

**ArtsPolicyNow**  
**Platform for a National Cultural Policy**  
**Creativity > Vision > Change**

**INTRODUCTION**

This is a time for big and bold ideas. In a period of staggering economic instability, we, as a nation, must rebuild our infrastructure, reengage our workforce, stabilize our city and state governments, rehabilitate our international standing, fight extremism and intolerance, regain our preeminence in scientific innovation, come to grips with an existential environmental crisis, and find a way to provide all of our citizens with access to affordable healthcare, affordable housing and superior educations.

President Obama has set the lofty goal of achieving this through community organizing, democratic participation, and the empowerment of the individual. Maximizing participation by all of our nation's citizens is required to re-envision and rebuild the United States. Historically, artists help lead change. Creative thinking, once nurtured, can be practiced by every individual. At its very core, art is about noticing and making what is noticed visible. Artists have professional skill and experience in pushing the boundaries of existing technology, re-imagining forms and structures, and utilizing materials, words and scientific principles in new ways. That is why we propose the following platform, which calls for the formulation of a cogent federal cultural policy that can harness the great power of the arts to achieve our national objectives in these extraordinary times.

**PLANK 1**

**The existing resources, capabilities, and expertise of the arts and cultural sector should be recognized and developed as a prime resource for national recovery and regeneration. Maximizing this resource to rebuild and sustain our cities and advance our nation, with a policy aimed at integrating arts, culture and their professionals into a wide range of initiatives, should be the charge of a dedicated department within the newly established Office of Urban Policy.** The United States lags behind much of the rest of the world in recognizing and harnessing the potential of the arts. Art adds value to business, science, technologies and education, and strengthens America's social fabric. The integration of art into civic life will allow and inspire people to come together in collaborative processes, fostering community through the transformative experience of creation. Artistic expression is a universal language of innovation and a harbinger of change. The arts and cultural sectors offer well-honed expertise in diverse methods of communication, re-training of perception, and focusing of attention. Individual empowerment, civic pride and engagement, social cohesion, sense of place and the inward investment that follows, are all byproducts of a thriving cultural sector. The economic value-add of artistic activity can be calculated by community effects such as local growth and stability; tourism; leadership training and development; levels of educational attainment; innovation and growth in the development and export of creative and intellectual products, including synergistic future manufacturing techniques and technologies, additional products, and resulting employment opportunities in other sectors, such as sales and production. A Cultural Liaison Department should be

established within the Office of Urban Policy and charged with identifying and supporting these activities in order to maximize their benefits and integrate them into a wide range of urban and federal initiatives.

## **PLANK 2**

**Artistic creation is the primary activity of the \$166 billion U.S. arts and culture sector, and we as a nation should support it with an integrated strategy. The federal government should establish a Secretary of Culture and a Cultural Policy Agency that can understand current research and trends and set strategies and guidelines for the optimal allocation of cultural development funds.** As we work to reestablish our national identity and to restore our international economic, political, and social relevance and respectability, we must also recognize how far behind the rest of the developed world we are in acknowledging that art is integral to every aspect of human endeavor. The NEA, the NEH, and the many arts and humanities councils that they have fostered have proved to be effective mechanisms for providing grants to support artistic creation. Thought should also, however, be given to how federal funds could more effectively provide support to the arts sector infrastructure for technical assistance, capacity building, and unique programs that address the “freelance” nature of much arts employment. Policy areas that could fall within the purview of this department might include: cultural policy research; infrastructure support such as international exchanges and information sharing; informal and community arts; arts, technology and connectivity; and heritage tourism, including the formulation of regional creative industries strategies. This department should also consider intellectual property rights, import and export laws, and other policy issues that impact the non-profit sector as well as the commercial entertainment industries.

## **Plank 3**

**An effective arts policy must understand that the non-profit arts and culture sector is an integral component of the highly lucrative creative industries sector, and therefore eligible to participate in small business and economic development stimulus programs and strategies.** As a constantly renewing entrepreneurial enterprise, the arts and culture sector stimulates job creation, currently contributing, through both direct and indirect means, \$166 billion and 5.7 million jobs annually to the nation’s economy. Individual artists should be regarded as “sole proprietors” and small arts organizations as job creators and important cogs in the nation’s economic engine. What art and culture has contributed to the growth of digital technology over the last 15 years is only one example. The place of artists is irrefutable in visioning appealing demonstrations, products and concepts to stimulate business. Non-profit cultural organizations and individual artists serve as the research and development arm of Hollywood and other hugely profitable entertainment industries. It is also in the non-profit arts sector where, because risks can be taken, many innovations first occur. The individual artists, artist-led groups, and their service and production organizations are entrepreneurial incubation centers, a discrete business sector worthy of capital, infrastructure and small business fund investment. By leveraging such investments with contributions from their philanthropic portfolios, cultural organizations are uniquely

positioned to stimulate new public-private partnership platforms for our nation's economic growth.

## **CONCLUSION**

The non-profit cultural sector is in a very precarious position. Having suffered financial cutbacks in boom times, this sector is particularly vulnerable now. For all of the reasons already stated, the collapse of this sector would have a devastating effect on our economy, on our national psyche, and the country's ability to overcome these difficult times and triumph as a people.

We are not looking for a handout. Policies that encourage economic development and support the health of the national business environment exist. When these policies include the cultural sector, our nation will be stronger and better integrated into the global community. Nations are communities, and communities are ecosystems, healthiest and most productive when diversity and interdependence flourish. Artists are trained professionals, educated citizens, experts in their various disciplines. We are ready to get to work. The only thing missing are the mechanisms through which our expertise can be channeled to best benefit the nation of which we are proudly a part.

## **CASE EXAMPLES**

In order to discover and maximize the benefits derived, arts policy should be formulated for every issue area where arts and culture can play a key role. ArtsPolicyNow offers the following examples in order to stimulate what we hope will be an ongoing discussion with the Obama Administration.

- Economic Development and Community Sustainability
- Human Development and Reclamation
- Urban Revitalization and Visionary Urban Planning
- Workforce Retraining
- Civic Pride and Participation
- International Relations
- Education
- Scientific and Technological Breakthroughs, Advances & Development
- Fostering Multi-cultural Peaceful Coexistence
- Reversing Environmental Degradation and Promoting Environmental Sustainability
- Health Service and Delivery
- Community Organizing