | Individual creators and performers, performing arts organizations, and festival- based events in particular still lack the guidelines to resume programs. |
| Technology Has Become A Double-edged Sword | Most underserved or undercapitalized organizations struggle to monetize and optimize digital programs. |
| Unprecedented Disaster of this Magnitude | Artist contracts and cultural programs were among the first canceled and will be one of the last resumed. There is still a great need for support of individual artists. |
| Nonprofits Provide Critical Support To Artists | Putting nonprofits back to work means protecting the arts community's individual members. |
| Funding Exists Outside of the Traditional Arts Funding Models | Funding outside of the arts community requires programming which has a direct and measurable tie to community impact and recovery. |
| Struggles With Isolation | Managers and artists want mental health or leadership support but are hesitant to accept it from funders as the nonprofit may appear unstable. |

Community Action

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| Communications | The collective response to COVID-19 should choose a single, central hub of information. |
| | Relief Fund applicant marketing should target counties outside of Harris. |
| | Funders, service organizations should be transparent about what they can provide and tailor support. |
| | Organizations should create a shared vision of needs then cooperate to meet them. |
| | Advocacy should highlight the contributions of artists and organizations as essential to society. |
| Infrastructure | Guidelines for safely reopening and operating should be made widely available. |
| | Regular support should be created to help all individuals heal isolation. |
| | Platforms and coaching should be available to help the community adjust to online programs. |
| | Coaching should be provided to help creators invest in new business models. |
| Direct Assistance | Financial help is still the greatest need; the community should seek nontraditional sources and solutions. |
| | The arts community should cooperate to promote each other's programs. |
| | Mental health assistance should be provided but must be operated by a non-funding agency. |
| | Service organizations should continue to help artists access public and social assistance. |
| | Opportunities to put the arts back to work should be created, with a focus on community impact. |

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The preceding information summarizes two months of interviews, surveys, and other data. This analysis is intended for all members of the arts community because the future of the arts community will require all of us to rally, support, fund, attend, and re-build during / after the pandemic. Since both time and money are scarce resources, the following needs assessment should help all members of the community to target the clearest community needs.

Data used in this needs assessment contains was compiled anonymously from two arts community Town Halls, more than 400 emergency Relief Fund applications for artists and arts workers, more than 25 one-on-one interviews, several online surveys, and online research reports.

The following organizations helped to collect data for this report.

Brazosport Center for Arts and Sciences

City of Houston Mayor's Office of Cultural Affairs

Community Artists Collective

Dance Source

Diverseworks

East End Cultural District

Fifth Ward Cultural District

Fresh Arts/Arts District

Galveston Historical Foundation

Glasstire

Houston Arts Alliance

Houston First Corporation

Mid America Arts Alliance's Engage Houston

Midtown Cultural District

MECA

Houston Museum District

Theatre District Houston

University of Houston