

Advancing Black Art in Pittsburgh

A Partnership of The Pittsburgh Foundation and The Heinz Endowments



Program Rationale

Both The Pittsburgh Foundation and The Heinz Endowments are committed to helping create a vibrant cultural life in Pittsburgh and the region. The foundations have maintained a long-term commitment to arts and culture as an important factor in the region's quality of life, in the well-being of its citizens, and in its image and economy. We believe that a vibrant cultural life includes the notion of diverse cultural offerings that appeal to the widest array of the region's citizenry. It is now widely recognized that Pittsburgh's cultural offerings are one of its strongest competitive advantages; this includes a rich history and the current presence of excellent Black arts presentation and production. But Pittsburgh has lagged in the presence of stable Black arts organizations and professional Black artists; that is, organizations and individuals whose work focuses on the art of African-Americans, Africa and the larger Diaspora—despite the fact that the city of Pittsburgh itself is over 25% African American.

The region's well documented social and economic disparities around race, as well as our racial segregation, are also present in the region's cultural life. Historically lower government and foundation support, fewer individual donors for the arts, little or no endowment income, and smaller audiences leave many arts organizations that are committed to Black arts programming under-resourced. Working capital for these organizations can be far less than that of their counterparts working in western European-based art forms that were founded decades ago. Less working capital has significant ramifications for the quality and quantity of Black arts programming presented in the region: artistic risk-taking is curtailed; outreach programming to schools is reduced; individual artists are less likely to find sustainable employment in chosen art forms; visibility within the arts landscape is constrained; and organizational growth is made much more difficult. In addition, Black arts as a collective segment of the region's life has not been adequately documented and discussed as part of the region's cultural health.

The depth of the challenges outlined above will require dynamic leadership from the African American community as well as a coordinated long-term strategy from the philanthropic community. The goal of this new fund is to build upon the legacy of The Pittsburgh Foundation and The Heinz Endowments' initial investments in the Multi-Cultural Arts Initiative more than twenty years ago, and to continue to work toward eliminating disparities and providing diverse cultural resources for all the region's citizens.

Theory of Change

Creating equity in all our funding programs is critically important, and this grants program is a beginning in building strategies to create equity. We believe that the most important investments that philanthropy can make to advance Black arts in the city and region are: 1) to help to build the careers of individual artists 2) to increase the sustainability of cultural organizations that focus on Black art; 3) to build community awareness of the Black arts sector; and 4) to support connections to larger and predominantly European-based arts organizations. Growing institutional capacity, supporting career development, and building understanding and awareness within the larger community is the best way to ensure that there will be a continuing presence of these cultural forms and increasing interest in and demand for them. These beliefs have led us to focus grant dollars on operating support, funds for individual artists, targeted special project, and activities that advance the field collectively. If this investment strategy is successful, we will be able to measure progress in terms of growth in organizational stability, career opportunities for artists, and public participation in the art of the African Diaspora.

Funding Strategies

Beginning in 2011, the foundations will provide the following funding opportunities to advance the quality and quantity of Black art in the region:

General Operating Support

A select group of nonprofit cultural organizations whose focus is the production and/or presentation of Black art, as previously defined, will be invited to apply for general operating support. Grantees must present a full season of programming, have at least one full-time equivalent staff person, a clear strategy to accomplish their goals, and meet annual measures of success developed in consultation with foundation staff.

Support to Individual Artists

Two different opportunities will be available for individual artists. Individual artists whose work focuses on art of the African Diaspora may apply directly for support for the creation of new work. In addition, any arts organization may apply for support to host artist residencies with artists whose work focuses on art of the African Diaspora. Residencies should emphasize the creation of new work and, where possible, include in-depth public interaction with professional artists through workshops and classes.

Special Project Grants

Nonprofit organizations may apply for grants up to \$20,000 to present and/or produce work that will make an important contribution to the place of Black arts on the artistic landscape. Preference will be given to arts organizations; however, other nonprofits may apply if they can demonstrate ability to present/produce work. Preference will also be given to those organizations that have Black arts as a core part of their mission, and that emphasize significant community involvement/engagement in the project.

Advancing the Field

Nonprofit organizations may apply for grants that advance understanding and visibility of the Black arts sector in the region. Ideas that will be considered include the provision of service and technical assistance; the collection of data on the sector; and other collective activities that advance the field of Black arts as a whole.

The foundations have consulted with an advisory group of individuals concerned with the cultivation of Black art in the region and will convene this group on a regular basis to review the progress of the program during 2011. We will also use a peer panel to review all applications. We believe that intentional targeted funding will spur greater creativity in this important part of the cultural sector, grow the capacity of its artists and organizations, and allow more people to experience and enjoy the contributions of Black artists to our collective cultural life.

For more information on this initiative, visit:

www.pittsburghfoundation.org

www.heinz.org

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