

From Regranting to Redistribution

How the Cultural Solidarity Fund Moved Money & Why We Need Community- Centered Coalitions

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The Cultural Solidarity Fund (CSF) is an initiative administered by IndieSpace (formerly Indie Theater Fund) with leadership by LEIMAY and a coalition of arts administrators and institutions that provides relief microgrants of \$500 to artists and cultural workers including individual artists, administrators, production staff, custodians, art educators, ushers, guards, and more and prioritizes Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC), immigrant, disabled, d/Deaf, and trans and gender-nonconforming individuals who have been most severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

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More Information: culturalsolidarityfund.org

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How did the Cultural Solidarity Fund execute over **\$1,000,0000** in relief grants to **2,030 individual artists and cultural workers** across New York City?

By rooting in **values**, leaning on **community**, and leading with **instincts**.

As the COVID-19 pandemic began and the need for economic support grew, many support efforts emerged to meet the needs of organizations and individuals left floundering by the sudden shutdown. From state-developed programs, like the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, to sector-specific initiatives, like the Shuttered Venues Operators Grant (SVOG), the world rose to meet a political opening¹ and committed to providing relief.

When individual artists' and cultural workers' needs weren't met by these grants, other members of the creative ecosystem stepped in. In New York City, the Cultural Solidarity Fund (CSF) came forward to support individual artists and cultural workers with \$500 unrestricted grants, redistributing over \$1 million to 2,030 people over the course of three years.

The act of moving this amount of money alone is a feat to celebrate. In addition, the organizers of the Cultural Solidarity Fund accomplished this during a time of peak crisis and as a coalition of individuals and organizations, many of whom had no previous experience moving money nor working with each other.

The Cultural Solidarity Fund relied on organizers' collective experiences as shepherds of solidarity in the arts and cultural ecosystem. Each organizer of the Cultural Solidarity Fund brought an awareness of the role they played in shaping an equitable cultural field, and used power analysis tools and community organizing experience to build infrastructure for a Money Moving Coalition. Whether as an individual member of a dance company or as the former lead of a state arts organization, every organizer of the Cultural Solidarity Fund knew what it was like to be in need of financial support, and committed to sustaining a movement for an equitable arts ecosystem. CSF's organizers stood in equal strength, and built a responsive, equitable, and reproducible process for redistributing money.

Through this horizontal and formal group of organizations, individuals, and institutions, CSF organizers collaboratively raised and redistributed money to the more marginalized members of their communities: prioritizing Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC), immigrant, disabled, d/Deaf, and trans and gender-nonconforming artists, cultural workers, administrators, production staff, custodians, art educators, ushers, guards, and more who were most severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The results?

- As of the publication of this report, 2,030 individual artists and cultural workers who otherwise did not have access to relief money received grants of \$500 through the Cultural Solidarity Fund.
- Over 20 administrators and cultural workers who organized the Cultural Solidarity Fund translated their lived experiences into a model, the Money Moving Coalition, that can challenge economic inequity across times of crisis.

This report tells the story of why the Cultural Solidarity Fund came into existence, and how many people came together to raise and redistribute over \$1 million in emergency relief grants at \$500 each to over 2,000 artists and cultural workers in New York City. We hear from:

- CSF Organizers: Individuals who joined the Coalition and performed the day-to-day operations of the fund
- CSF Supporters: Individuals who supported and uplifted the Coalition without becoming organizing members
- CSF Grant Recipients: Individuals who received grants
- CSF Donors: Individuals and organizations who donated to the Coalition
- CSF Funders: Foundations who funded the Coalition

¹ From *The glorious pull of political openings* by Lugay, M., 2023, Medium.

It includes analyses of the systemic factors specific to the cultural economy that work against or support Money Moving Coalitions through and beyond crises, including:

- How the COVID-19 pandemic presented a “political opening” that mobilized Cultural Solidarity Fund organizers to practice deeper solidarity with each other and the larger ecosystem;
- What enables people to participate in Coalitions and how we can sustain solidarity;
- How and why the organizers relied on relational organizing to fundraise for the Cultural Solidarity Fund;
- Why transparent, regular, and responsible reflection is crucial to both fostering and sustaining solidarity that moves beyond relief and towards recovery; and
- Why Coalitions bring us closer to materializing an equitable cultural economy.

As researchers, we expand these questions to outline recommendations for a cross-systems investment of resources into the Solidarity Economy, prioritizing the role of Money Moving Coalitions in supporting artists and cultural workers left out by the dominant extractive economy.

This report traces these results in three sections:

1. A toolkit for moving money, including a series of worksheets and prompts to help organize Money Moving Coalitions
2. A list of recommendations to sustain Money Moving Coalitions
3. A history or case study contextualizing why the Cultural Solidarity Fund moved money the ways it did

Why haven't the remaining 204 CSF grant applicants been funded?

The goal of this report is to resource more artists and cultural workers. It also is a tool for CSF organizers to use to reflect on the past four years' work and imagine the next steps. Some of the money allocated for this grant has already been redistributed to Cultural Solidarity Fund applicants. Other money from this grant was redistributed to the organizers, who were otherwise not paid for their work developing this fund. To learn more about how we spent this grant money, write to culturalsolidarityfund@gmail.com.

As of the publication of this report, the Cultural Solidarity Fund is still fundraising to ensure they can process grants for the remaining 204 applicants, with 42% self-reporting an urgency level of four out of five, and all facing childcare, financial, food, housing, and/or medical insecurity. This report was written to raise the final \$112,000, which includes grant and administration costs. You can contribute to meeting this goal at culturalsolidarityfund.org.

Once the Cultural Solidarity Fund reaches its goal of funding the remaining 204 applicants, it will sunset. But, the work of redistribution continues. The larger goal of this report is to make the work of CSF replicable and to compel you, Reader, in all your roles to shift our ecosystem from relief to recovery.

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How to Organize a Money Moving Coalition

Grounding Money Moving Coalitions in the Solidarity Economy

As Caroline Woolard and Nati Linares say in their 2021 report, "Solidarity Not Charity", "To survive and thrive, creative people are co-creating more humane and racially just economic models in their local communities."¹ The Cultural Solidarity Fund (CSF) is one model.

Like many other mid-pandemic relief efforts, the Cultural Solidarity Fund was planted intuitively against systems we know are working against us and with practices we know for their strength in resistance. The Cultural Solidarity Fund is a Money Moving Coalition that builds on centuries of organizing against a dominant economic system that further marginalizes the already oppressed — resistance for the abolition of slavery, for civil rights, for decolonization, for no more wars and for peace, for gender equity, for the right to marriage and the right to not come out, for #LandBack, for Black lives, for Another World. The Cultural Solidarity Fund's commitment to moving money using the structure of a coalition is not new, but can be identified as part of the Solidarity Economy movement and Community Centric Fundraising. In each of these movements, we see culture bearers at the core resisting pain, exploitation, and extraction while building spaces for education, agitation, and organization.²

Resistance has always been sustained by cultural work, but cultural workers have not always been the focus of resistance movements. Without cultural struggles and ancestries, we would not have the voices nor platforms we have today.³ The Cultural Solidarity Fund, in the tradition of many past movements of the Solidarity Economy, puts these members of our community front and center.

Principles of the Solidarity Economy movement⁴

- Collective Care, Relationships, & Accountability
- Shared Resources & Shared Vision
- Liberation Culture
- Democracy & Process
- Education & Leadership Development

Guideposts for Community Centric Fundraising⁵

- Fundraising must be grounded in race, equity, and social justice.
- Individual organizational missions are not as important as the collective community.
- Nonprofits are generous with and mutually supportive of one another.
- All who engage in strengthening the community are equally valued, whether volunteer, staff, donor, or board member.
- Time is valued equally as money.
- We treat donors as partners, and this means that we are transparent, and occasionally have difficult conversations.
- We foster a sense of belonging, not othering.

1 From *Solidarity Not Charity: A Rapid Report* (p. 35) by Linares, N. & Woolard, C., 2021, Grantmakers in the Arts.

2 From *Solidarity Not Charity: A Rapid Report* (p. 7) by Linares, N. & Woolard, C., 2021, Grantmakers in the Arts.

3 Check out Art.coop's directory to see examples of intersectional movements calling for the survival and thrival of culture bearers, and against the deprioritization of creativity. They demonstrate solidarity work that not only resists the current system, but also changes systems to be built with, by, and for creatives. Learn more at art.coop.

4 From *Solidarity Economy Principles* by Solidarity Economy Principles Project, 2023.

5 From *Narrative Change for Racial Equity in Nonprofit Funding: An Exploratory Report on Community-Centric Fundraising in the Arts and Culture Sector* (p. 36) by E. Pettersen, 2023, Arts Business Collaborative.

- We promote the understanding that everyone (donors, staff, funders, board members, volunteers) personally benefits from engaging in the work of social justice—it's not just charity and compassion.
- We seek the work of social justice as holistic and transformative, not transactional.
- We recognize that healing and liberation requires a commitment to economic justice.

The Cultural Solidarity Fund re-synthesizes these values on their website:

- Center trust
- Move out of the mindset of scarcity and competition
- Focus on solidarity as action, not as a symbol
- Expand the circle of care beyond our immediate communities
- Center the artist (the person) as the antidote to trickledown funding
- Require cooperation, collaboration, coalition, mutual accountability, personal reflection, and:
 - Lighten the burden of the artists and cultural workers (people) requesting funds
 - Prioritize those who have been historically excluded from funding
 - Commit to transparency
 - Believe that ALL artists and cultural workers in need deserve our support; our decision making process is not based on meritocracy
 - Respond to the needs that arise throughout the process

Practices of a Money Moving Coalition

Coalitions like the Cultural Solidarity Fund (CSF) spring up organically from communities who recognize a need for redistribution instead of regranteeing. They are often urgency driven and more and more these movements are recognizing they are part of a larger Solidarity Economy Movement engaging Community Centric Fundraising. The practices below are drawn from interviews with and tools created by Cultural Solidarity Fund co-organizers and are designed to provide early organizers with shortcuts to mobilization.

NOTE: CSF examples were created in rapid response and should be seen as stepping stones, not the only way.

1. Understand your role and relationship to your ecosystem to identify the goal you want to work towards.

The work of Money Moving begins with knowing your role and relationship to your ecosystem, and identifying the goal you are working towards. For example, the Cultural Solidarity Fund grounded their goal in a place (New York City) and for a group of people (Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC), immigrant, disabled, d/Deaf, queer, trans and gender-nonconforming, and working class artists and cultural workers in New York City).

The Role & Relationship tool linked below has generative questions inspired by CSF organizers' strategies. It will help you make informed decisions about where Money needs to be Moved, and by, with, and for whom. Use your answers to formulate your goal. For example, CSF's goal was to raise funds for arts

and culture workers facing housing, food, health and family care insecurity.

 [Tool: Roles and Relationships Worksheet](#)

 [Tool: Defining Solidarity & Coalition Zine](#)

 [Example: CSF Press Release](#)

2. Find others who share your goal, and invite them to join you in coalition.

Based on your answers to the above questions, look to your local ecosystem. Who in your community and beyond might share your goal? You might look to organizations' missions, individuals' arts practices, and foundations' giving histories to find people to organize with.

Organizers and organizations involved in CSF shared a goal but did not share the exact same lists of values. This wasn't a breaking point! In fact, it's one of the things that allowed CSF to grow and sustain, meeting more needs in the ecosystem. Coalitions don't need to be fully aligned on values as long as they are fully aligned on goals. Part of the work of the coalition is bringing people into values alignment through work on a shared goal.

“Coalition work is not work done in your home. Coalition work has to be done in the streets. And it is some of the most dangerous work you can do.”

— Bernice Johnson Reagon⁶

3. Map your coalition's access to resources.

Money Moving Coalitions have to fundraise to gather resources to redistribute. They don't always start with a pool of money, but they are grounded in a deep understanding of who they want to move money towards because, by principle, they are led by the most marginalized and the least resourced.

⁶ From *Coalition politics: Turning the century* by B.J. Reagon, 1998.

Each collaborator in your coalition will have different access to the local ecosystem. For example, in the Cultural Solidarity Fund, IndieSpace, formerly Indie Theater Fund, had some connections with foundations and theater makers, while LEIMAY had connections with independent dancers.

Explicit power analyses will lead you to establish a grounding point of where you stand, your limitations, and where you want to end up. With the structure and space to focus, you can continually reiterate and shift your work from this grounding point. If power doesn't transform at the paces of trust and need, on community terms, or sustainably, this is where you return to retrace your steps and try again.

Use this mapping activity to help you identify who you are connected to in the ecosystem, and who has access to what resources. Consider who has access to financial, people, time, and space resources:

 [Tool: Access Mapping](#)

4. Iterate on infrastructure to raise and redistribute money.

Once you have a coalition and goal, you can begin the work of Moving Money. The tools below offer CSF's way to build this infrastructure for Moving Money, but it may not be the one your Coalition ultimately needs and uses. Iterate on this infrastructure by using the previous mapping activity and developing tasks, roles, and responsibilities for each co-organizer in the Money Moving Coalition.

Coalition goal alignment					
Compliance	Meeting	Sustaining	Fundraising	Allocating	Documenting

Compliance

Pick a fiscal sponsor from within the Coalition who will hold the raised money before it is redistributed. The fiscal sponsor will need to be prepared to:

- Oversee accounts
 - Manage receiving money, including banking and other organizational information necessary to receive funds from donors
 - Manage payments, including payouts of grants to applicants, to staff, and for infrastructural investments like the fiscal sponsor and payments for subscriptions
 - Provide overview of cash flow
- Report back on money
 - Shareback any necessary paperwork for donors, including acknowledgement letters of contributions and grant reports
 - Collect any necessary paperwork and information from recipients, including addresses⁷
 - Have tax reporting infrastructure ready and file taxes

 [Example: CSF and IndieSpace MOU agreement](#)

Meeting

Develop a pace for meeting and collaboration.

- Set a regular meeting time that meets all participants' needs for flexibility and stability. Change the meeting time when needed.
- Assign tasks and roles for regular meetings, including note-taking, scheduling, and sending follow-ups.
- Use democratic decision making processes.

 [Tool: Meeting Notetaker](#)

Sustaining

Create administrative structures that sustain individual organizers' lives and the Coalition's work.

⁷ In CSF's case, no documentation was required to be collected from applicants.

- When possible, raise money to compensate administrative labor on par with leadership, and in addition to redistributing money.
- Ask organizations to compensate their staff's time spent working on Coalition efforts as an in-kind donation. Many organizations also reserve a set number of work hours every year for volunteer time.
- Share labor by inviting organizers to be in relationship with the Coalition in a variety of ways in the forms of labor, money, relationships, resources, advice, and more.
- Include time for individual and collective reflection.

Fundraising

Raise the money.

- Collectively decide how to manage new relationships and sustain existing relationships with donors.
 - Use existing relationships with other funders and orgs to spread the word to raise money
 - Use existing relationships with other shared spaces to spread the word to raise money
- Identify coalition members interested in collaboratively writing grants to raise money, including from partner organizations.
- Create and use social media to spread the word to raise money.
 - Create a social media toolkit so member organizations and others can do the same

 [Example: CSF thank you letter to a foundation](#)

 [Example: CSF's Social Media Kit](#)

 [Example: CSF's Classy platform](#)

Allocating

Move the money.

- Choose a grant amount that meets recipient and organizer needs. For example, CSF chose \$500 grants to meet the needs of

undocumented artists and cultural workers, and lessen the administrative burden for the financial sponsor.

- Prioritize relationship building on the terms of the community to know how communities will receive and respond to the application.
- Develop a trust-based application to meet your communities' needs
 - Prioritize accessibility needs of your applicants' community, including for those who are vision, hearing, and mobility disabled.
 - Translate the application into languages spoken in your community. Compensate translators from your community for these translations. Avoid using Google Translate.
 - Remove any elements that could be onerous, such as an application fee.
- Develop an application review process that prioritizes the communities the Coalition wants to redistribute to.
- Be transparent with your lottery process by recording it and live streaming it on your social media.

 [Example: CSF's Application](#)

 [Example: One of CSF's lotteries for grantees showing the use of RandomPicker](#)

 [Example: CSF's Applicant Vetting Process](#)

Documenting

Contribute to a movement against extraction by showing how you model an alternate way of survival and thrival.

- Make regular time to document your Coalition's work. Consider including meeting notes, press coverage, funder and grantee testimonials, survey responses, and organizer introspection. Store this information somewhere that is accessible to all Coalition members.
- Use surveys to gather testimonials from grantees, donors, and organizers.

- Regularly share updates with your community. Include how much money has been moved, from and for whom, and testimonials.
- Create social media toolkits to encourage others to share these updates widely, and reflect on their own experiences.

 [Example: Testimonial from a CSF Organizer](#)

5. See The Money in the World

Money supports individual artists and cultural workers and signifies an investment in members of our community who otherwise see little infrastructural care. The impact of centuries of undervaluing artists and workers is still present: CSF grant recipients spoke repeatedly about their worries that receiving the money for themselves meant denying other artists and cultural workers this support.

Seeing money spread equitably through our communities causes individuals to rethink their scarcity mindset, and to understand the power of helping to move that money. The power of donations is always best spoken to by grant recipients. The artists and cultural workers who received the CSF grants share:

“[The \$500] was a relief first because it finally came through, and second, because it covered an unexpected expense. And that’s the stuff that we panic about as artists.”

—Anonymous, CSF Grant Recipient

How can I participate without being a member of a Money Moving Coalition?

At any point, you may recognize that this work isn’t feasible for you at this moment — that’s okay. One value of solidarity-based Coalitions is inviting and supporting organizers to step back when needed. The work of Money Moving is not

limited to a coalition. Here are three different roles you can take on to support this work:

Supporting Strategy

- Model and promote the values of Money Moving Coalitions and contextualize the larger movements they sit within.
- Exchange knowledge between Money Moving Coalitions. Give advice based on knowing your local ecosystem, and hear advice based on how others respond to their ecosystems.
- Use the learnings of the Coalition to shape your own work outside of Moving Money.
- Communicate externally about what Coalitions can do and why you support them.
- Speak up when Money isn’t Moving in transformative, just, or equitable ways.

Fundraising & Funding

- Give money from your organization or as an individual.
- Do a power analysis on your organization or community to see what resources you can move. Then, move these resources.
- Encourage other institutions, foundations, organizations, and individuals to join and/or contribute resources to the Coalition.
- Solicit money from individuals and organizations in your community.
- Use existing relationships with funders to ask for resources to be directed towards Coalitions and other Money Moving efforts
- Promote the work of the Coalition in as many spaces as possible, including meetings and social media.

Shepherding the Money into our Ecosystem

- If you receive money, know your power in modeling an investment in culture and use the money to get closer to thrival.⁸

⁸ Thrival is a term uplifted by Ebony Gustave, a web weaver, community architect, and storyteller who organizes artists and creatives in the Solidarity Economy. She uses this term to shift mindsets from focusing on surviving and “getting by” towards an embrace of abundance.

How to Sustain Redistribution

In order for us to all step into Money Moving, there must be an initial re-seeding of solidarity from those with the most resources. Though everyone can do the work of redistribution, philanthropy must do the largest part. Foundations were a significant force in shaping the trajectory of the Cultural Solidarity Fund (CSF), contributing 83% of CSF's budget. Cultures of giving dictate the past, present, and future of redistribution.

We make these recommendations knowing that each of us has the ability to take on the roles of organizer, ally, donor, and artist or cultural worker. These recommendations are heavily guided by other organizers' work on shifting economic paradigms — this call for redistribution is not new.

Recommendations

- 1. Follow the lead of the most marginalized** and explicitly center Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC), immigrant, disabled, d/Deaf, queer, trans and gender-nonconforming, and working class artists and cultural workers.
- 2. Raise both individual and collective understanding of class privilege.** When we understand our role in our ecosystem, we can shift dynamics and redistribute power.
- 3. Overcome the scarcity mindset** to shift the economic paradigm. Recognize that there are more resources that we can all collectively access, and that one person accessing a resource should not prevent another.
- 4. Invest in Solidarity Economy infrastructures, including the Money Moving Coalition Model, that allow more people to resist exploitation and build alternative systems** to challenge the nonprofit industrial complex, Racial Capitalism, and the dominant extractive cultural economy.
- 5. Use trust-based funding principles** to resource and build relationships with the organizations led by, with, and for the most marginalized.
- 6. Shift from regranting to redistributing by inviting communities to collectively control how funds flow across the ecosystem.**
- 7. Work towards and sustain a safety net**, including by using the language of the Solidarity Economy movement.⁹ Invest in infrastructures that seed solidarity, and hold the movement accountable to this change.

⁹ "When we use a shared term, we can find each other, meet each other, and build a shared vision!" From *Solidarity Economy* by CreativeStudy, 2022.

Follow the lead of the most marginalized

Everyone can participate in redistribution work, but it must be led by, with, and for the most marginalized.

Within the U.S., this means pushing against Racial Capitalism and Settler Colonialism by prioritizing the needs and leadership of Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC), immigrant, disabled, d/Deaf, queer, trans and gender-nonconforming, and working class community members. In the art world, these marginalizations show up in different ways.¹⁰ There are numerous medium-specific efforts that you can look to,¹¹ but ultimately, this wisdom comes from deep relationship with community members.

When we build towards a goal with and for Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC), immigrant, disabled, d/Deaf, queer, trans and gender-nonconforming, and working class community members, we don't lose anyone on the way to activating that goal.

Caroline Woolard and Nati Linares, in their 2021 report "Solidarity not Charity,"¹² call for all members of our cultural ecosystem to shift resources and attitudes, language, and beliefs related to benevolence, charity, and perceived expertise by:

- Embracing systems-change;
- Learning about, acknowledging, and repairing histories of harm caused by their institutions; and
- Identifying and shifting how people in the sector show up in spaces.

This report lays out many strategies for philanthropists to reckon with their identities and identify the most marginalized members of

their communities.¹³ Some of these strategies are:

- Get data about inequities in the allocation of funding in your region along racial and cultural lines. Measure your organization's prior investment in Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) staff and grantees: culture-bearers and culturally-grounded organizations. Set internal and external benchmarks and practices for repair.
- Conduct a power analysis.
- Do diversity, equity, and inclusion training that is led by artists and culture-bearers.
- Engage in somatic and embodied leadership training that addresses social position, rank, trauma, and race.

Raise both individual and collective understandings of class privilege

We must all internally reckon with historic access to resources. Ultimately, this should lead to ceding and redistributing resources.

"Class privilege is a way to describe one's access to resources, power, and opportunities within a system and culture that systemically advantages the mostly White, ruling class."

— Resource Generation¹⁴

Understanding what marginalization looks like in different contexts requires understanding how class dictates access. When we all understand our roles in the economy, we can more strategically redistribute power from those with abundance to those without.

10 For example, there are fewer disabled architects than there are disabled fine artists, art directors, and animators; dancers and choreographers; musicians; entertainers; and announcers. From *Artists in the workforce: Selected demographic characteristics prior to COVID-19* by National Endowment for the Arts, Office of Research & Analysis, 2022.

11 From *BIPOC demands for White American theatre* by We See You W.A.T.

12 From *Solidarity Not Charity: A Rapid Report* (p. 75) by Linares, N. & Woolard, C., 2021, Grantmakers in the Arts.

13 From *Solidarity Not Charity: A Rapid Report* (p. 14-15) by Linares, N. & Woolard, C., 2021, Grantmakers in the Arts.

14 From *Frequently asked questions* by Resource Generation.

People must advocate for equitable redistribution of resources together and across lines of class. Those with wealth should contend with how much they have compared to others, and commit to redirecting resources more equitably to the working class and poor.

Below we share resources for individuals, organizations, and philanthropic institutions to help contend with personal and institutional privileges.

One helpful guide to understanding what resources you as an individual have access to is Resource Generation. Their Redistribution Guidelines¹⁵ suggest that people in the top richest 10% of net wealth¹⁶ in their generation:

- Return the wealth by redistributing all inherited wealth and/or excess income.
- Escalate redistribution and turn up the heat on giving.
- Begin to spend down, and spend into movements.
- Say “No!” to making wealth off of wealth by giving capital gains to social justice movements.
- Give between 1% and 7% of your assets annually.

A helpful resource for organizations is Working Artists and the Greater Economy (W.A.G.E.), which has a digital calculator for institutions to know what fair pay means at their economic scale.¹⁷ Only 27 out of hundreds of community-based arts organizations in New York City are W.A.G.E. Certified.¹⁸ None of the 34 Cultural Institution Group members, who collectively represent the largest and oldest organizations in the city’s arts and culture ecosystem, are

W.A.G.E. certified.¹⁹

W.A.G.E. identifies a compensation floor for different professional fees, and scales those fees based on organizations’ total annual operating expenses. Simply put: “the higher an institution’s annual operating expenses, the higher the fee.”²⁰

Another resource comes from Cultural Solidarity Fund co-organizer Michelle Amador, who offers these steps to dismantling institutional Racial Capitalism in organizations:

- Invest in education that helps staff understand their organization’s place in the larger arts and culture economy; and
- Transparently share where organization resources go (and don’t) within the organization and outside.

For some individuals and organizations, and for all philanthropic institutions, this means ceding resources. For many more it means creating a culture where redistribution is affirmed and valued. We see an investment in political education as necessary to build this culture. Anti-Capitalism for Artists is another resource that offers this.

Until we incorporate an understanding of class politics, we cannot turn a struggle against racism, sexism, ableism, etc. into equality.²¹ By knowing our relationships to the production and distribution of resources and encouraging others to do the same, we can better comprehend our role in bringing change. Our path is to not develop a new analysis of class, but to rediscover it and share it to inspire future generations to mobilize.²²

15 From *Redistribution guidelines* by Resource Generation, 2021.

16 Net wealth is everything you have (value of property, vehicles, art, jewelry, stocks, bonds, trust funds, Certificates of Deposits, or cash) minus everything you owe (debt, loans). From *You’re in the richest top 10% if...* by Resource Generation, 2022.

17 From *Working artists and the greater economy* by W.A.G.E.

18 From *Creative Comeback: Surveying NYC’s cultural ecosystem in the wake of COVID-19* by Dvorkin, E., Shaviro, C. and Amandolare, S, Center for an Urban Future.

19 From *Working artists and the greater economy* by W.A.G.E.

20 From *Working artists and the greater economy* by W.A.G.E.

21 From *Manifesto* by Anticapitalism for Artists.

22 From *Intro to Anticapitalism for Artists* by Anticapitalism for Artists.

Overcome the scarcity mindset

Class analysis helps us understand that there are more resources that we can all collectively access. Today, instead of a shortage of resources, we see a monopolization and hoarding of resources. When we contend with what we need and accordingly cede or receive resources, we will shift our relationship with money, and overcome the scarcity mindset. When we have both internal and field-wide contention with the false narratives of eternal shortage, we will see more resources in and across our field.

“What can we do on an ongoing basis, in the absence of a safety net provided by the federal government? What can we do with billions of dollars in endowments? With the community reach and breadth that service organizations can provide? If we just work together and get out of our own way and stop only prioritizing our own organization’s survival, but look to each other for collective survival...”

— Randi Berry, CSF Organizer & Executive Director, IndieSpace

Overcoming the scarcity mindset is cemented with actions. Without action and with performative solidarity, we uphold the scarcity mindset. Operating against a scarcity mindset means committing to and seeing abundance²³ in the arts, and committing to ‘and’, not ‘or’. That means more money for larger organizations *and* smaller organizations, more money for organizations *and* artists, more money for artists *and* cultural workers, and more money for those most marginalized by our current systems.

“Funding shouldn’t be taken away to give to someone else. More funding should be given to more people.”

— Laurie Berg, CSF Organizer

One existing strategy to see abundance could be in percentage for arts campaigns. A few research participants proposed asking for more than 1% of the New York City budget to be dedicated to arts and cultural funding. This shifted their mindset to imagine the right to abundant funding for arts and culture. These research participants acknowledged that there is enough money in the world for us all, and that uniting to advocate for it strengthens the possibility of thriving. Why not ask for more than 1% for the arts?

Overcoming the scarcity mindset requires that those with access to wealth put money, resources, and time behind statements of solidarity. A few research participants mentioned feeling wary when they hear organizations speak to Diversity Equity Inclusion Access (DEIA) efforts, decolonization, mutual aid, and Black Lives Matter. Especially since the pandemic, well-endowed individuals and organizations have expressed verbal commitments without changing their actions.²⁴

“Maybe you’re co-opting the work of our organizations right? By plastering [it] on this wall... My question behind it is, so what now? Because for many folks coming through, it’s going to look like a major accomplishment, a major recognition of our voices in an institution that historically has never been welcoming of us... Others are seeing this as ‘How progressive, how inclusive, how diverse!’ But it’s still an institution that is very racist in its practices and that’s not being addressed.”

— Anonymous, CSF Organizer

To embody solidarity and overcome the scarcity mindset:

- Resource small organizations and individual cultural workers at the same pace, rate, and length as larger organizations and individual artists, respectively.²⁵
- Fund life, not just livelihoods.

23 From *Narrative Change for Racial Equity in Nonprofit Funding: An Exploratory Report on Community-Centric Fundraising in the Arts and Culture Sector* (p. 43) by E. Pettersen, 2023, Arts Business Collaborative.

24 From *BIPOC demands for White American theatre* by We See You W.A.T.

25 “Just 2% of all cultural institutions receive nearly 60% of all contributed revenue, up approximately 5 percentage points over a decade.” From *Not just money: Equity issues in cultural philanthropy* (p. 5) by Helicon Collaborative, 2017.

- Study the legal, administrative, and personnel structures of small organizations and individual community members at the same depth as larger organizations.
- Analyze access to wealth, using tools like W.A.G.E., Anti-capitalism for Artists, and Resource Generation, and accordingly shift resources to those experiencing precarity.

Invest in infrastructures that allow people to practice solidarity

Investing in existing Solidarity Economy practices enriches the soil of our ecosystem. The Solidarity Economy Movement prioritizes resourcing people to survive and resist, while enabling them to build the structures that help them thrive.

Money Moving Coalitions are one Solidarity Economy model that both undoes the dominant extractive economy and manifests a new one by overcoming competitions of scale enforced by the scarcity mindset. Resourcing the Money Moving Coalition model incentivizes organizations to prioritize supporting underresourced individuals while sustaining infrastructural investments.

“I’m not gonna say all institutions are evil, [because] they’re also [serving] communities. The issue is when we start sacrificing the actual community [to be able to] maintain the institutional structure.”

— Ximena Garnica, CSF Organizer & LEIMAY Artistic Co Director

The Money Moving Coalition model puts people at the center of transformation. Solidarity requires that our ecosystem looks at workers, community members, and leaders as equally responsible for Just Transition. The Climate

Justice Alliance defines Just Transition as “a vision-led, unifying and place-based set of principles, processes, and practices that build economic and political power to shift from an extractive economy to a regenerative economy. This means approaching production and consumption cycles holistically and waste-free.”²⁶ We must learn from these groups to build the ecosystem we deserve.

“As a contributor to and beneficiary of White supremacy and the extractive economic system, philanthropy has a moral obligation to not only abundantly resource the Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC)-led community organizing work... It must also resource groups like the [U.S. Federation of Worker Cooperatives](#) and [New Economy Coalition](#) to support our movements in re-imagining how to build and participate in new forms of economy.”

— Justice Funders²⁷

Additional Solidarity Economy organizing models to invest in and resource include:²⁸

- **Land and Housing:** Community Land Trusts, Cooperative Housing, Housing Cooperatives, Cooperative Co-working Spaces, Cooperative Venues, Cooperative Stores & Galleries, Cooperative Studios, Cooperative Recording Spaces, Cooperative Darkrooms, Cohousing and Intentional Communities, Cooperative Co-working Spaces, Retreats, Residencies, or Landback Networks
- **Labor:** Worker Cooperatives, Multi-stakeholder Cooperatives, Producer Cooperatives, Time Banking, Mutual Aid, Barter Systems and Non-Monetary Exchange.

²⁶ See [Glossary](#) for a full definition.

²⁷ From *Can philanthropy relinquish enough power and control to support BIPOC communities in governing resources for themselves?* by J. Near, Justice Funders, 2021, Medium.

²⁸ See more examples at [art.coop/#examples](#).

- **Money and Finance:** Participatory Budgeting, Credit Unions, Community currencies, Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs), Community Loan Fund, Solidarity Philanthropy and Grantmaking, Democratic Loan Funds and Grants, Cooperative Billing and Accounting, Cooperative Insurance, Cooperative Marketing, Patronage Cooperatives, Unions and Guilds, Universal or Guaranteed Basic Income (UBI/GI).
- **Energy and Utilities:** Community Solar, Community Broadband, Energy Democracy
- **Food and Farming:** Community Gardens, Community Supported Agriculture, Food and Farm Cooperatives, Community Fridges
- **Media & Technology:** Worker-Owned News Media, Community Radios, Platform Cooperatives, Solutions Journalism, Open Source, Copyleft, Cooperative and Collective Study Groups.

Use Trust-Based Funding principles

The most sustainable way to resource these Solidarity Economy models is to share power by using Trust-Based Funding principles.²⁹ These principles encourage funders to connect deeply with organizations led by, with, and for Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC), immigrant, disabled, d/Deaf, queer, trans and gender-nonconforming, and working class community members.

Unfortunately, as philanthropy currently functions, the most marginalized are explicitly not centered. Of philanthropic foundations in the U.S., 92% are led by White presidents and have a staff body that is 83% White. Less than 7% of total grantmaking is designated to support communities of color.³⁰

Because of how Whiteness functions in philanthropy, fighting for trust in philanthropy will be difficult. The Kindle Project³¹ lays out some challenges:

- For donors and foundations, challenges can range from internal reckoning with access to power to shifting existing financial structures to meet community needs.
- For community-based decision makers, the challenges can be similar, but are complicated by shifting internal community dynamics when relationships to power change.

Still, the Kindle Project proposes that we can push through these challenges when we learn to prioritize relationships.

One exciting example is the work of the Whitman Institute and their collaborative project, the Trust Based Principles Project. The Whitman Institute, their grantee partners, and other funder allies developed the following six principles, by reflecting on and centering their relationships with each other. These principles align with the call for Just Transition in philanthropy.

The Trust-Based Philanthropy Project³² principles and practices are:

Provide Multi-Year, Unrestricted Funding: Give grants that last longer than one year and can be used by grantees as needed. *CSF donations were re-allocated from multi-year unrestricted grants given to organizations to meet community needs in a time of sudden crisis. With more multi-year unrestricted grants, more organizations would have been able to give.*

Do the Homework: Make an effort to get to know your grantees personally and refrain from asking them to pitch themselves. *CSF organizations and organizers took the time to communicate goals to their communities, rather than relying exclusively on CSF Organizers to*

29 From *Trust-Based Philanthropy Project*.

30 From *Power to the People* by S.R. Cameron & A. Shaffer, 2024, Stanford Social Innovation Review.

31 From *Power to the People* by S.R. Cameron & A. Shaffer, 2024, Stanford Social Innovation Review.

32 From *Trust-Based philanthropy: An approach* by Trust-Based Philanthropy Project.

tell the story. With foundations, too, taking on this labor, CSF organizers may have been less burnt out.

Simplify & Streamline Paperwork: Remove redundant asks from applications. *To support CSF, Mellon made an active choice to help organizers document and share their work, so that the Fund spent less of its time on paperwork, and more on redistribution. With more foundations using this practice, the Cultural Solidarity Fund could have prioritized documentation that serves its communities' goals, rather than those of the foundation.*

Be Transparent & Responsive: Share explicit details about what you can and cannot fund, whenever that changes. *Donors to CSF who had restricted grant funds shared their limitations and worked with CSF organizers to still redistribute what they could. With further transparency, more workarounds to fund limitations could have been co-developed, and more money could have been redistributed.*

Solicit & Act on Feedback: Actively seek grantees' input, and shift practices to meet grantees' needs. *For CSF, Mellon made an active choice to meet organizers' need for a verbal report-back, and have adapted this for other grant reporting processes. Many donors have not asked for feedback on their grantmaking processes, and thus, leave their future grantmaking programs to be less inclusive.*

Offer Support Beyond the Check: Shift power through and beyond the redistribution of funds. *Donors to CSF with connections to foundations*

shared their relationships with organizers, raising more money. With a clearer power analysis, all members of our cultural ecosystem can feel equipped to redistribute.

The Whitman Institute followed these principles to spend out their assets by 2022. Across two decades, they provided unrestricted, multi-year funding to 170 grantees.³³

Shift from regranteeing to redistributing money

In this report, we define redistribution as autonomous community control of funds, and monies are moved based on reflective, responsive, reciprocal relationships of interdependence between human communities and the living world upon which we depend. Justice Funders calls this Regenerative Grantmaking.³⁴ We define regranteeing³⁵ as efforts that move money to those who have the infrastructure to redistribute that money.

We recognize that regranteeing is a successful strategy. It is what allowed the Cultural Solidarity Fund to move money. But, as the Movement Strategy Center³⁶ lays out, regranteeing is not perfect. It can limit the scale and scope of money-moving efforts through bureaucracy and by creating further alienation between donors and grantees. For example, funders were not able to build and sustain relationships with individual artists and cultural workers through the Cultural Solidarity Fund. Is this one of the reasons why donations have slowed? When funders rely on researchers and organizations to keep them in touch with individual artists and cultural workers, details

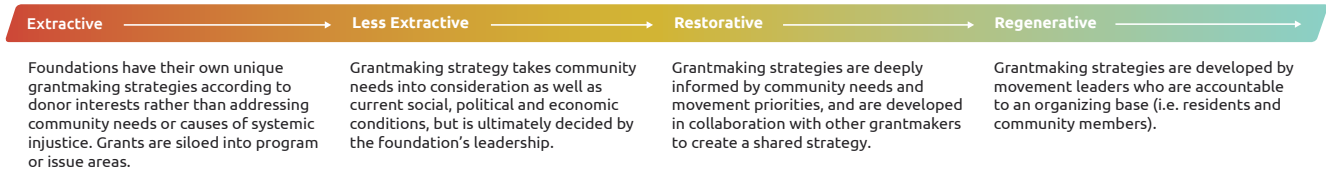
33 From *Our funding* by The Whitman Institute.

34 From *Narrative Change for Racial Equity in Nonprofit Funding: An Exploratory Report on Community-Centric Fundraising in the Arts and Culture Sector* (p. 43) by E. Pettersen, 2023, Arts Business Collaborative.

35 "That, in a nutshell, is regranteeing. An individual or organization wants to make an impact but doesn't necessarily have the infrastructure, access, or expertise to reach the communities that need it most. So, they funnel that cash into a grant-making organization. That organization, a presumed expert in the field, is better-positioned to determine where those funds can make the most impact and grants that money to the folks on the ground who can really make a difference." From *Reconsidering Regranteeing* by F. Gargione & L. Alvarez, 2022, Movement Strategy Center, Medium.

36 From *Reconsidering Regranteeing* by F. Gargione & L. Alvarez, 2022, Movement Strategy Center, Medium.

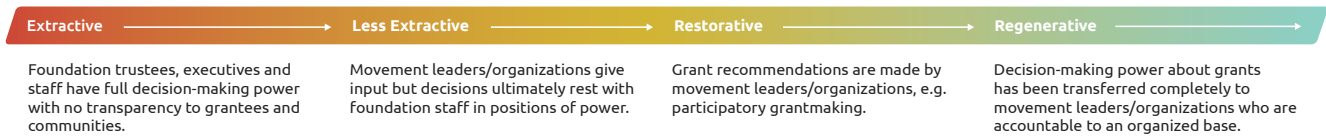
GRANTMAKING STRATEGY



GRANTMAKING PROCESS



GRANTMAKING DECISION



Justice Funders spectrum of extractive to restorative to regenerative philanthropy (2021).

can be left out and empathetic understanding can be compromised.

“Those who hold the purse of relief can’t be disconnected from the pain.”³⁷

— Yancey Consulting Group, *We Are Bound*

To fully transform from regranteeing to redistribution, grantmaking must be democratized by allowing money to move with co-accountability, rather than top-down bureaucracy. This means inviting the people you fund to not just control what resources they receive, but to collectively decide how funds flow across the ecosystem.

Redistribution focuses on using existing infrastructure and building new infrastructure to see a collaborative commitment to moving money. Rather than resources moving based on one organization’s capacity, redistribution relies on many organizations, people, and institutions working collectively.³⁸ **Justice Funders uses**

a spectrum from extractive to regenerative grantmaking (see diagram above).

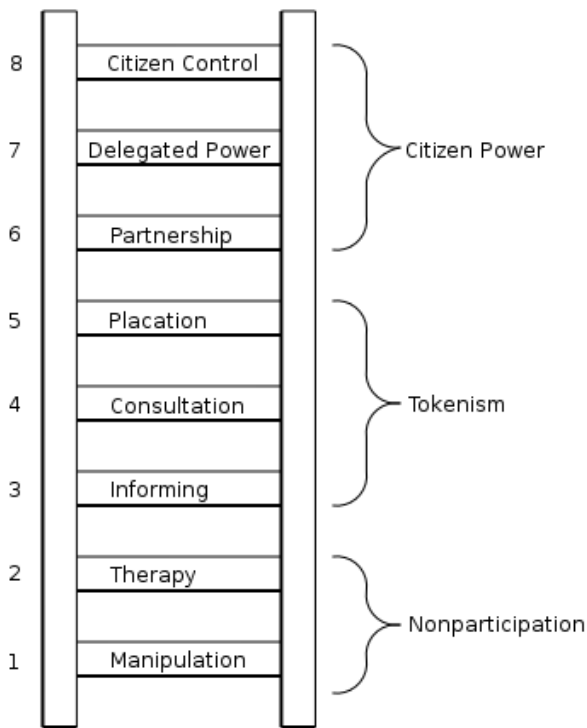
To shift from regranteeing to redistribution, all foundations and large organizations should actively build relationships with the most marginalized and ensure communities collectively control the flow of resources.³⁹ When there are more voices helping shape the flow of resources, we are better suited to meet everyone’s needs.

Participatory grantmaking, grassroots grantmaking, and mutual aid are all practices within the Solidarity Economy⁴⁰ that support Just Transition. These shifts in sharing resources “disrupt the existing ‘winner takes all’ approach”⁴¹ which is inherently unfavorable to Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC), immigrant, disabled, d/Deaf, queer, trans and gender-nonconforming, and working class people.

37 From *We are bound: Excavating the story of Artist Relief 2020* (p. 99) by L. Yancey, K. Lane, and C. Reyes, Yancey Consulting Group, Publuc.
 38 From *Reconsidering Regranting* by F. Gargione & L. Alvarez, 2022, Movement Strategy Center, Medium.
 39 From *Can philanthropy relinquish enough power and control to support BIPOC communities in governing resources for themselves?* by Justice Funders, 2021.
 40 Some examples include Grantcraft’s [Deciding Together](#), Cynthia Gibson’s [Participatory Grantmaking—Has Its Time Come?](#), Hannah Paterson’s [Grassroots Grantmaking: Participatory Approaches](#), and Ben Wrobel and Meg Massey’s [Letting Go: How Philanthropists and Impact Investors Can Do More Good by Giving Up Control](#). See more in our list of Parallel Efforts.
 41 From *COVID-19 and the Creative Economy: Phase 1 Emergency Aid Report* (p. 30) by C. Pautz & V. Ignace, 2022, Arts Business Collaborative.

A Money-Moving Coalition is another model that democratizes grantmaking⁴² and prioritizes collective control of resources. This model can facilitate redistribution by sharing labor based on capacity and expertise across a coalition structure. For example, the Cultural Solidarity Fund saw IndieSpace, formerly Indie Theater Fund, take on the labor of moving money to applicants, while individual organizers used their experiences fundraising to liaise with foundations and donors.

Collective participation in redistribution decreases competition over resources and increases collaboration towards meeting communities' needs. When we collectively participate in redistribution, we transform the system by prioritizing giving more resources to those historically marginalized while building an equitable economy.



Sherry Armstein "A Ladder of Citizen Participation"

Sherry Armstein "A Ladder of Citizen Participation" offers a diagram of resident participation (see diagram on left) to understand the different ways funders engage communities, culminating in true transformation from extraction to solidarity. Let's use it to look at the funding of the Cultural Solidarity Fund:

- We saw most donors start their engagement with Money Moving through **therapy**. These funders made one-time donations, but did not develop long term plans to sustain CSF. For example, most funds from foundations were limited to a one-year grant period.
- This report is an example of **consultation**. The Mellon Foundation is asking CSF (and others in the field) for input on funding strategies that meet needs beyond crises. However, CSF organizers can never be sure that Mellon will implement their strategies or follow their recommendations. In this case, power remains with the foundation.
- A potential future goal might be to get all donors and recipients to steward the Cultural Solidarity Fund into a sustained state of **resident power**. One way to get there is for all philanthropists to move from consultation to partnership, by joining the Money Moving Coalition officially and sustaining relationships with the Cultural Solidarity Fund, its organizers, its supporters, and its recipients. This would look like becoming a part of CSF by committing time, labor, and resources.

42 "We need funders to serve as schools of democracy, not defenders of oligarchy. This means embracing democracy for both external grants and internal practices. It means teaching boards, staff, grantees, and communities to practice democracy, to build up our democratic muscles and mindsets. In other words: grantmaking not just for the people, but of and by the people. This will require a deeper investment in participatory grantmaking, moving beyond information sharing and consultation... Participation without power is tokenism. It's time for funders to share real power over real decisions." From *To support democracy, foundations must practice democracy* by J. Lerner, 2021, Nonprofit Quarterly.

Ultimately, the best tool for this shift is relationship building and collaboration.

“Share power and support: If you share power, people will step up. If you don’t also share support, they will fall down.

Combine technical and community expertise: Don’t ask people to decide without technical expertise.

Institutionalize participation: Make it part of official decision-making processes, not a one-off event or special funding stream.

Meet people where they are: Rather than asking people to come to your spaces, engage them in their existing community spaces.

Step back as decision-makers, and step up as conveners, advisors, and facilitators.

Abandon elite rule, and let the people decide. Give democracy a try.”

— Josh Lerner ⁴³

Build a Safety Net for artists & cultural workers

Ultimately, the tools and resources above lead us through world building to an ecosystem that guarantees safety nets for all who sustain creativity, life, and humanity. When we behave like we value each other, we create a world where we do.

“World-building creates opportunities for people to practice better ways of living, working, and meeting their spiritual, social, and material needs today. These experiments—whether mutual aid groups, cooperative businesses, democratically run investment funds, land trusts, alternative currencies, publicly owned utilities, open technology platforms, restorative

justice communities, or sites of cultural production—build community, transform people’s perceptions and capacities, and create possibilities for larger-scale changes down the line.

Even when such experiments are small or hyperlocal, they offer the [“threat of a good example”](#) by demonstrating that another world is indeed possible.”

— Alexis Frasz ⁴⁴

Money Moving Coalitions like the Cultural Solidarity Fund are one threat of a good example. To bring forth the arts and culture worlds we deserve, we must build an inclusive safety net composed of many different Solidarity Economy models and practices.

One CSF organizer talked about the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) program as one model for this safety net. In the 1970s, CETA provided 20,000 artists and cultural workers across the country with full-time employment.⁴⁵ In New York City, CETA funding employed 600 artists through five nonprofits starting in 1977. Unfortunately, despite its success, CETA closed in September 1980 due to federal funding cuts.⁴⁶

What could have happened if CETA continued, or a similar state support program was designed? Perhaps the work of all the COVID-19 relief funds would be less necessary, more manageable, and more sustainable.

“If government funding of the arts [via CETA] had been maintained instead of going into the private sector, the Job Development program would have had an easier time placing people in permanent jobs...”

— Joan Snitzer ⁴⁷ CCF Job Development Program Counseling Coordinator

43 From *To support democracy, foundations must practice democracy* by J. Lerner, 2021, Nonprofit Quarterly.

44 From *Culture and Community Power Building* by A. Frasz, 2024, Stanford Social Innovation Review.

45 From *ART/WORK: How the Government-Funded CETA jobs program put artists to work* (p. 4) by M. Garfinkel, J. Waynberg, City Lore Gallery, & Cuchifritos Gallery + Project Space, 2021.

46 From *ART/WORK: How the Government-Funded CETA jobs program put artists to work* (p. 4) by M. Garfinkel, J. Waynberg, City Lore Gallery, & Cuchifritos Gallery + Project Space, 2021.

47 From *ART/WORK: How the Government-Funded CETA jobs program put artists to work* (p. 4) by M. Garfinkel, J. Waynberg, City Lore Gallery, & Cuchifritos Gallery + Project Space, 2021.

Structures of the U.S. art economy and larger state structures slow and prevent the creation of safety nets for artists and cultural workers. Artists Relief, a national grantmaking fund, had to dissect Internal Revenue Service (IRS) law⁴⁸ in order to understand its ability to redistribute. The organizers of Artists Relief realized their redistribution was limited by how the federal government defined crisis.⁴⁹

In times of crisis, state support allows us to see possibilities only for relief. For true recovery, we need the state to move beyond crisis-limited or short-term investments in redistribution towards a structure that makes resources available to all. We must imagine what it could look like if the U.S. maintained state infrastructures that enabled more people to survive and thrive, like other countries.⁵⁰

“When you look at the countries that are giving away, based on taxation or philanthropy, we’re giving away the least with our 5%. Many countries mandate 20% or more.”

— Caroline Woolard, CSF Supporter

In New York City, the call to build a safety net for arts and culture goes first to the Department of Cultural Affairs (DCLA) to:

- Dedicate more of the city budget to arts and culture, with a focus on funding organizations in the Community Development Fund which represents all but 34 cultural organizations across New York City.
- Partner with private funders to map out and fill gaps in resourcing.
- Fund coalition-based work and give money to participants in intersectional and cross-sectoral collaborations.
- Provide additional resources for small and large organizations to build collaborative infrastructures for moving money, including legal and infrastructural support. Incentivize

grantees to do the same, and fund them when they share non-monetary resources.

- Provide portable benefits for independent artists and cultural workers.
- Commit to resourcing communities by funding efforts across scale, including through support for and of Money Moving Coalitions, Universal Basic Income experiments, a New York City artist and cultural worker census, and Solidarity Economy efforts, to get us to a safety net.

Beyond New York City, the call to safety net builders is similar:

- Invest in and incentivize coalitional collaborations, following the recommendations above.
- Prioritize, incentivize, and resource communication between regional safety nets to build a national safety net that meets specific needs while remaining flexible.

While Money Moving Coalitions like the Cultural Solidarity Fund have provided some security to our arts and culture ecosystem, they cannot build a safety net alone. Neither can the 500+ organizations, efforts, campaigns, and movements that our research participants named as stewards of Solidarity and Coalition ([see Appendices: Parallel Efforts](#)). For any true transformation of our arts and culture worlds, we need full ecosystemic support — from organizations to each other and to individuals, in and across sectors.

The work begins with financial investments from those with money to those who can move money directly to communities. It continues with members of the arts and culture ecosystem participating in exchange and reciprocal practices with non-monetary resources to meet each others’ needs.

48 Internal Revenue Service. (n.d.). *Disaster relief resources for charities and contributors*. <https://www.irs.gov/charities-non-profits/charitable-organizations/disaster-relief-resources-for-charities-and-contributors>

49 From *We are bound: Excavating the story of Artist Relief 2020* (p. 51) by L. Yancey, K. Lane, and C. Reyes, Yancey Consulting Group, Publ.u.

50 From *How are governments supporting art workers during the pandemic?* by S. Gaskin, 2020, Ocula.

For relief to become recovery, there must be an overarching body to infrastructurally support this work. While the state can be theoretically positioned at the necessary scale to do this, it isn't yet. In the meantime, while pushing for this change, organizations and individuals will continue to step in to provide a safety net as best as they can. The work will only end when there is an intersectional and institutional commitment to providing abundant resources to all communities.

Case Study: The Cultural Solidarity Fund

Re-Seeding with Solidarity

Inspired by writing by Michelle Amador, Cultural Solidarity Fund (CSF) Organizer.

"Can we be like mycelium? Can we be like soil?

What might we re-compose

with the nutrients being released into the system right now?

What if this moment, painful and raw though it be (and grief has its place),

is not just the ending of a world

but the beginning of something new?"

— Annalisa Dias, *Decomposition instead of collapse: Dear theatre, be like soil*

Nature is full of reciprocal relationships that build the biodiversity essential to all health and wellbeing. As we consider the health and vibrancy of our arts ecosystem, how will we transform our relationship to solidarity, and solidarity itself? How will we ensure that we are not just watering the big lawns, or favoring the big trees, but are collectively supporting all plants that grow? How do we ensure that various arts and culture forms do not go extinct due to lack of resources?

To answer these questions and do the work of re-seeding with solidarity, we must return to ancestral practices and the practices of the Solidarity Economy. Our arts and culture "parks", once filled with regenerated soil, can allow not only play, picnic, and respite, but also collaboration, redistribution, and justice.

This next portion of the report focuses on the role of the Cultural Solidarity Fund in regenerating the soil and solidarity of New York City's arts and culture ecosystem. This work of regenerating soil cannot be done by one

organization alone. In this park, the Cultural Solidarity Fund is but a single fava bean plant or a shrub of comfrey. It will take many more coalitions like CSF and other models that look different to fully regenerate and sustain New York City's arts and culture ecosystem. We write this report hoping it can be one piece that helps regenerate the soil by enabling each of us to realize our potential as gardeners.

Solidarity, like healthy soil, has many facets, and no single entity can offer all solidarities.⁵¹ The Cultural Solidarity Fund is one form of solidarity with a focused goal. This Money Moving Coalition helped redistribute money to artists and cultural workers including individual artists, administrators, production staff, custodians, art educators, ushers, guards, and more. It prioritized Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC), immigrant, disabled, d/Deaf, and trans and gender-nonconforming individuals who have been most severely impacted by the pandemic. Our research participants said that CSF regenerated the arts and culture world by:

- Moving as much money to as many community members as it could;
- Listening to each other as co-organizers and helping each other grow;
- Bringing different people together regularly to engage in democratic decision-making towards one shared goal;
- Acknowledging that someone affirming their need was enough for others to meet that need;
- Thinking about who wasn't in the room that was Moving Money; and
- Committing to funding everyone who applied to receive money.

51 See the [Appendix](#) for a full list of parallel efforts and organizations named by our research participants as solidarity seeders.

Timeline

The Cultural Solidarity Fund brought together over 250 organizations and individuals from across New York’s creative sector to move over \$1,000,000 to fund over 2,000 artists and cultural workers with grants of \$500 each.

: The system was built against and without us.⁵²
: We find ways to push against it, and to build a new world.⁵³

52 While many history books have documented the inequities of the U.S. nation-state, we especially appreciate *Howard Zinn’s A People’s History*.

53 The work of resistance has also been well documented. Here, we draw your attention to Leanne Betasamosake-Simpson’s *As We Have Always Done* and Caroline Woolard and Nati Linares’s *Solidarity Not Charity*.

● **March 11, 2020** **COVID-19 lays stark inequities bare**

In 2020, the world’s social and economic systems fall into a deeper state of collapse, revealing the already stark inequities in our society. On March 11, COVID-19 is declared a global pandemic by the World Health Organization. By March 9, most of the world, including New York City begins to shut down.

In the art world, this looks like canceled gigs, slowing pay, and unsold work, on top of profound loss and grief. It is a continuation and worsening of devaluing artists and cultural workers — the very people who the global population was turning to in their times of isolation, loss, and grief for comfort.⁵⁴

“When the COVID-19 pandemic hit NYC, 66% of arts workers lost their only source of income. Like many creative fields, they had little to no reserves to support them during a crisis, revealing the lack of any financial safety net comparable to those afforded to people in other professions.”

— Cultural Solidarity Fund

54 The role of art and culture in helping us through crises has been well-covered through archives like Interference Archive. We recommend *Art in the time of pandemic* by Columbia College Today and *Wages for and against Art Work: On Economy, Autonomy, and the Future of Artistic Labour* by Katja Praznik. “How much free art have you enjoyed during the three-or-more-month lockdown due to the global pandemic? And why do you think art should be available for free while at the same time you feel it’s perfectly fine to pay Netflix or Amazon or Spotify or whatever online platform you may have a paid subscription for and from which art workers making the art you are enjoying will see pitiful amounts?” From *Wages for and against Art Work: On Economy, Autonomy, and the Future of Artistic Labour* by K. Praznik, 2020, Reshape.

Spring 2020

Acting on a political opening to redistribute resources

On May 25, 2020, George Floyd is murdered by Minnesota police officers, and the world, again, fights for justice against anti-Black police brutality and racism. Amidst the pandemic, protests spread across the country and call in local organizers to manifest the change they demanded. We cannot just ask for a world with no police; we must model community control and self determination.

For some, acting on this political opening looks like hosting art builds for protests, while

for others it looks like neighborhood mutual aid. The arts and culture world, too, sees concurrently emerging movements to support the community and reach more people.

- In New York City, the Cultural Institutions Group spreads information to over 300 non-profits, via Culture@3PM⁵⁵
- Funding efforts like Artists Relief distribute money to 4,000 artists nationally, in \$5,000 emergency grants⁵⁶

55 From *Be biased towards Community-Building* by R. Fields, 2023.

56 From *We are bound: Excavating the story of Artist Relief 2020* by L. Yancey, K. Lane, & C. Reyes, 2022, Publuu.

Summer 2020

It's not enough, especially for individual artists

Nine months after the pandemic began, we see so many relief efforts — but, their scale and reach isn't enough. Many individual artists and cultural workers, especially those on the margins, remain under-supported.

Fall 2020

"How can we be in deeper solidarity?"

Ximena Garnica is an artist and the leader of a non-profit arts organization and attends Culture@3PM meetings.

In October, Ximena speaks up in a Culture@3PM meeting, naming that the space is in solidarity with organizations like hers by sharing critical information at a time of crisis. However, she calls out the symbolic solidarity taking place in the calls and voices the need for Culture@3PM to directly redistribute cash and support to individuals in the ecosystem.

At first there is no response. But when another artist and leader of Caribbean Cultural Center African Diaspora Institute, Melody Capote, stands up and encourages this additional act of solidarity, the leaders of Culture@3 are moved to create a working group.

The first participants meet in November 2020, but some of them are confused: "Are we redistributing to support organizations, like ours? Or are we redistributing to support individuals, like the artists and cultural workers in our community?"

December 2020

Building the foundations of a Money Moving Coalition

The working group clarifies its intents and becomes a coalition, Cultural Solidarity Fund, only when it answers those questions. CSF is a coalition that redistributes money to artists and cultural workers without sacrificing organizations' infrastructures, staff, or values.

The Cultural Solidarity Fund is primarily held by two people: Ximena Garnica, leader of LEIMAY, and Randi Berry, Executive Director of IndieSpace (formerly Indie Theatre Fund and IndieSpace). Ximena holds the vision of the coalition, rooted in her experiences as an artist of color and a self-produced artist working within and outside the non-profit structure, and Randi holds the financial administration, rooted in her community organizing experiences moving money. As women representatives of two artist women-led organizations, these partners recognize that co-holding stewardship of the coalition puts them in solidarity with one another — to continue holding the vision while another maintains, to continue building infrastructure while another relates.

From December 2020 onwards, all of the following organizers came in to support the implementation of CSF at one moment or another: Apollo Theater | Donna Lieberman; Bronx Arts Ensemble | Ellen Pollan; The Bushwick Starr | Lauren Miller; Caribbean Cultural Center African Diaspora Institute | Melody Capote; Dance Parade | DJ McDonald; Dancewave | Nicole Touzien; Mark Rossier |

Individual; Hi-Arts | Hanna Stubblefield-Tave; IndieSpace | Randi Berry; LEIMAY | Ximena Garnica; Mark Morris Dance Group | Michelle Amador & Haley Mason Andres; Moore Opera | Cheryl Worfield; National Dance Institute | Juan José Escalante; New York Arts Live | Laurie Berg; New Yorkers for Culture and Arts | Lucy Sexton; NYC & Company | Carianne Carleo-Evangelist; Performance Space New York | Paula Bennett; Ted Berger | Individual; and Theater for a New Audience | Dorothy Ryan.

Together, the organizers set up a way to receive and redistribute money from a variety of donors (organizations, foundations, individuals) to the most marginalized people in the arts world (Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC), immigrant, disabled, d/Deaf, and trans and gender-nonconforming artists and cultural workers), implementing an amplified model for trust-based philanthropy utilizing tools engaged by IndieSpace and informed by the group to remove the subjective bias that can occur in the best of grants panels regarding the "validity" of an artist's work, to enable a rapid verification review of thousands of applications over days, a process that would have taken weeks if not months in more widely used grants review structures. It takes a week filled with meetings to develop the application's open call and to discuss fundraising, allocations, applications, documentation, and storytelling infrastructure that comes with this work.⁵⁷

57 See [How to Build a Money Moving Coalition](#) for guidance on how you can build your own.

February 2021

Raising the money

Unlike artist grant funds that begin with access to a pool of money, CSF had to find the funds it wanted to redistribute. CSF begins with a challenge grant of \$25,000 from IndieSpace, recategorized from a previous grant from

BroadwayCares/Equity Fights Aids. By February 2021, the first solicitations to match this challenge grant are made. By February 25, the amount raised is nearly \$117,000.

February 26, 2021

Beginning to redistribute the money

Applications for the fund open at 9:00AM EST on February 26, 2021. The application is open for one week and 2,722 artists and cultural workers apply. CSF uses a lottery structure to select grant recipients. There are a total of 12 lotteries, reaching 2,030 grantees.

As grants are redistributed, CSF continues to receive more donations, from foundations, organizations, and individuals.

May 1, 2022

Sunsetting by saying: "It's still not enough"

Over two years into the pandemic, the organizers of the Cultural Solidarity Fund begin to think about sunseting the fund. The organizers reaffirm their commitment to funding all applicants in a public statement:

"CSF re-surveyed all remaining applicants and learned that 385 of them are still in urgent need of financial support. The Cultural Solidarity Fund remains steadfast in its commitment to meet this need with a trust-based approach to mutual aid that demonstrates a collective response to the hard lessons learned by attempting to address the emergencies occasioned by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Inspired by the opportunity to meet the needs of every applicant, CSF launches 'Art Worker Solidarity: No One Left Behind'. From May 1 to August 31, 2022, CSF must raise \$250,000 to close its initial commitment to those who serve us."

— Cultural Solidarity Fund ⁵⁸

Yet, the flow of donations to support this work slows. The mindset of a "new normal" has returned many to old ways: scarcity being the overarching theme. As funders stop funding redistribution efforts, other large institutions also step away from their support.

As CSF organizers dealt with a decrease in funding, they looked to efforts like this report, which came with a grant of \$150,000 from Mellon Foundation, to sponsor 204 applicants' grants. Still, the organizers hesitated to take on this money and use some of it for research or paying themselves. As the dominant economy seems to signal that CSF must end without funding all of its applicants, the organizers stand tall.

58 From *May 2022 Press Release* by Cultural Solidarity Fund.

Tomorrow, onwards

Moving beyond regranting and towards redistribution

Today, the spirit of the Cultural Solidarity Fund carries on. While the elite, rich, and the continually favored return to their new normals, CSF and others practice resistance.⁵⁹ Resistance in 2024 looks different — it calls

for more from some people (redistribution of power, resources, wealth from those who have) and less from others (rest for organizers, investments in maintenance and care). Where will we *all* go from here?

59 From *As we have always done* by L. B. Simpson, 2017.

The system was built without us and against us.

The same Black, Indigenous, People of Color, immigrant, disabled, d/Deaf, queer, trans and gender non-conforming, and working class communities continue to be left out before and during crises. Why? Because the current economic system is not built to sustain the existence of the global majority. In the U.S. especially, we can draw this to two root and compounding causes: Racial Capitalism⁶⁰ and Settler Colonialism.⁶¹

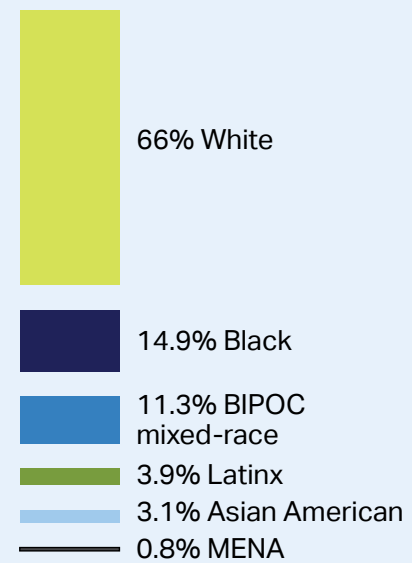
For centuries,⁶² Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities have had arts and culture-bearers at their core. Creatives build systems for thriving that prioritize the equitable distribution of resources and sustain community. Yet the dominant cultural ecosystem follows the same rules of the system it lives within. It puts profits over people, and it prioritizes Whiteness, class privilege, ableism, heteronormativity, and patriarchy.

In this system, a city like New York City is especially primed for inequity, drawn more explicit by its positioning as a cultural capital for nearly a century.⁶³

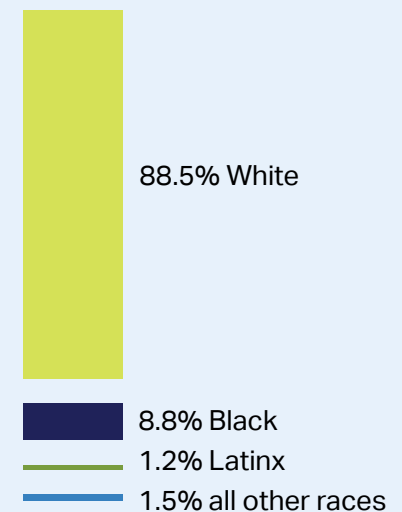
- New York contains 26% of U.S. arts institutions, 37% of the country's galleries, and 16% of its arts nonprofits.
- While 32.1% of New York City's population is White, 60% of all roles on the city's stages in the 2018-2019 season went to White actors.⁶⁴
- In New York City's top 45 commercial galleries, 88.5% of represented U.S. artists are White. The most underrepresented are Latinx artists, who make up 1.2% of represented artists, though the Latinx community is the largest minority group in the U.S.
- It's simultaneously about class and education: 19% of represented artists graduated from Yale,⁶⁵ a school that is a 50% White.⁶⁶

The origins of the Cultural Solidarity Fund and of the U.S. cultural economy begin with the weaving of these two compounding historical threads, of Settler Colonialism and Racial Capitalism. CSF follows the work of many ancestors to build and dis-organize⁶⁷ against this system.

Race of roles cast on New York City stages in the 2018–2019 season



Race of artists represented by New York City's top 45 commercial art galleries



60 [See definition of Racial Capitalism in the glossary.](#)

61 [See definition of Settler Colonialism in the glossary.](#)

62 From *As we have always done* by L. B. Simpson, 2017.

63 From *Investing in creativity: A study of the support structure for U.S. artists* (p. 7) by M. R. Jackson, 2004, *The Journal of Arts Management, Law, and Society*.

64 From *The visibility report: Racial representation on NYC stages* (p. 14) by Asian American Performers Action Coalition (AAPAC), 2021.

65 From *It's official, 80% of the artists in NYC's top galleries are white* by H. Neuendorf, 2017, *Artnet News*.

66 From *Yale: Facts and statistics* by Yale University, Office of Institutional Research, 2021.

67 "The idea of dis/organizing emerges from an essay by incarcerated abolitionist organizer Stevie Wilson, who offered the provocation that organizing from within prison walls was more about prison disorganizing." —Rachel Kuo and Lorelei Lee, *Dis/organizing toolkit: How we build collectives beyond institutions*

COVID-19 lays stark inequities bare.

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic hurt everyone — it was an abrupt transition to a reality few were prepared for, including long-standing institutions of the art world.⁶⁸ COVID-19 reminded us that the privileges that keep us from precarity can often easily be taken from us, and that few people truly have access to stability through and beyond crises. Universal experiences of loss during the COVID-19 pandemic united people.

Even large arts and cultural organizations experienced this loss. Nearly 90% of all museums across the world (over 85,000) shut down, at an estimated cost of \$5.5 billion across the arts and culture sector by May 2020.⁶⁹

Individual artists and cultural workers have less access to safety nets than organizations. An April 2020 survey from Americans for the Arts⁷⁰ found that:

- 80% of individual artists and cultural workers did not have recovery plans
- 36% only had savings to cover three months of experiences before COVID-19, 28% had no savings prior to COVID-19, and 53% have no savings now
- 31% also work outside the industry; of those, 49% faced furlough or unemployment
- 80% felt a decline in their ability to generate revenue
- 66% couldn't access the resources they needed to make creative work

Traditionally, there are three dominant models that financially support individual artists: unions, employment, and freelance. All three models failed to fully protect individual artists during the pandemic. For example, the Actors Equity Association represents roughly 51,000 stage actors and managers, but, on Broadway alone, 1,100 of them lost work once the pandemic began.⁷¹

Employment in the arts and culture industry was precarious during the COVID-19 pandemic.⁷² Between April and July 2020, the Brookings Institution estimated cumulative losses of 2.3 million jobs in creative occupations.⁷³

Several CSF organizers witnessed the increased levels of unemployment first-hand as they ran their own organizations.

“COVID brought a set of universal conditions where our civic identities could once again compete with our often all-encompassing, if not always acknowledged, consumer identities... COVID’s conditions brought vulnerability and mutuality back into our relationships.”

— Mario Lugay, *The Glorious Pull of Political Openings*

“COVID hit us all. It hit communities of color harder than everybody.”

— Sadé Lythcott, CSF Donor

68 From *New data shows economic impact of COVID-19 on arts & culture sector* by National Endowment for the Arts, 2022.

69 From *13% of museums worldwide may close permanently due to COVID-19, studies say* by H. Bishara, 2020, Hyperallergic.

70 From *10,000+ artists and creative workers report widespread job, income loss due to COVID-19* by Americans for the Arts, 2020.

71 From *New York City misses out on billions of tourism dollars as Coronavirus keeps Broadway dark* by S. Whitten, 2020, CNBC.

72 From *Virus-related venue closures will affect the music business for years to come* by B. Owsinski, 2020, Forbes.

73 From *ANALYSIS: COVID-19's impacts on arts and culture* by G. Guibert & I. Hyde, 2021, Arts.gov.

Arts and cultural workers are over three times as likely to be self-employed,⁷⁴ and more often work part-time or multiple jobs.⁷⁵ Even before the pandemic began, independent creatives found it difficult to secure long-term or consistent income.⁷⁶

Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC), immigrant, disabled, d/Deaf, queer, trans and gender-nonconforming, and working class individuals were already severed from safety nets that could protect them in and beyond times of crises.⁷⁷ Between January 2020–August 2021, White workers unemployment rates were 1%, while “Black, Indigenous, Asian, and multiracial respondents collectively averaged unemployment rates about 6% higher.”⁷⁸ Hispanic survey respondents faced more unemployment than non-Hispanic survey respondents; disabled respondents averaged unemployment rates “three to four percentage points higher over the period of January 2020 – August 2021. That figure increases to about 12 points if looking only at the first six months of 2020.”⁷⁹ Within the gender binary, women experienced higher levels of unemployment before the pandemic; our siblings outside the gender binary likely faced equal or worse disparity.

New York City’s positioning as a creative hub did not shield its artists and cultural workers from pandemic-driven loss. Between March and April 2020, 52,100 people lost employment in the arts and culture sector. New York City saw a 69% decrease in employment between July 2019 and July 2020.⁸⁰ Over the same time period there was a 1208% jump in unemployment claims in the arts and culture sector, nearly twice as much as other industries’ unemployment rates.⁸¹

“What if these unions aren’t the way forward for us anymore? What if SAG is not it? What if Actors Equity doesn’t have my back? And that’s been making me think of where we might find that, if we expand, maybe that’s what CSF can be or be a portal to.”

— Moira Stone, CSF Donor

“I saw the evidence because all of these W2s got returned, but also all of these unemployment claims.”

— Dorothy Ryan, CSF Organizer

Acting on a political opening to redistribute resources.

While we have long known that marginalized communities experience deeper precarity, our sense of unity to resist and build hasn’t always been as strong (though it may have always been possible).⁸² Though the

74 From *ANALYSIS: COVID-19’s impacts on arts and culture* by G. Guibert & I. Hyde, 2021, Arts.gov.

75 “Artists often described their work life to us – a description that is supported by other research – as divided into three parts: (1) the creative activity itself (learning, thinking, imagining, searching for material[s], practicing, creating); (2) arts-related work such as teaching or arts administration; and (3) non-arts work that differs among individuals and across their artistic careers.⁴⁶ An artist typically engages in the second and third parts of this work life to earn enough to support the creative activity that is the essence of the artistic endeavor.” From *Investing in creativity: A study of the support structure for U.S. artists* (p. 30) by M. R. Jackson, 2004, The Journal of Arts Management, Law, and Society.

76 From *ANALYSIS: COVID-19’s impacts on arts and culture* by G. Guibert & I. Hyde, 2021, Arts.gov.

77 From *ANALYSIS: COVID-19’s impacts on arts and culture* by G. Guibert & I. Hyde, 2021, Arts.gov.

78 From *Unemployment rates in the arts & culture sector* by DataArts.

79 From *Unemployment rates in the arts & culture sector* by DataArts.

80 From *The impact of COVID-19 on NYC Artists* by Data Team, New York City Council.

81 From *The impact of COVID-19 on NYC Artists* by Data Team, New York City Council.

82 “Where is all of this money coming from? If people were holding on to this kind of money, they continued, this shows that we can do more. Sadly, it took a pandemic for the purse strings to open up more to support artists.” From *We are bound: Excavating the story of Artist Relief 2020* (p. 90) by L. Yancey, K. Lane, and C. Reyes, Yancey Consulting Group, Publuu.

COVID-19 pandemic threw the world suddenly into crisis, communities found ways to support each other. It offered what Mario Lugay calls “a political opening” to reconsider the status quo and reflect on complicity. People responded by witnessing the intertwining of individual and collective pain, and translating it into action. 2020 saw a rise of multi-modal mutual aid groups,⁸³ with more people on the street protesting and rallying,⁸⁴ and with more expressions of gratitude for workers and work.⁸⁵

At the federal level, this political opening launched programs like the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loans and the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act to launch. These initiatives financially supported full-time and freelance workers as they lived through the pandemic.⁸⁶

The art world also used this political opening to invest in ecosystemic care. One funder of the Cultural Solidarity Fund talked about how arts organizations played more than just a professional role in the community throughout the pandemic.

New York City is a uniquely dense cultural hub, so its struggles are at a larger scale than other cultural hubs across the U.S. As a result, artists and cultural workers in New York organize both with more resources than other cities and in deeper scarcity. New York City received more funding than other regional art worlds, despite the fact that the most marginalized communities in the U.S.’s national arts and culture ecosystem are the communities outside of cities, urban hubs, and located in the South or in Indian country. The American Rescue Plan Act for the Arts⁸⁷ awarded 85 grants to New York state (including 73 to New York City), totalling an \$8.8 million investment in this regional art world, much higher than the average of 10 grants per state.⁸⁸ Even this wasn’t enough and resources still remained out of reach for the most marginalized.

Across time, marginalized communities and allies have always developed tactics to redistribute whatever resources they have access to and control over. COVID-19 carried these tactics into the mainstream. Communities across the world were united by a sense of responsibility that made it more possible and sustainable to share space, supplies, energy, information, and money.

One example of redistributing resources in the New York City cultural community is Culture@3PM, a daily Zoom call where arts organizations could share and receive information and energy.

“A culture born out of an extractive economy — steeped in individualism, consumerism, scarcity and competition — casts long shadows and causes doubt... Then a political opening arrives...”

— Mario Lugay, *The glorious pull of political openings*

“I felt a really acute need to be action oriented during a time when things felt really uncertain.”

— Nicole Touzien, CSF Organizer

“Art service is typically about the administrative backend of helping artists create artistic products or artistic experiences. During the pandemic, the nature of art service changed to one of social service. Grant applications became processes where you were a social worker, and where you were reading stories of loss and need that were way beyond the scope of [what we were used to].”

— Alejandra Duque Cifuentes, CSF Supporter

83 Here we see a broader application of mutual aid, stretching beyond their anarchic and diasporic traditions in the U.S. into the mainstream. Learn more about the history of mutual aid in Dean Spade’s *Mutual aid: Building solidarity during this crisis (and the next)*.

84 From *In 2020, protests spread across the globe with a similar message: Black Lives Matter* by A. Westerman, 2020, NPR.

85 From *In 2022, the workers’ rights movement continued to grow* by L. Witt, 2022, Prism.

86 From *Congress’s \$2 trillion stimulus package offers many benefits for artists and freelancers. Here’s a step-by-step primer on how to claim yours* by T. Dafoe, 2020, Artnet News.

87 From *American Rescue Plan (ARP) for the arts: Rebuilding America’s arts and culture sector* by National Endowment for the Arts, 2022.

88 From *American Rescue Plan: Grants to organizations* by National Endowment for the Arts, 2022.

Members of the Cultural Institutions Group (CIG), a coalition of 34 privately managed organizations operating in public facilities across New York City, transitioned a regular call into what is now Culture@3PM. This gave space to CIG members at the start of the pandemic to ask and answer questions about COVID-19 emergencies.

It later opened to any New York City-based leaders of non-profit arts and cultural institutions. Culture@3PM was able to assist arts organizations in applying for and receiving aid, and in helping these groups share aid across scales of power.⁸⁹ The space offered help to organizations that are otherwise marginalized by the dominant extractive economy — namely smaller-scale nonprofit arts and culture groups.

It's not enough, especially for individual artists.

These relief programs often did not reach individual artists and cultural workers. Research participants who worked for or ran organizations contrasted the support their organizations received with the lack of similar support for the individual artists their organizations serve. The current cultural economy often relies on trickle-down support, the belief is that those closest to the resources will spread them in the community through re-investment. However, resources don't always spread, nor reach the most marginalized, with this method. It also creates a dependency on relationships with large-scale arts organizations. The arts and cultural sphere cannot continue to expect money to trickle down. A more sustainable strategy is to move it directly.

Organizations could rely on pandemic-era federal programs, but still weren't fully sustained by them. The Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) gave out \$500 billion to small businesses but didn't fully support venues, because the loans were only forgivable if the recipients spent 75% on payroll. This was impossible for shuttered venues, which had few or no employees or payroll costs, but still had to pay rent.⁹⁰ The Shuttered Venues Operators Grant (SVOG) Program moved some \$16 billion⁹¹ to some of those organizations left out by PPP, but not venues whose principal line of business was restaurant, tavern, or bar operations.

Organizations saw their seemingly-steady resource nets worn, ultimately affecting the community members they served. Even with federal financial support, small and large organizations had to lay off their staff.⁹² In March

"If I didn't go to those meetings, I wouldn't have known ... about all these emergency government things, as a small artist-run organization. And there were people in Culture@3PM that were so generous with their time... The intention of sharing information was amazing... Imagine if all artists and small nonprofits know this information."

— Ximena Garnica, CSF Organizer & LEIMAY Artistic Co Director

"The wonderful thing was that a number of those big institutions who had government affairs staff members, [and] all those people in that role spent an enormous amount of time, sorting through the requirements of the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), etc., and sharing that information [with those of us who don't] have a government affairs [staff member]."

— Donna Lieberman, CSF Donor on behalf of Apollo Theater

⁸⁹ From *New York is one of the world's great cities for the arts — but the damage from the pandemic is proving to be catastrophic* by P. Marks & G. Edgers, Washington Post.

⁹⁰ From *As music venues shutter, former owners describe devastating toll* by J. Newman, 2020, Rolling Stone.

⁹¹ From *The Small Business Administration Shuttered Venue Operators Grant Program (SVOG): Frequently asked questions as of April 8, 2021* by Empire State Development, 2021.

⁹² From *New York City lost Two-thirds of its arts and entertainment jobs in 2020, a new report finds* by S. Cascone, 2021, Artnet News.

2020, the Metropolitan Opera laid off all its union employees, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art announced it had to use its endowment to cover employment and maintenance costs for the first time ever. In April, the Whitney Museum laid off 20% of its staff.⁹³ It's no surprise that these organizations couldn't sustain relationships with individuals when they could barely sustain themselves.

Relief efforts for individual artists and cultural workers still left out our more marginalized communities. The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, which prioritized independent members of the cultural ecosystem, focused on aiding those who already had stable income and left out undocumented people. Artist Relief gave grants of \$5,000, but required recipients to have a certain form of residential status to receive funds.⁹⁴

When applications open for the Cultural Solidarity Fund in 2021, 95% of CSF grant applicants self-described an urgency level of 5, meaning they did not have enough support for food, rent, childcare, housing, medicine, or other life-sustaining resources.

“How can we be in deeper solidarity?”

As the pandemic continued, members of the creative community reckoned with the reality that their friends, neighbors, and collaborators were facing increasing precarity without any relief. In response, many turned inwards to ask themselves what else could be done.

Like many others, CSF Organizer Ximena Garnica asked: “What things do we have access to, and how can we redistribute them to those without access? Who are we leaving out, and how do we reach them?”

“My first reaction when [CSF] conversations were starting was, ‘Wait, this doesn’t already exist in some capacity?!’...There is socially, but economically, not as much. And there’s a lot of bureaucratic headaches and barriers and red tape [to access] private support [and there is a] lack of public programs.”

— Anonymous, CSF Donor

“In terms of the priorities, it was, ‘Let’s center the people who don’t get centered.’”

— Ximena Garnica, CSF Organizer & LEIMAY Artistic Co Director

“My ability to overcome my own reluctance to ask my friends and family for material contributions was heightened because I felt like there was a sense in the air of everyone reckoning with their own privilege, especially White, cis, economically privileged people.”

— Moira Stone, CSF Donor

93 From *The impact of COVID-19 on NYC Artists* by Data Team, New York City Council.

94 From *We are bound: Excavating the story of Artist Relief 2020* (p. 3-4) by L. Yancey, K. Lane, and C. Reyes, Yancey Consulting Group, Publloo.

Ximena sees Solidarity from a few perspectives:

- She has a space of her own, shared with collaborators. It's a non-profit called LEIMAY⁹⁵, and it is a live/work space. ***Most other artists and cultural workers do not have their own studio spaces; they also often have precarious living realities to tend to.***
- She has experiences with financial precarity. She also knows what it's like to be supported by arts organizations. In 2020, her organization LEIMAY received a grant from IndieSpace, formerly Indie Theater Fund. ***Most other artists and cultural workers struggle to apply for grants because of the long application process; very few receive them.***⁹⁶ ***On top of that, there are only a handful of efforts that give unrestricted grants to artists.***
- She has access to information about large-scale relief and recovery efforts that can support her creative practice. She can attend Culture@3PM meetings because she is the leader of a non-profit. ***Most other artists and cultural workers she knows are not leaders of nonprofits; many don't even have a space or organization (let alone a nonprofit) they work at or feel closely affiliated with.***

Ximena made a call to action at a Culture@3PM meeting. She recognized how Culture@3PM focused on spreading information to organizations, and wondered aloud: Could Culture@3PM create an effort to spread money to independent artists and cultural workers, so that organizations and individuals could collectively nourish our cultural ecosystem?

When Ximena first called-in Culture@3PM, the participants were quiet; they themselves floundered in an ongoing crisis. As Ximena kept calling-in her peers on Culture@3PM, more participants began to echo her demands. Melody Capote, Executive Director of Caribbean Cultural Center African Diaspora Institute (CCCADI), was one of the first to speak up. She serves a similar role to Ximena in the creation of the Cultural Solidarity Fund. When she stands with Ximena, Melody reiterates that it's important for New York's arts and culture leaders to prioritize supporting individual artists through the pandemic, in addition to supporting organizations like they had with Culture@3PM. Melody cements the need for sustained anti-racist practices to identify, root out, and prevent further harm to community members of color.

Ximena's voice is also made louder by the support of Randi Berry, Executive Director of IndieSpace. Randi had previous experience resourcing marginalized artists in New York City through lottery systems, and Ximena was one of the marginalized artists who received support through this system. Ximena calls Randi to ask for advice, time, and resources to design CSF's system for administering grants, and Randi says yes.

"Ximena approached us... because she appreciated the way that we gave out our grants from a loving place. IndieSpace's ethos is that we're in community with the people that we're supporting and that they're not just applicants, they're people."

— Randi Berry, CSF Organizer & IndieSpace

95 LEIMAY is a grassroots POC artist-run organization and performing arts ensemble that exists out of a converted garage space called CAVE in Williamsburg Brooklyn. Learn more at leimay.org

96 "It's actually very unlikely your project will be funded given the sheer volume of applications they receive. Let's say they receive 5,000 applications and fund 28 projects. That gives you a 00.56% chance of winning, and that doesn't even take into account behind the scenes politics." From *Artist grant resource: The frank reality of winning your first grant*, 2019.

Over the course of the next year, Michelle Amador, Haley Mason Andres, Paula Bennet, Laurie Berg, Ted Berger, Juan José Escalante, Carianne Carleo-Evangelist, Donna Lieberman, DJ McDonald, Lauren Miller, Ellen Pollan, Mark Rossier, Meredith Lynsey Schade, Lucy Sexton, Hanna Stubblefield-Tave, Nicole Touzien, and Cheryl Warfield join Randi Berry, Melody Capote, and Ximena Garnica in to echo the demand to focus on individual artists and cultural workers otherwise left out.

Building the foundations of a Money Moving Coalition

Choosing a coalition structure

By December 2020, the working group transformed into a coalition. It recognizes and affirms a few commitments, including:

- It cannot fund everyone in our ecosystem, but it will try to fund all applicants;
- This was a way to provide temporary relief, while calling for and contributing to a collective path to long-term recovery; and
- They would take care of each other as organizers, people, and members of the creative community.

The Cultural Solidarity Fund used emergent strategy⁹⁷ to create flexible infrastructure to quickly redistribute money from organizations and individuals with wealth into the hands of as many under-resourced artists and cultural workers as possible, without sacrificing the organizers' well-being. In an initial agreement, organizers lay out these details: "As the CSF grows, and if multiple rounds end up taking place, the Working Group will determine if compensation is required/possible for the main organizers. To the extent possible, the CSF will look for donated hours from larger cultural organizations in order to offset any compensation necessary."

The cultural economy's prioritization of nonprofits primes participants against coalitional work and emergent strategy.⁹⁸ Becoming a nonprofit requires a level of formality, including legal registration, and patience with bureaucracy. It also creates a reliance on resources from foundations.

The Non-Profit Industrial Complex fails to sustain Solidarity because it individualizes issues and movements. As Amara H. Perez says in "The Revolution Will Not Be Funded", it is more helpful for many voices or

97 From *Emergent strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds* by Brown, A. M., 2017, AK Press.

98 From *Democratizing American philanthropy* by C. E. Ahn in *The revolution will not be funded by INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence*, 2017, Duke University Press.

organizations to call attention to the same issue and build a movement, than it is to have a singular voice or organization focus on that issue while limited by social, financial, and legal restrictions.⁹⁹

CSF chooses not to formalize as a 501(c) organization, and instead collaborates as what we call a Money Moving Coalition.

A Money Moving Coalition is:

- Holistically informed by the needs of marginalized individuals in a community
- Internally administered by organizers affiliated with individuals and groups in the community
- Externally supported by institutions, groups, and individuals in the community
- Funded by institutions, groups, and individuals in and beyond the community

This coalition structure is not an original creation of CSF organizers.¹⁰⁰ In fact, some research participants had previous experiences in spaces that shared the same values of CSF, and this encouraged their involvement. Other research participants who weren't connected with coalitional work found it harder to join.

Struggling against the Scarcity Mindset

"The scarcity mindset", per Stephen Covey, is an inability to imagine that another world is possible and to understand that the current way doesn't work.¹⁰¹ We heard the scarcity mindset in conversations with research participants. One person stated that their organization met a niche need in the community, and that participating in Cultural Solidarity Fund felt like it'd detract from that work. Others reflected similar sentiments, saying that even if they personally understood the value of CSF, convincing their organization to do the same wasn't easy. The scarcity mindset also led many organizations to feel like moving money was unsustainable in the long term.

Cultural Solidarity Fund organizers recognize that challenging a scarcity mindset is crucial to its success and for the creation (and sustenance) of a recovery for the arts and cultural ecosystem. How do we shift our mindset and move resources from those who can to those who need?

"...Why could it take [small arts/cultural organizations] so long to actually participate in CSF? And the answer is because I felt as though that wasn't necessarily our role. It's not my role to raise money to give to another organization to then give money to an artist."

— Anonymous, CSF Donor on behalf of an Anonymous Organization

"If a fund came along now and said, can you give us \$5,000 to give to artists? Well, that's what we do. We hire artists and put money in their pocket and give them a stage and give them an opportunity..."

— Lisa Fane, CSF Donor on behalf of Irish Repertory Theatre

99 From *Between radical theory and community praxis* by A.H. Perez in *The revolution will not be funded by INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence*, 2017, Duke University Press

100 Learn more about the history of the solidarity economy in our [Researcher's Resources](#).

101 From *The 7 Habits of highly effective people* by S.R. Covey & D. Blankenhagen, 1991.

Participating because of access to safety nets

Across our conversations, we recognized that contributing to CSF was enabled by professional safety nets, including:

- Being allowed them to use paid time from their day jobs to participate in the coalition.
- Being actively employed by organizations that were resourced through the pandemic to keep staff on payroll.
- Having job security, permission from their board or manager, and agreement from their coworkers to contribute to other efforts.
- Holding leadership positions and thus being able to independently move money; the remaining donors had harder paths to redistribution.
- Receiving additional funding from state and private grants that could be redirected to support CSF.
- Working for an organization that was financially prepared for crisis prior to the pandemic, because they owned their space and/or had an endowment to pull from, or were able to redirect funds from other budget lines.

The organizers of the Coalition were not alone in seeing the scarcity mindset harm people's abilities to support one another; many research participants noted how the dominant cultural economy prescribes values to certain labor, focusing on aesthetics or productivity, rather than sustainability and infrastructure.

Showing up in all the ways we can

CSF encouraged people to show up within each individual's time, limitations, and access to resources. The coalition model allows organizers to participate even if they have concerns, because they can show up in partnership, only take on the labor they can, and trust that others will hold the work they can't.

Many research participants discuss how this interpersonal sharing of labor helped them see how collaborative cultural work really is. Resourcing artists and cultural workers is the responsibility of a small Bushwick-based theater as much as it is for a state-funded zoo. This way, organizers of the Cultural Solidarity Fund looked to a variety of experiences with solidarity as they redistributed resources to the most marginalized.

To support this, the working group promoted actionable and accessible steps to encourage more people to feel ownership of and accountability to the money moving process, like posting on social media or making a \$1 donation. This made it easy for new people to participate and to see what building a path to recovery could mean. It also encouraged people with experience to operationalize their programs for larger scales and greater efficiencies.

"You have to be able to be someone who can either be at a [coalition] meeting and make a commitment or not have a lot of layers to go through to make that commitment. That's either a commitment of time or that's a commitment of money."

**— Amy Schwartzman,
CSF Donor**

"CSF was an opportunity to be of service to individual artists... It could [come in the form of] advice to the CSF organizers, money from your own institution, promoting it to other cultural institutions, but it was happening in a context where there were a lot of others."

**— Anonymous,
CSF Organizer**

Sharing labor and leadership across many

Cultural Solidarity Fund organizers shared all labors, including leadership-related ones. The coalition sought leadership and wisdom from both elder and younger individual organizers and from organizations with five-year- and fifty-year-long histories. Each organizer was co-accountable for the design, administration, and implementation of the Money Moving Coalition.

The organizers partook in a leadership squaredance that ebbed and flowed per the Coalition's needs. Ximena's initial seeding of the Cultural Solidarity Fund set values and commitments for the entirety of the project, while Randi's administrative structuring of redistribution efforts established how organizational staff and fund recipients should be valued.

Compensating organizing labor

Cultural Solidarity Fund organizers found it easier to redistribute money to individual artists and cultural workers than to invest in sustaining the coalition itself. Several research participants also minimized the value of their organizing labor.

Donors were quick to donate money that could be redistributed, and organizers were quick to vet applications. But, articulating the need for an infrastructural investment in IndieSpace, formerly Indie Theater Fund, for processing these donations was difficult — even to IndieSpace's staff. Because of the acute emergency, IndieSpace originally tried to run as lean a program as possible for CSF by charging only 2% for administrative labor. However, when the larger donations for the Cultural Solidarity Fund came in, IndieSpace's budget ballooned past what they were previously managing operationally. As the budget grew, so did the bills (both for the Cultural Solidarity Fund and for the organization itself) and responsibilities of IndieSpace. The organizers of the Cultural Solidarity Fund understood that IndieSpace's 2% administrative labor fees had to increase, and sustained a culture of care that let IndieSpace cover more of its operational costs. Ultimately, IndieSpace charged 10% in order to sustainably perform the labor needed, which accounts for the organizational costs of redistribution and models a tenable approach to future coalition work. Across CSF, administrative costs accounted for roughly 15% of all money raised, while 85% of all money raised was for grants themselves.

Today, LEIMAY is the financial home for the grant that funded this report. The fee and administrative structures to support LEIMAY are informed by missteps in the original compensation model for IndieSpace.

The Cultural Solidarity Fund counters the scarcity mindset in practice by re-affirming that all workers in the cultural field deserve resources. This is explicit in the fundraising and redistribution strategies CSF used to get funds to independent artists and cultural workers.

"[CSF] was much more of a partnership, and it led to more transparent conversations... I think it led to faster building of trust, a deeper level of camaraderie in the relationship."

— Emily Waters,
CSF Supporter

"Not all of us have the answers and we all need each other's superpowers to come to the table in order to build a bigger table, a better built table, a table with a diversity of kinds of chairs."

— Sadé Lythcott,
CSF Donor

"If we did not take a coalition approach, any individual one of us would collapse because the amount of need was beyond what any one of us could do."

— Alejandra Duque
Cifuentes, CSF
Supporter

"Very early on I told the group, I am not getting paid by my organization to do this. I need to be paid... So I think that allowed me to show up..."

— Ximena Garnica, CSF
Organizer & LEIMAY
Artistic Co Director

It is also explicit in how CSF valued its organizers. All organizers, especially those without financial or professional safety nets, are compensated when possible. CSF models what equal investment in all organizers looks like, and counteracts the dominant ecosystem's deprioritization of maintenance by first paying those who hold administrative labor — database coordinators, social media managers, and fiscal sponsors — and still compensates others. Initially, only one organizer was compensated, though by the time this report was written, all 18 organizers had received honoraria for their labor.

Building connection via regular online meetings

Because the Cultural Solidarity Fund met on Zoom, there was already a sense of equity shared by participants. In a literal sense, this meant the organizers shared the same number of square inches on a screen. Abstractly, organizers were united in the fact that they had suddenly been displaced from work environments that were very relational and were feeling highly isolated from their communities. The practice of meeting online continues today, when in-person gathering is more possible. This allows organizers who have relocated to participate as equal members. When some organizers feel a need to meet in person, they do so in addition to digital meetings — because of the type of cross-border collaboration they enable.

In these regular weekly meetings, organizers made decisions, reviewed grants and communication materials, and strategized around values and goals. Meeting regularly during a time of isolation put organizers in stronger communication about their strengths, experiences, and needs as organizers. When one needed to step away, they could. This allowed for better collective understanding of who individual CSF organizers were in community with across the cultural field, and built a foundation that sustained partnership across scale and size.

Participation in CSF transforms organizers' work

Organizing the Cultural Solidarity Fund impacted every member of the coalition. We see this with how IndieSpace has transformed. IndieSpace's increased budget size from receiving redistribution funds opened their eligibility for other funding and how the operations of IndieSpace have gotten better at adapting to different sums of money.

The same is modeled in how CSF organizers chose LEIMAY to receive the grant for this report. Prior to receiving this grant, LEIMAY had a smaller general operating budget that made it more difficult to receive larger-scale grants. By housing the grant money for this research, LEIMAY crossed a threshold of eligibility and has become more visible in the funding world.

“There was an exponential benefit to my organization because suddenly we were also getting grants for other [programs]. It changed the profile of our organization tremendously. And the budget changed everything.”

— Randi Berry, CSF Organizer & IndieSpace

“Now I'm about to get this big money from Mellon Foundation for my organization. I think it's a combination of many things...we have been working as artists and community builders for over 25 years ... and we were lucky for the visibility that [CSF] created to our work, to our practice, to the work that we've been doing.”

— Ximena Garnica, CSF Organizer & LEIMAY Artistic Co Director

Raising the money

Unfortunately the infrastructures of a coalition cannot alone resist the extractive economy. The action that comes after is what the Cultural Solidarity Fund will be remembered for: raising and rapidly distributing over \$1,000,000 to individual artists and cultural workers.

Strategies for raising money from organizations, foundations, and individual donors

Like other Money Moving Coalitions, CSF didn't start with money. It did start with a \$25,000 challenge grant from IndieSpace. With this seeding challenge and the organizers' volunteer labor, the Cultural Solidarity Fund organizers could quickly start soliciting donations.

Here are a few ways the organizers of the Cultural Solidarity Fund gave money from their organizations:

- Hosting events and donating a percentage of ticket sales
- Redistributing from their organization's budget, and when they couldn't, asking their board, coworkers, staff, or accountants for support redirecting funds
- Donating percentage of ticket sales,
- Matching others' donations, like IndieSpace
- Soliciting personal communities for donations
- Making a donation themselves

When asking others to give money to the CSF, the organizers used their experiences of giving to guide others to redistribution.

CSF organizers fundraised from other individuals and organizations by:

- Making social media assets available in English and Spanish so that cultural workers and funders could promote CSF in their own networks.
- Using a platform called [Classy](#), managed by LEIMAY, that used similar "spread-the-word" strategies to motivate people to meet campaign goals. Classy puts donors at all scales on the same virtual page.
- Meeting with partners as representatives of their host organizations and making pitches through existing relationships
- Returning to the Culture@3PM call to make regular solicitations for donations.
- Encouraging all donors and community members to use any of these strategies to also help raise money and spread the word.

"I was adamant about [donating] because when I'm knocking on all the doors, I want to be able to say, 'I'm a donor too. Please match our contribution or contribute whatever you can.'"

**— Juan José Escalante,
CSF Organizer & José
Limón Dance Company**

Organizations across scale made creative and strategic choices to fundraise for CSF, like moving money from other budget lines or rewriting their mission statements to allow for this into the future. They allowed for the seeds planted by smaller organizations with smaller donations to be nurtured and blossom.

CSF also sought donations from foundations. In general, foundations had more resources to move, but aren't necessarily quick to redistribute money from their systems. CSF organizers had access to foundations through two paths: organizers' personal relationships with individuals who worked in foundations and organizations' histories of receiving money from certain institutions. With CSF organizers and organizations bringing their existing connections with funders, the Cultural Solidarity Fund was more able to receive and use grant funding.

- Organizers brought their skills in grant writing to write applications on behalf of the Fund that could speak to organizers' goals and be understood by funders.
- Digital presentations were designed by organizers so that pitches could be simultaneously made to multiple funders.
- Organizers with existing relationships led calls with foundations, but shared the labor of following up. This helped relationships feel more collectively held, rather than nepotistic.

Two foundation funders who participated in this research shared their initial hesitation to contribute to CSF. They overcame this barrier through deep conversations with CSF organizers about the value of philanthropic support for community-led redistribution efforts. These grant liaisons made the grantmaking process more accessible for CSF and other Money Moving Coalitions. One proposal to a foundation, for example, became fruitful because of the program officers' solidarity with the movement; they allowed for an easier application process, and limited the restrictions they placed on the grant money. This foundation contributed significantly to the Cultural Solidarity Fund.

"[We are] not a grant making organization. I can't just give money that somebody gave to me to another organization. I had to think... Can I see this as a community engagement cost or a marketing cost? Can I make it work in my budget in that way?"

— Anonymous, CSF Donor on behalf of an Anonymous Organization

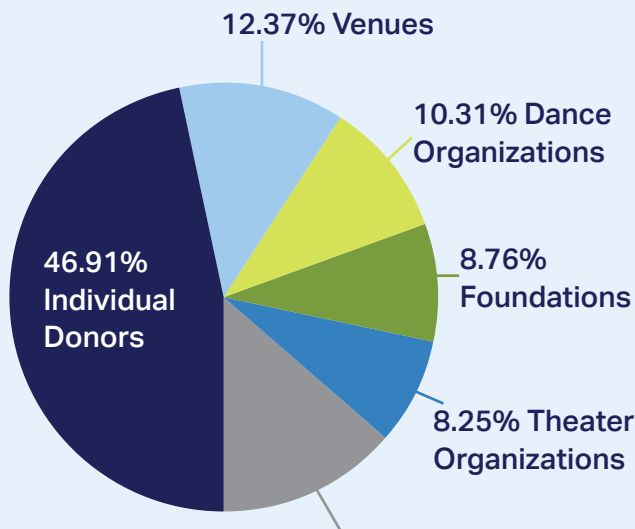
Patterns in giving

As of the publication of this report, the Cultural Solidarity Fund raised a total of \$1,173,220.48. Most money came from organizational efforts. Smaller organizations were more likely to give a larger percentage of their general operating budget.

By the publication of this report:

Who Donated?

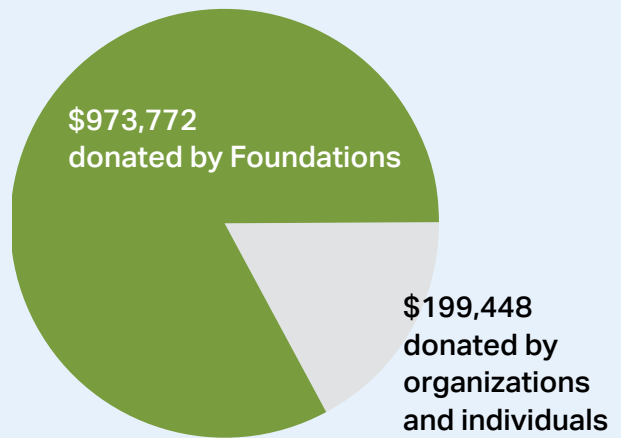
Almost half of all donors were individuals who gave on their own and not via an organizational campaign. They gave between \$9 – \$25,000, with an average donation of \$407.



Other Donors including:

- 4.13% Arts Operations and Management Organizations
- 2.58% Visual + Interdisciplinary Arts Organizations
- 2.06% Museum Donors
- 1.55% Arts Education Organizations
- 1.03% Film Organizations
- 1.03% Garden/Conservation Organizations
- 0.52% Music Organizations
- 0.52% Residency Program Organizations

Foundation donations made up 83% of the redistribution pool.



- 45% of organizations gave directly from their own budgets, while 55% organized campaigns that mobilized their donors to give. A handful of organizations did both.
- While CSF organizers reached out to all 34 members of the Cultural Institutions Group, which represents some of the largest organizations in New York City, only three mobilized to give money: the Wildlife Conservation Society, Queens Theatre, and Snug Harbor Cultural Center & Botanical Garden.

Number of organizations who donated to CSF	Budget Range (based on FY21 Revenue)	Average donation	Average Percent of general operating budget
29 organizations	Less than \$1,000,000	\$1,496.49	1.00%
37 organizations	\$1,000,000 – \$5,000,000	\$3,985.62	0.10%
10 organizations	\$5,000,000 – \$10,000,000	\$6,776.53	0.10%
12 organizations	\$10,000,000 – \$100,00,000	\$22,641.68	0.01%
5 organizations	Greater than \$100,000,000	\$105,250	0.02%

Large organizations could give more money but relatively fewer did. The larger organizations that gave to CSF did not work as fast: why?

Larger organizations have infrastructures that make it difficult to prioritize relationship building with individual artists and cultural workers. Because these relationships aren't as deep, it is harder for larger organizations to intimately know the needs of these community members. Often, large organizations rely on smaller organizations to lead the charge when calling for acts of solidarity.

One research participant noted that the reliance on small organizations to hold relationships with individual artists and cultural workers did not just affect community-facing organizations. Foundations also struggle to maintain relationships with newer and smaller organizations because of the sheer volume of their job, and the historic relationships they are asked to prioritize by the larger system of philanthropy.

On the other hand, smaller organizations had long developed practices of redistributing smaller amounts of money. Small organizations were also more able to share their staff time, infrastructural resources, and their relationships. They donated because their ability to sustain relationships helped them understand the impact of sharing their resources. Within and across these sectors, smaller organizations were faster in moving their money, and were more likely to give a larger percentage of their general operating budget. Two of the first five organizations to give money had operating budgets under \$140,000 in 2021. It isn't until three weeks after the call is publicized that a \$5,000 donation is made, on 25 January — and this comes from the José Limón Dance Foundation where CSF organizer Juan José Escalante works. The first donation to pass \$5,000 outside the organizers' comes on 1 February, from Broadway Cares / Equity Fights AIDS.

However, small organizations did not have the capacities to redistribute money across a long period of time. This is why the contributions of larger organizations are crucial; though they took longer to arrive in CSF's hands, these funds allowed for a sustained investment in redistribution for many, rather than one-off grants to a few.

“Think about the amount of energy you’re putting in, if we could get \$50,000 from a foundation in the same amount of labor it would take for us to raise \$5,000.”

**— Nicole Touzien,
CSF Organizer**

As we mentioned earlier, New York City only makes the inequities in other regional art worlds starker. A 2017 study from Helicon Collaborative found that organizations in New York City’s cultural hub with less than \$100,000 in annual revenue made up 40.7% of the field in 2017 — but they only received 0.7% of the revenue.¹⁰² If we were to divide the total revenue created by the arts, culture, and humanities sector in New York City in 2017, we’d see over \$2,500,000 for each of 2,247 arts organizations. Instead, we see 914 organizations with less than 4% of that.¹⁰³ Large organizations — especially those who make 82.2% or more¹⁰⁴ of the total revenue in our sector — have an incredible opportunity to move money, but as we saw with CSF, they are less likely to redistribute at a scale that shifts power.

Barriers to organizing for redistribution

On top of the barriers presented by the scarcity mindset and by peoples’ lack of access to a sustained safety net, research participants mentioned feelings of hopelessness. Two CSF organizers felt demoralized by the less-than-expected response from the larger New York City cultural community, and another research participant spoke about how lonely they felt carrying the weight of building CSF in a world that doesn’t support its future.

Other research participants also felt nervous about asking for more support or for giving what they did. Two organizers expressed fears of retaliation for how they invited others to contribute to CSF.

These barriers are rooted in the scarcity mindset. Despite these barriers and in the absence of a safety net, over 250 donors came together to help redistribute over \$1 million dollars.

“You also had organizations that... still feel that way today, [that think], ‘If I’m too vocal or too active, the two pennies I rub together are going to be taken from me.’ And it’s a reality, but if we make a little bit more noise, maybe it’s more than two pennies you’re rubbing together.”

— Anonymous,
CSF Organizer

102 From *Who gets most arts money? Still large, White organizations* by D. Tran, 2021, American Theatre.

103 From *Not just money: Equity issues in cultural philanthropy* by Helicon Collaborative, 2017.

104 From *Not just money: Equity issues in cultural philanthropy* by Helicon Collaborative, 2017.

Beginning to redistribute the money

Redistributing to whom?

The dominant extractive economy prioritizes Whiteness and class dominance (be that in wealth, social relationships, politics...) across all sectors, including the art and cultural ecosystem. In this world, undocumented people are especially vulnerable, and within this community, Black, Indigenous, People of Color are drastically more so; these more vulnerable communities are more likely to also hold working class identities, which only further compounds their vulnerability.¹⁰⁵

The Cultural Solidarity Fund prioritized redistribution towards those expressing the highest need, and Black, Indigenous, People of Color, disabled, d/Deaf, trans and Gender Non-Conforming, and immigrant artists and cultural workers.

Applications were open for just one week, between 9:00 AM ET February 26, 2021 and 9:00 PM ET on March 5, 2021. Within this week, CSF received 2,722 applications. Through the end of 2022, 2,010 of the applicants received grants. Of these grant recipients:

- 757 or 38% identified as Black or African American
- 574 or 29% identified as Hispanic or Latinx
- 442 or 22% identified as White
- 283 or 14% identified as Asian American Pacific Islander
- 280 or 14% identified as multi-ethnic¹⁰⁶
- 121 or 6% identified as Indigenous, Native American or American Indian
- 45 or 2% identified as Middle Eastern, North African
- 398 or 20% identified as immigrant
- 102 or 5% identified as living with a disability
- 583 or 29% identified as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, Intersex, Asexual (LGBTQIA+)
- 689 or 34% identified as women
- 414 or 21% identified as men
- 172 or 9% identified with multiple gender identities¹⁰⁷
- 166 or 8% identified as non-binary
- 145 or 7% identified as gender non-conforming
- 69 or 3% identified as trans
- 30 or 1% identified as two-spirit

“We’re talking about hundreds of dollars, and to cover very basic human needs (and I would define that in New York [as] rent, food, medical bill, transportation).”

**— Nicole Touzien,
CSF Organizer**

105 From *Race and economic opportunity in the United States: An intergenerational perspective* by Chetty, R., Hendren, N., Jones, M. R., & Porter, S. R., 2019.

106 131 recipients did not report their race or ethnicity.

107 694 recipients did not report their gender.

Bridging silos with language

The Cultural Solidarity Fund invited both artists and cultural workers to apply for relief grants. The Cultural Solidarity Fund identifies cultural workers as administrators, production staff, custodians, art educators, ushers, guards and more, and in doing so, affirms that maintenance labor in the cultural ecosystem is as valuable as creative labor.

Using the term “worker” speaks to a longer history of class-based organizing in our ecosystem, and unites us in the work of resisting extractive economies and building the art worlds we deserve.

This decision puts artists and cultural workers at a peer level, when otherwise, we see cultural workers’ lives compromised. This language also reiterated how inseparable art and culture are.

Though we may conceptually understand art and culture as interwoven and inseparable, there is a clear difference in how either is resourced and valued by institutions. Organizations and individuals that present non-dominant culture — zoos, medicinal artists, food stall vendors — have less access to the same social capital, and thus financial capital. This is reflected even within the “art” exclusive world: in how certain forms of visual art are prioritized over performance art, or in how cultural forms of creation aren’t seen as museum-worthy. The day-to-day forms of culture that sustain us are put aside in favor of those that produce profit for a select few. CSF pushes against this by explicitly including the workers who sustain culture, and by inviting applicants to speak to their needs, rather than their output.

The Cultural Solidarity Fund’s application design and eligibility logic

Organizers designed CSF’s redistribution based on their past experiences with receiving support and giving money. Because of the coalition’s own access to money, CSF organizers focused their efforts on relief rather than recovery, and committed to providing grants for survival.

Organizers worked to meet applicants needs by keeping the application free. Language needs were addressed by making the application available in several languages, and offering phone assistance to complete applications was offered in Spanish and English. The application form was designed to take no longer than 10 minutes. The Cultural Solidarity Fund also retained open communication lines with applicants, so that organizers could change the application and allocation processes in order to prioritize those most in need. The organizers recognized that this would be a trial-and-error process, and affirmed their commitment to changing strategies when people’s needs weren’t met.

“That it wasn’t just for artists, it was for cultural workers. So that meant anyone that was working adjacent to culture; you didn’t need to identify as an artist.”

**— Laurie Berg,
CSF Supporter**

“How do we create a way of distribution rooted in equality, justice and trust? How do we avoid becoming the validators of need? How do we avoid asking people to relive the trauma of need? How do we facilitate access to the Fund? How do we share a small pie while caring for all the above? How do we increase the size of the pie!?”

— Cultural Solidarity Fund

To be eligible for CSF's \$500 grants, applicants also had to:

- Be 18 years of age or older
- Be residents of New York City's five boroughs (The Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan, Queens, and Staten Island) as of April 1, 2020
- Fall into at least one of the following disciplines, in the live and visual arts: Actors, Administrators, Choreographers, Custodians, Curators, Dancers, Designers, Directors, Drivers, Dramaturgs, Front of House, Guards, Janitors, Installers, Musicians, Playwrights, Production Managers, Receptionists, Technical Crew and Art Handlers, Stage Managers, Teaching Artists, Technicians, Ushers, Visual Artists and anybody working in any capacity in the arts/cultural non-profit or community-based sector.
- Have a history of working in the non-profit or grassroots art/cultural sector in New York City.
- Self-identify need of assistance, whether for rent, groceries, medical expenses or other essential services.

Self-assessed need in the contexts of applicant identity

The final version of the application used a self-assessed need scale, from 1-5. The self-assessment model prioritizes need over speed: applicants at need levels of 4 or 5 were the first to receive grants. It also allowed for applicants to self-disclose their needs, and for applicants, not CSF organizers, to confirm eligibility.

Still, this didn't always meet their goals. Organizers knew from the work of IndieSpace, formerly Indie Theater Fund, that White applicants stated a higher need than Black, Indigenous, and People of Color applicants. This shows how people prioritized by the dominant extractive economy (White, able-bodied, cis, and owning class artists) are better practiced and more comfortable in asking for and accessing public and private resources and support, compared to those left out by the dominant extractive economy (Black, Indigenous, People of Color, disabled, d/Deaf, trans and Gender Non-Conforming, and immigrant artists).

Why a \$500 grant?

It's not that the organizers thought \$500 was enough money for folks to survive, nor that grants of \$5,000 wouldn't be helpful. Many research participants recognized how a grant of \$500 made the fund accessible to all artists and cultural workers, including those that are undocumented.

"The application was based on trust. You didn't have to perform your oppression or your disadvantage... You just had to [self assess your need] and we will believe you that that was the case."

— Ximena Garnica, CSF Organizer & LEIMAY Artistic Co Director

The tax threshold for grants is \$600, so any amount under that does not require a social security or tax identification number from the recipient for the money to be distributed. This choice also decreased administrative labor, because the coalition wouldn't have to distribute, collect and manage 1099 tax forms for all 2,000+ grantees.

A one-time relief grant of \$500 is a band-aid amount of money that cannot guarantee the long term survival of the ecosystem. But, the smaller financial amount allowed a wider field of grantees to receive the money, and conceptually encouraged more members of the arts and culture industry to donate. CSF's donation requests conceptually connected donors with grantees by asking directly for \$500 to fund a single grant.

"There was a part of me that kept saying to myself, 'It's a \$500 grant. What's it really gonna do?' I was wrong. It makes a hell of a difference."
 — Ted Berger, CSF Organizer

Reviewing applications and allocating grants

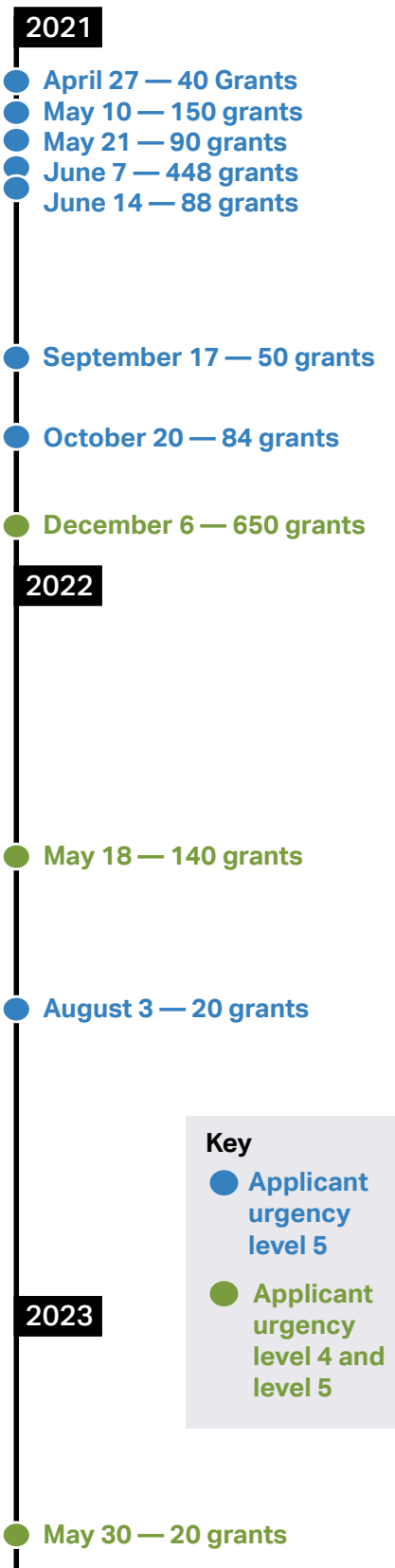
A simple, short application process weighted based on self-assessed need created a simple review process. CSF organizers worked together to vet thousands of applications. Cultural workers only needed to show that they worked in New York City and the arts, using evidence of their choosing. Of the 2,722 applicants, only a handful are ineligible (for not living in New York City or for not working in the arts). Some entries are duplicate applications for one person, while some applicants rescinded their applications when their need for support decreased significantly. Today, there are still 204 applicants who need support.

CSF used a lottery process to select grantees randomly using the tool [RandomPicker.com](https://randompicker.com). For transparency, lottery recordings were recorded and lottery numbers were publicized on CSF's website and by email.

Even though there was a system for reviewing lottery numbers, CSF organizers still had to read through applicants' answers to what they needed in order to understand what else our ecosystem had to shift to provide. Organizers also had to communicate who received and didn't receive grants. This added a layer of emotional labor.

"They were regularly in the midst of stories of loss and failure and devastation that they had actually no power to do anything about. All they could do was give somebody \$500 or tell somebody that they didn't have \$500 for them, which was actually the harder part of the job."
 — Alejandra Duque Cifuentes, CSF Supporter

The Cultural Solidarity Fund ran 12 lotteries through the end of 2023



Sunsetting by saying: "It's still not enough"

We can start with the hope: with 2,030 applicants funded, the Cultural Solidarity Fund was able to meet many needs.

Two grant recipients donated at least some of their grant money back, stating that their needs had changed and they were no longer in need of support. This is a demonstration of the compassion that artists and cultural workers share with each other.

But, in early 2024, over 200 applicants remain unpaid because of drying donor pools, a lack of infrastructural investment in healing from conflict, and organizer burnout. As of the publication of this report, there are still 204 people on the waitlist for funds, with 42% in urgency level 4 facing housing and food insecurities. To redistribute grants of \$500 to each of these people, a total grant amount of \$102,000, it will take roughly \$10,000 more to pay for administrative costs. The realities of this happening today seem unfortunately grim, as foundations and other institutions deprioritize redistribution.

Barriers to funding the remaining applicants

There are simply fewer donors to the Cultural Solidarity Fund in 2024. This decline in donations does not match the reality that COVID-19's economic and social repercussions continue to play out against the survival of our most marginalized. This is not a unique trend — with Artist Relief, funding also went down as the pandemic continued.¹⁰⁸ In 2007, the authors of "The Revolution Will Not Be Funded" saw this pattern propagated by the non-profit industrial complex across sectors.¹⁰⁹

"They helped to pay rent in a month that my unemployment wasn't coming through between claims. It decreased the panic of checking my account every day to see if I was going to make it that month. Thank you!"

— Anonymous,
CSF Grant Recipient

"I used the fund to visit the dentist and to pay for my living expenses including housing and utilities."

— Anonymous,
CSF Grant Recipient

"Times are difficult now for people and I want to share my good fortune with others struggling. Therefore I am enclosing a money order for \$25 to your organization so you can continue to give grants and help others."

— Anonymous,
CSF Grant Recipient

108 "There was growing fatigue with the pandemic. Another research participant shared that they don't think a lot of funders would have funded [relief] if their peers hadn't funded also, [because] a lot wanted to move on to recovery." From *We are bound: Excavating the story of Artist Relief 2020* (p. 96) by L. Yancey, K. Lane, and C. Reyes, Yancey Consulting Group, Publloo.

109 From *Democratizing American philanthropy* by C. E. Ahn in *The revolution will not be funded* by INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence, 2017, Duke University Press.

Foundations are donating less

"A 2020 GIA survey of arts grantmakers found that 51% of respondents reported increased giving to Black, Indigenous, and People of Color-led organizations. However, while \$11.9 billion in overall philanthropic dollars in 2020 was pledged in support of racial equity in the US, only \$3.4 billion of these awards were confirmed as of October 2021."¹¹⁰

— Erika Pettersen, *Narrative Change for Racial Equity in Nonprofit Funding*

Even though foundations responded initially to the crisis by moving money, these commitments have waned as the ongoing pandemic is deemed "gone," "faded," and "acclimated to by all" for those with financial, social, political safety nets. We see the return of questions about artistic quality and merit, and indications of allyship without solidarity. Some program officers and organizers have attempted to subvert this trend, with acts of solidarity like allocating money to documenting redistribution efforts, including this research. But individual artists and cultural workers need systems-wide and structural investment in redistribution efforts.

Fewer organizers are participating

In tandem with a steep decline in funding for redistribution, there has been decreased participation from organizers, both internal and external to the fund. In seeing this report manifest, some organizers question what CSF is becoming, especially in relation to their May 2022 goal. For these organizers, CSF has already stepped outside its original goal of funding all the artists who applied for its grants by receiving this level of foundation support for research instead of redistribution.

CSF's weekly organizing meetings have fewer attendees. Many organizers feel that keeping CSF going, without any signals from the ecosystem that redistribution is valuable, would be the equivalent of pushing another boulder up a hill. With the systems-wide decrease in participation, more labor is shared by fewer people.

"None of us can keep it going at the rate that we were going before. That's just not possible. I don't even think the desire is not even there... I had the desire until very recently, after the last round of us trying to fundraise for that last whatever it was, and then we just came back completely empty handed."

— Anonymous, CSF Organizer

Of the organizers who do still participate in bi-weekly meetings, many feel confused about their next steps. Some didn't know what CSF meant when it sought to provide "support" this far into the pandemic. These organizers say: without a clear collective goal, and deeper commitment to CSF's founding values, the work is not possible.

"I don't want to be pessimistic. But the longer that I work in the position that I'm in, the more strongly I'm convinced that it is not possible to remove [barriers] because ultimately foundations exist to be able to engage in grant making in perpetuity... To acknowledge a different way of doing business is calling for the end of these kinds of institutions."

— Anonymous, CSF Donor on behalf of an Anonymous Organization

"Funding priorities have shifted. Some of the generous foundations and the few corporate funders have gone away... or increases that they put in have been scaled back."

— Mark Rossier, CSF Organizer

"There's a lot more self-examination that's needed... I don't think that has to do with budget. I think that has to do with values."

— Ted Berger, CSF Organizer

110 From *Narrative Change for Racial Equity in Nonprofit Funding: An Exploratory Report on Community-Centric Fundraising in the Arts and Culture Sector* by E. Pettersen, 2023, Arts Business Collaborative.

While CSF built accountability structures based on shared values, the group found challenges in an instance of gender-based harassment. When this organizer operated outside of CSF values and harmed the group, they did not have a mechanism in place to respond immediately. Reflecting on the course of events, organizers noted that a deep sense of trust built between the group obscured the necessity of building proactive response mechanisms at the formation of the group. The organizers worked under an assumption of shared values that were collectively articulated, but did not anticipate the need to craft accountability measures for if a member or the group as a whole veered from them. In hindsight, they would recommend adopting such policies to clarify responsibilities and build a culture of restorative justice.

Today, organizers are attempting to parse how they will distribute the remaining funds and also heal from living under capitalism. There are increased instances of burnout throughout the field coming through the pandemic. This has led a few organizers internal to the coalition to think about their own health, and whether they have the capacity to engage in this work if tensions aren't laid bare across our cultural ecosystem.

These compounding decreases in resources and energy make organizers feel hopeless and cynical, and pull them back into a scarcity mindset about the possibility of recovery. The scarcity mindset continues to fulfill itself, even for those who organize structures of a different world.

Crises will compound when there is no recovery

Today, there is a significantly reduced capacity for relief work. There is less awareness of the ongoing impacts of COVID-19, less motivation to move money, less money to redistribute, and more burnt out organizers unable to raise awareness of how the crisis continues for individual artists and cultural workers.

As research participant and CSF organizer Ted Berger says, "Our field is always in crisis." The "new normal" in the art world is the same as it always was: built without and against the most marginalized. Urgency remains in the communities of cultural workers, but it is not landing on hearing ears. Where we stand now is here: the crisis is ongoing, but the most privileged people have long stopped feeling its tendrils.

It is crucial that we understand that the transition from relief to recovery is not immediate. We must make an active effort to sustain the survival mechanisms created by entities like the Cultural Solidarity Fund, so that the most marginalized return to the centers of our worlds.

"[Larger organizations] were struggling, but they weren't struggling to have breakfast the next day, [they were struggling] to figure out how long until their emergency funds or the endowment will run out, and [how long] until they have to start getting ready to furlough more people or fight for their utility bills and their buildings."

— Ximena Garnica, CSF Organizer & LEIMAY Artistic Co-Director

Moving beyond regranting and towards redistribution

The work of redistributing towards the art worlds we want requires escaping the return to the “new normal” by remembering the origins of CSF. The Cultural Solidarity Fund and other Money Moving efforts are opportunities to demand another way forward that goes beyond regranting small amounts of money and instead redistributes power towards an equitable arts and cultural world.

Following the lead of Cultural Solidarity Fund organizers, we present this research as a tool to leverage field change, and to generate the funds to not only pay the remaining applicants, but to also invest in a safety net for all artists and cultural workers.

How do we start?

We can easily recommend the creation of more Money Moving Coalitions, but we cannot make this call without also demanding a deep investment in the infrastructures that can allow for this to happen sustainably.

Using the guidance and tools in our recommendation section, we can bring forth the world that our research participants reiterate will equitably meet our needs for creativity, community, and collaboration.

“Part of what we discovered is that our sector has been so fractured... It emphasizes how important it is to actually build those coalitions in advance of a crisis so we know who to turn to and trust.”

— Anonymous, CSF Organizer

“I hope that even in five years or in a hundred something, there won’t be the art world, but the worlds of arts and culture stewards that has more centered and multidimensional worlds.”

— Ximena Garnica, CSF Organizer & LEIMAY Artistic Co-Director

“CSF has proven very effectively that there is a dynamic that can circumvent the system for artists.”

— Anonymous, CSF Donor on behalf of an Anonymous Organization

“If we have to use the emergency to bring us together, then we can start by how we respond to the next emergency.”

— Randi Berry, CSF Organizer & IndieSpace

Appendices

Special acknowledgement goes to **Gonzalo Casals** for organizing this research project and for advocating for the CSF and Coalition based work throughout NYC. Thank you!



Research Methodology

The main phases of this report, conducted from March 2023 – March 2024, were:

Meetings with Organizers

This research was guided by the leadership of and regular dialogues with the Cultural Solidarity Fund’s research team: Haley Andres, Michelle Amador, Randi Berry, and Ximena Garnica. These dialogues were supported by input from all Cultural Solidarity Fund organizers.

Ecosystem Audit

The research began with a literature and media review to contextualize the Cultural Solidarity Fund’s work in larger movements for redistribution in arts and culture.

→ [See cited and recommended readings in “Researchers’ Resources”](#)

Storycircling

This research project used Storycircling (a method used by the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and the Free Southern Theater) to unite participants in conversations of strategic collective reflection and analysis based on mutual respect and trust. Three story circles were conducted in the first portion of this research project, with CSF Organizers of the fund, with foundation funders, and with organization funders. During the first research activation on November 3, 2023, five simultaneous storycircles were held as the first breakout room.

 [See our research storycircle script](#)

Surveys

Two survey processes were used to increase accessibility. The first survey was sent to grant applicants to gauge interest in a qualitative interview.

The second survey was shared with organizers affiliated with Culture@3, to ask about their experience with and knowledge of CSF. It asked the following questions:

- How do you primarily see yourself fitting into our cultural economy?
- How do or did you participate in Culture@3?
- Have you heard of the Cultural Solidarity Fund before this survey?
- Did you participate in the Cultural Solidarity Fund? If you didn’t participate, why not?
- What is your experience working in or with coalition-based efforts, including in Culture@3?

Qualitative Interviews

Qualitative interviews were conducted online using Zoom, Dovetail, and Miro to aid in data collection. The researchers conducted 35 moderated qualitative interviews with:

- 6 applicants and grantees
- 17 organizers and supporters
- 12 donors and funders

Qualitative interview participants were selected with the support of the CSF research team to represent the demographics of the full group of organizers and supporters.

 [See our qualitative interview script](#)

Socialization

After major learnings were synthesized, researchers and CSF organizers co-convened two gatherings to socialize the findings. In the first gathering on November 3, 2023, research findings were shared by the researchers and

discussed in three breakout rooms. In the second gathering, on November 9, 2023, some internal CSF organizers gathered in person to reflect on the research process. The cover image is visually scribed by Emma Dulski of that gathering.

Redistribution

The Cultural Solidarity Fund is still working towards its goal to fund all of its applicants. Remaining money in this research budget was redistributed to unfunded applicants through a simple survey and CSF's lottery system, awarding \$500 honoraria to as many applicants as the budget would allow. As of March 2024, money was redistributed to at least 20 applicants, leaving 184 still unfunded.

Attendance at a variety of other events

Local rallies and study circles; Art.coop and Creative Time HQ's "Art Worlds We Want" in New York City; Marina Lopez and Clara Takarabe's "An Invitation to Rest" online; A Blade of Grass's "Convening" at Creative Time; Creatives Rebuild NY, Anti-Capitalism for Artists and Art.coop's "Connecting to the Solidarity Economy Movement: Reframing Institutional Power" at the 2023 Basic Income Guarantee (BIG) Conference; CityLore's "Sustaining Arts Labor: Past and Present" at Bluestockings Cooperative; Asia Art Archive's "Leadership Camp Exhibition: (Im)material Ruins" in its home space; Participatory Budgeting, Democracy Beyond Elections, and Art.coop's "This is what Participatory Democracy looks like!" at Naturally Occurring Cultural Districts of New York (NOCD-NY); NEW INC and Art.coop's "Art and/or Work: Creating Beyond Capitalism"; Jurrell Lewis and Lucas Kane's presentation of Bertolt Brecht's "The Measures Taken: A Learning Play" at CUNY School of Labor and Urban Studies; University CLAEH and Art.coop's "Gestión Cultural: Perspectivas Críticas desde

lo Comunitario/Cultural Management: Critical Perspectives from the Community" online; CityLore's "Celebrating the Art of Activism and Community-Building in Chinatown" in its home space; SALAM's "Rice and Resistance: Tamil Labor on the Plantation" at The Peoples Forum; Radio AlHara, Musicians for Palestine, and Interference Archive's "Collaborative Curriculum Building Workshop" in its home space; Eyebeam's "Democracy Machine Fellows Week" online; SALAM's "Songs of Solidarity" at Project Reach; Interference Archive's "Art in Action Across Borders" in its home space; Justice Funders' "State of the Movement 2023: Shifting Capital and Power to Build the Regenerative Economy" online; and New York Grantmakers in the Arts' "Rejecting the Cliff: Long-Term Visioning for Justice-Forward Grantmaking" at Ford Foundation, among others.

Consent

We have made every effort to ensure that quotations have been reviewed and approved by our research participants.

Acknowledgements

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Research Participants

This research draws upon interviews and conversations with:

- Alejandra Duque Cifuentes
- Alfonso Ramirez
- Amy Schwartzman
- Aya Esther Hayashi, PhD, People's Theatre Project
- Aziza Browne
- Bruce Allardice, Ping Chong and Company
- Caroline Woolard
- Columbine Macher
- Donna Lieberman
- Dorothy Ryan
- Eileen Wiseman
- Emily Waters
- Eva Ding
- Haley Andres
- Jennifer Wright Cook
- Juan José Escalante, José Limón Dance Company
- Kimberleigh Costanzo
- Kristin Fulton
- Lauren Miller
- Laurie Berg
- Lisa Fane, Irish Repertory Theatre
- LuLu LoLo
- John Calvelli

- Mark Rossier
- Melody Capote
- Michelle Amador, Mark Morris Dance Group
- Moira Stone
- Nicole Touzien, Dancewave
- Randi Berry, IndieSpace, formerly Indie Theater Fund
- Sadé Lythcott
- Talissa Bavaresco
- Taryn Sacramone
- Ted Berger
- Ximena Garnica, LEIMAY
- Additional anonymous participants

From the Organizers of the Cultural Solidarity Fund

None of this work would be possible without the care, compassion, and commitment of the CSF organizers:

- Michelle Amador
- Haley Mason Andres
- Randi Berry
- Paula Bennet
- Laurie Berg
- Ted Berger
- Melody Capote
- Juan José Escalante
- Carianne Carleo-Evangelist
- Ximena Garnica
- Donna Lieberman
- DJ McDonald
- Lauren Miller
- Ellen Pollan
- Mark Rossier
- Meredith Lynsey Schade
- Lucy Sexton
- Hanna Stubblefield-Tave
- Nicole Touzien
- Cheryl Warfield

CSF Supporters from Cultural Solidarity Fund Website



Reflection from the Researchers

We are Sruti Suryanarayanan and Emma Werowski, two craftspeople who come together in our lives as neighbors in Brooklyn, NY and in this report to tell the stories of culture bearers who resist capitalism and build alternative ways to shift from just surviving to thriving. This document is one way we channel our stories, of artists that facilitate healing from inherited and global traumas, into a call to action to sustainably resource all workers, including cultural workers.

We know, employ, and resource collective action processes that recognize the interwoven natures of our liberation, and actively counteract systematic exclusion, especially in the forms of Racism and Capitalism, by redistributing power through resourcing and internal learning. We know that when the most marginalized of us is resourced, we are ready for liberation.

We invoke in this work the care, maintenance, visions, and leadership of all those who have struggled for racial, economic, workers' and environmental justice and emancipation across the lands. Our Solidarity Economy relies on the centuries-long work of our siblings at the forefront of Black liberation, Indigenous sovereignty, and decolonial movements around the world, including but not limited to: the Movement for Black Lives, the Native and First Nations people of Turtle Island and Aotearoa, and people resisting settler-colonial occupation in Palestine, Kashmir, and elsewhere.

We also acknowledge that, as a research duo, we primarily live and work on Lenapehoking, the unceded land of the Lenape people, with respect to our Shinnecock, Wampanoag, and Haudenosaunee neighbors. We pay respect to Indigenous elders past, present, and future,

and thank them for their continued stewardship of the lands we sit upon, while recognizing that land acknowledgment is simply one small step, not the end of the work towards reconciliation. We affirm that the Solidarity Economy is inherently about building right relationship with Native people and Native land that includes reparations and the #LandBack campaign.

When we say #LandBack, we mean give the land back and commit to Indigenous control of occupied lands; decolonization is not a metaphor. We affirm that the Solidarity Economy is inherently about reparations and justice for the Black communities whose ancestors were enslaved, abused, and murdered to build this nation-state.

When we say reparations and justice, we also mean abolition. We stand in solidarity with those who continue to labor without just compensation and those who struggle for Black liberation and just economic systems—we honor this work as we work together. We know that the work of the Solidarity Economy movement is equal parts tearing down systems that violate us — of policing, militarization, incarceration — and building ones that strengthen us.

When we say building systems that support us, we also mean preparing to resist future crises that Racial Capitalism will force upon us. We hope this document serves as a tool, not just to water a hundred flowers to feed a thousand bees, but to heal the soil so it can let a thousand flowers bloom and millions of bees feast.

"If you have come here to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together."

— Aboriginal activists group Queensland, 1970s¹

¹ This quote was prominently documented after Lilla Watson spoke it at the 1985 United Nations' Third World Conference on Women in Nairobi, Kenya. Lilla Watson notes that this quote is not hers alone, and that she was "not comfortable being credited for something that had been born of a collective process." She calls attention to the Aboriginal activists and the collective process they shared that brought forth these words. From *Let Us Work Together* by R. Beisler, Uniting Church Australia, 2019.

Visual scribing notes by Emma Dulski

Of the November 9, 2023 gathering of CSF organizers to discuss the research results.



List of Parallel Efforts

Our research participants listed the following groups, efforts, movements, and campaigns as parallel efforts to the Cultural Solidarity Fund that modeled solidarity and coalition during the onset of the pandemic. They have equally shaped this report by guiding our participants' reflections.

Individuals

- Melody Capote
- Alejandra Duque Cifuentes
- Mackenzie Scott
- Jess Macy
- John Wright
- Sally Applebaum
- Sean Leonardo from Recess
- Jeremy O'Harris
- Theresa from The Brick
- Individuals who offered compassion
- Union organizers
- Political educators
- Political organizers
- Neighbors

Regional Efforts

- Local religious groups
- Local affordable live/work spaces
- Culture Aid New Orleans
- Local community fridges
- Local mutual aid groups

Reports & Writing

- Bridgspan Report
- CreateNYC plan
- Americans for the Arts Survey
- Helicon's "Not Just Money"
- Echoing Green Report
- Solidarity Not Charity report

Theater & Performing Arts Organizations & Projects

- Lincoln Center's outdoor stages
- Performing Arts Centers Consortium
- Coalition of Theatres of Color (CTC)
- Bushwick Starr
- Performing Arts Readiness Project
- League of Independent Theaters
- We See You, White American Theater
- SAG Strike
- 10 Chimneys / Black Theater United
- Off Broadway League
- Association Performing Artist Professionals (APAP) Conference
- North American Theater Owners
- Ping Chong Company
- People's Theater
- Out of an Abundance of Caution

Music Organizations

- Music Workers Alliance
- Everwave

Dance Organizations

- Chocolate Factory Theatre
- Dance/NYC

Organizations Led By, With, and For Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC)

- Caribbean Cultural Center African Diaspora Institute (CCCADI)
- Harlem Arts Alliance
- CEG - Cultural Equity Group
- Latinx New York (LXNY) Artist Consortium
- Asian American Arts Alliance

Other Arts & Culture Organizations & Projects

- Laundromat Project
- Culture@3PM
- Nursing Arts Coalition
- Triangle Fire Coalition
- CSA: Coalition of Small Arts Organizations
- Creatives Rebuild NY (CRNY)
- Skirt Ball
- Unions, including SAG/AFTRA, the Writers Guild, and the Freelancers Union
- Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts
- New Yorkers for Culture and Arts
- Art in Odd Places
- Executive Director Affinity Group
- Association of Zoo and Aquariums
- Lower Manhattan Cultural Council

- Art/New York
- Cultural Institutions Group (CIG)
- ArtBuilt
- Issue Project Room
- Art Service Organization Coalition
- Safety Net Coalition
- Organizations who continued to commission and pay their artists and cultural workers

Political Organizations & Campaigns

- Tax The Rich
- One Percent for Culture
- Local DSA chapters
- People's Cultural Plan

Larger Advocacy Organizations

- National Employment Law Project

Educational Efforts

- People's Institute for Survival & Beyond
- Caribbean Cultural Center African Diaspora Institute (CCCADI)'s webinars on anti-racism: What, not How

Funds & Grants

- Innovation Fund
- FCA Emergency Grant
- Craft Emergency Relief Fund.
- AAPI Transportation Fund
- ArtPlace
- Shuttered Venues Operating Grant
- Entertainment Community Fund
- Ballet Theatre Scholarship Fund

- New York Arts Recovery Fund
- Emergency funds and grants
- Cultural Immigrant Grant
- Dancers Above Water Relief Fund
- Cultural Development Fund Grants
- Ford Foundation's America's Cultural Treasures Fund
- Rauschenberg emergency grants
- Springboard's "quick grants"
- Apollo Theatre Micro Grants to Entrepreneurs
- New York Theater program
- National Artists Relief Grants
- Nonprofit Stabilization Fund
- Artist Relief Fund
- Apollo Theatre Employee Emergency Fund
- No strings attached grants

Grantmakers & Fiscal Sponsors

- Women in Development
- NYGIA NY Grantmakers in the Arts
- New York City Mortgage Coalition
- the waterers
- NYFA
- Mosaic Network
- Grantmakers in the Arts
- Culture Arts
- Creative Capital
- Howard Gilman Foundation
- Joseph Roundtree Foundation (UK)
- Indie Theatre Fund
- Artist Communities Alliance
- Fiscal sponsors
- The Field
- AmbitioUS
- Center for Cultural Innovation

- New York Community Trust (NYCT)
- NDN Collective
- Legacy project of the Actors Fund/Entertainment Community Fund

State Offices and Groups

- Social Security
- Department of Cultural Affairs (DCLA)
- National Coalition of Arts Preparedness and Emergency Response
- Universal Guaranteed or Basic Income Programs (UBI and GI)
- Disaster Unemployment Insurance Assistance
- COVID Task Force
- City Artists Corps
- City Council Representation
- NY State Council on the Arts' Individual Artists Grants
- Cultural After-School Adventures (CASA) and Su-Cultural After-School Adventures (SU CASA) Programs
- City Council Forums
- CETA
- Our own "works progress administration (WPA)"
- PPP Loans
- Western State Center Arts Council
- Unemployment
- Recovery Plan for Puerto Rico
- FEMA
- NYC Open Culture Program

Glossary

Anti-racism is “actively opposing racism by advocating for changes in political, economic, and social life.”¹

Black, Indigenous, People of Color is the term we use instead of the acronyms BIPOC or POC (People of Color) in order to center Black and Indigenous experience and to acknowledge ways that anti-Black racism and the practiced erasure of Indigenous peoples continues to shape our lives.²

Calling In vs. Out: Calling out is a public process of holding someone accountable with the hope that it will end their toxic behavior. In her article “Calling IN: A Less Disposable Way of Holding Each Other Accountable”, published on Black Girl Dangerous, Ngọc Loan Trần describes “calling in” as “a practice of pulling folks back in who have strayed from us... Calling in as a practice of loving each other enough to allow each other to make mistakes, a practice of loving ourselves enough to know that what we’re trying to do here is a radical unlearning of everything we have been configured to believe is normal.”³

Class privilege is a way to describe one’s access to resources, power, and opportunities within a system and culture that systemically advantages the mostly White, ruling class. Class privilege acknowledges that under this system one’s access to resources is based on one’s class position. To be clear, class and race are distinct but overlapping. This affects class privilege.⁴

Culture Bearers are people who are dedicated to sustaining cultural traditions within their community. The First People’s Fund defines Native culture-bearers as “individuals who pass on the traditions and lifeways of their people, or who carry ancestral knowledge and lifeways of generations before them. They are considered to be the best source of cultural knowledge for a tribe.”⁵

Cultural Workers: “To call oneself a cultural worker, as opposed to a creative, is to essentially say that your labor, or at least a particular fraction of it, occurs with the intention to uphold a certain culture. It proposes that your labor as an artist, your work in art and literature, is accountable to the idea of culture. And, if we as organizers and anti-racists and socialists and communists and revolutionaries are committed to upholding a revolutionary culture, then our labor as cultural workers is accountable to the notion of working to uphold that revolutionary culture. That is, that we are not simply creating art for arts sake, or writing for the sake of writing, but have a moral obligation to use our artistic and linguistic talents in the service of liberation. ‘Cultural worker’ ... assumes an art or literature production which lends itself to upholding this culture of eventual revolution and subsequent post-revolution, and uphold the notion that culture indeed can be a powerful weapon, as Amilcar Cabral and Nikki Giovanni and Robin D.G. Kelley and Amiri Baraka and Audre Lorde and many revolutionaries before us have said.”⁶

¹ From *Race reporting guide* by Race Forward.

² From *The BIPOC project* by The BIPOC Project.

³ From *The BIPOC project* by The BIPOC Project.

⁴ From *Frequently asked questions* by Resource Generation.

⁵ From *Establishing a creative economy: Art as an economic engine in Native communities* by First Peoples Fund, Artspace, Department of Anthropology, Colorado State University, Leveraging Investments in Creativity (LINC), & Northwest Area Foundation, 2013.

⁶ From *Cultural worker, not a “Creative”* by D. Springer, 2020, Medium.

Decolonization “brings about the repatriation of Indigenous land and life; it is not a metaphor for other things we want to do to improve our societies and schools. The easy adoption of decolonizing discourse by educational advocacy and scholarship, evidenced by the increasing number of calls to “decolonize our schools,” or use “decolonizing methods,” or, “decolonize student thinking”, turns decolonization into a metaphor... Because Settler Colonialism is built upon an entangled triad structure of settler-native-slave, the decolonial desires of White, non-White, immigrant, postcolonial, and oppressed people, can similarly be entangled in resettlement, reoccupation, and reinhabitation that actually further Settler Colonialism.”⁷

Emergent Strategy is “a plan towards a goal based in the science of emergence – the way complex systems and patterns arise out of a multiplicity of relatively simple interactions.”⁸ It is “a humble philosophy, a way to acknowledge the real power of change, and be in the right relationship to it. Its intent is to deepen relationships, build trust, and political alignment.”⁹

Equity: Grantmakers in the Arts defines equity as “the fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all people, while at the same time striving to identify and eliminate barriers that have prevented the full participation of some groups.”¹⁰ Press Press Baltimore defines equity as “the notion of folks being equipped with what they need to be successful, while acknowledging that folks are positioned differently in social spaces and have different needs. This notion understands that people are not starting from a level playing field. Equality might aim to promote the notion of fairness, but in reality only furthers existing inequitable social relations.”¹¹

Extractive Economy: An economy based on the removal of wealth from communities through the depletion and degradation of natural resources, the exploitation of human labor (a particularly precious natural resource) and the accumulation of wealth by interests outside the community (i.e. big banks, big oil and big box stores). The purpose of the Extractive Economy is the accumulation of wealth and power in the hands of a few, enforced through the violent enclosure of land, labor and capital. The violence of enclosure can only result in the erosion of biological and cultural diversity.¹²

Just Transition “is a vision-led, unifying and place-based set of principles, processes, and practices that build economic and political power to shift from an extractive economy to a regenerative economy. This means approaching production and consumption cycles holistically and waste-free. The transition itself must be just and equitable; redressing past harms and creating new relationships of power for the future through reparations. If the process of transition is not just, the outcome will never be. Just Transition describes both where we are going and how we get there.”¹³

Money Moving Coalitions are defined in this report as a horizontal and formal group of organizations, individuals, and institutions who collaboratively raise and redistribute money to the more marginalized members of their communities. The Cultural Solidarity Fund is an example of a Money Moving Coalition.

⁷ From *Decolonization is Not a Metaphor* by E. Tuck & K.W. Yang, 2012, *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*.

⁸ From *Principles of emergent processes in facilitation* by a.m. brown, 2013.

⁹ From *Emergent Strategy Ideation Institute* by Emergent Strategy Ideation Institute.

¹⁰ From *Racial equity in arts funding statement of purpose and recommendations for action* by Grantmakers in the Arts, 2015.

¹¹ From *The BIPOC project* by The BIPOC Project.

¹² From *From banks and tanks to cooperation and caring: A strategic framework for Just Transition* by Movement Generation Justice & Ecology Project, 2016.

¹³ From *Just Transition - Framework for change* by Climate Justice Alliance, 2023.

Neoliberalism is an economic philosophy which entails a belief that private markets will solve all problems and the corresponding defunding of state and public sector services. It has likewise eviscerated public arts funding.¹⁴

Non-Profit Industrial Complex (NPIC) is “a system of relationships between: the State (or local and federal governments), the owning classes, foundations, and non-profit/NGO social service & social justice organizations that results in the surveillance, control, derailment, and everyday management of political movements. The state uses non-profits to: Monitor and control social justice movements; Divert public monies into private hands through foundations; Manage and control dissent in order to make the world safe for capitalism; Redirect activist energies into career-based modes of organizing instead of mass-based organizing capable of actually transforming society; Allow corporations to mask their exploitative and colonial work practices through “philanthropic” work; Encourage social movements to model themselves after capitalist structures rather than to challenge them.”¹⁵

Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) are “institutions whose histories, policies, practices, and ideologies center Whiteness or the White majority. PWIs, by design, tend to marginalize the identities, perspectives, and practices of people of color.”¹⁶

Racial Capitalism refers to the ways in which racialized subjects made (and make) capitalism possible, including slavery, violence, imperialism, and genocide.¹⁷

Racism is defined by Audre Lorde as “the belief in the inherent superiority of one race over all others and thereby the right to dominance, manifest and implied.”¹⁸

Regenerative Economy : An economy based on reflective, responsive, reciprocal relationships of interdependence between human communities and the living world upon which we depend. The purpose of a Regenerative Economy must be social and ecological well-being.¹⁹

Settler Colonialism has a goal of “removing and erasing Indigenous peoples in order to take the land for use by settlers in perpetuity. According to Laura Hurwitz and Shawn Borque’s “[Settler Colonialism Primer](#),” “This means that Settler Colonialism is not just a vicious thing of the past, such as the gold rush, but exists as long as settlers are living on appropriated land and thus exists today.”²⁰

Solidarity Economy or Solidarity Economy Movement is a term used internationally to describe sustainable and equitable community-control of work, food, housing, and culture using a variety of organizational forms.²¹ The Solidarity Economy principles include cooperation, participatory democracy, intersectional equity, sustainability, and pluralism.²²

Structural Racism involves “macro level systems, social forces, institutions, ideologies, and processes that interact with one another to generate and reinforce inequities among racial and ethnic groups.”²³

¹⁴ From *The contest for American culture: A leadership case study on the NEA and NEH funding crisis* by C. Koch in *Funding Challenges and Successes in Arts Education*, 1997.

¹⁵ From *Beyond the Non-Profit Industrial Complex* by INCITE!, 2018.

¹⁶ From *To teach as we are known: The ‘Heart and soul’ labor of teacher educators of color working in PWIs in Designing Culturally Competent Programming for PK-20 Classroom* by A.R. Morales & J. Raible, 2020.

¹⁷ From *Black Marxism: the making of the Black Radical tradition* by C.J. Robinson, 2000.

¹⁸ From *The Uses of Anger* by A. Lorde, 1981, *Women’s Study Quarterly*.

¹⁹ From *From banks and tanks to cooperation and caring: A strategic framework for Just Transition* by *Movement Generation Justice & Ecology Project*, 2016.

²⁰ From *What is Settler-Colonialism?* by A. Morris, 2019, *Learning for Justice*.

²¹ From *The Solidarity Economy* by the New Economy Coalition, 2023.

²² From *System change: a basic primer to the solidarity economy* by E. Kawano & J. Matthaei, 2020, *Nonprofit Quarterly*.

²³ From *Structural racism and health inequities* by G.C. Gee & C.L. Ford, 2011, *Du Bois Review*.

Systems Change addresses root causes rather than symptoms and tends to take a multidisciplinary, long-term approach that requires transforming policies, practices, relationships, and power dynamics.²⁴

White Supremacy involves “individual and institutional attitudes, practices, and policies that elevate the White body as the standard against which all other persons’ worth is measured.”²⁵

²⁴ From *Embracing complexity: Towards a shared understanding of funding systems change* by Ashoka, Catalyst 2030, Co-Impact, Echoing Green, Schwab Foundation, Skoll Foundation, McKinsey & Company, & SYSTEMIQ, 2020.

²⁵ From *White body supremacy* by Complex Trauma Resources, 2020.

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Let's keep talking.

The **Cultural Solidarity Fund (CSF)** is an initiative administered by IndieSpace (formerly Indie Theater Fund) with leadership by LEIMAY and a coalition of arts administrators and institutions that provides relief microgrants of \$500 to artists and cultural workers including individual artists, administrators, production staff, custodians, art educators, ushers, guards, and more and prioritizes Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC), immigrant, disabled, d/Deaf, and trans and gender-nonconforming individuals who have been most severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. For more information visit culturalsolidarityfund.org

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