



Public Comments
From Educational Alliance on the
New York City Department of Cultural Affairs
Proposed 5-Year Accessibility Plan
Pursuant to Local Law 12 of 2023
(2024 - 2028)

Thank you for this opportunity to provide feedback on the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs Proposed 5-Year Accessibility Plan. This plan models many best practices, and we applaud DCLA's dedication to improved accessibility. As referenced in the Executive Summary, DCLA has an important platform as a funder to support increased access and inclusion in the field of arts and culture in New York City.

Educational Alliance is an organization with a long and ongoing commitment to inclusive and community-based arts programming, and we have a deep understanding of challenges to accessibility. We were established as a settlement house on Manhattan's Lower East Side in 1889 and have provided cultural programming in the community ever since. Our commitment to fostering creativity in people's lives is central to the work we do: each of our neighborhood-based community centers provides unique arts programming through a combination of classes, workshops, and performances, and all are low-cost and accessible to a wide variety of audiences. As a community-centered organization that provides cultural programming to a diverse audience, we offer the following comments based on our experience and perspective:

Increase funding for the CreateNYC Disability Forward Fund or other funding mechanisms that provide programmatic support for accessibility in performances. This includes several accessibility enhancements that address common barriers that prevent people from participating in cultural programming including open captioning, ASL interpretation, childcare for artists and audiences, and neurodiverse /relaxed performances. Smaller, community-based venues often need to make programmatic adjustments to reach diverse audiences but operate on a limited budget that makes even low-cost changes a challenge.

Pooled funding or microgrants through DCLA for accessibility programmatic support would strengthen the performing arts for more New Yorkers. For example, such funding could support a temporary staff role dedicated to addressing and implementing accessibility needs for the duration of a production or art installation.

Consider adjustments to DCLA's structure to increase its ability to support accessibility among the City's many smaller cultural providers.

The creative sector in New York City is an economic engine, attracting world class artists and creative workers, as well as a thriving cultural tourism industry that attracts visitors from around the world and provides employment to tens of thousands of New Yorkers. Small non-profit cultural organizations create cultural content and make it widely available through free programming or

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extremely affordable ticket sales. These programs add vibrancy to neighborhoods, yet most non-profit cultural organizations depend on limited private fundraising for revenue and operate on an extremely limited budget. To bridge this revenue gap and support the programs that add so much value to neighborhoods, government resources are needed. We urge the New York City leaders to expand DCLA's ability to support smaller, community-based arts organizations through funding and promotional support.

Thank you again for your leadership in modeling best practices for accessibility and equity in cultural community and for the opportunity to offer feedback.