

THE HEINZ ENDOWMENTS

The Transformative Arts Process Program Rationale

The Transformative Arts Process (TAP), is a grants program of The Heinz Endowments with a goal of **helping to create a more just Pittsburgh by enriching our practice as a foundation through experiments in participatory grantmaking, and invigorating the field of teaching artists and arts organizations that have a demonstrated practice of challenging structural inequities¹ and bringing transformative arts-centered experiences to youth in and from African American and “distressed communities.”²** This grants program is the latest step in what has been an iterative process, working closely with individuals in the field to determine how the Endowments might best and most sustainably increase our investments in out-of-school-time arts programming in the aforementioned communities. We have explored this issue with community partners, and have come to the conclusion that one place we can make a valuable contribution is to build that part of the teaching artist field that focuses on distressed communities and to see youth artists and ourselves as grantmakers as a part of that field.

We realize that community change will not occur because of the arts alone and that the challenges facing distressed communities relate to and intensify one another. However, we strongly believe that the arts can provide solutions in the struggle to address poverty, racism and other forms of oppression that form and denote distressed communities. The arts have powerful value in addressing both community and individual well-being. We know that, if well-taught, the arts build lasting skills, enrich identity, and change worldviews in ways that undermine the insidious effects of poverty and racism on children’s development and a neighborhood’s culture. We also know that we already have artists in Pittsburgh whose life’s work is to challenge oppression and make a larger impact on community. This leads the Endowments to a commitment to adding value by helping a strong cohort of artists prepare to work in community settings in order to address important community challenges.

When we refer to “teaching artists,” we use nationally recognized arts leader Eric Booth’s definition of teaching artist: “A teaching artist is a practicing professional artist with the complementary skills, curiosities, and habits of mind of an educator, who can effectively engage a wide range of people in learning experiences in, through and about the arts.” However in our read of this definition, we include art forms such as cosmetology, fashion, barbering and culinary

¹By structural inequities we mean to say the conditions or set of conditions that are the result of both history and the current moment, and that repeat themselves in African American/distressed neighborhoods and thus disadvantage youth who live in those communities.

² We draw our definition of “distressed communities” from the Allegheny County Health Department, which characterizes these communities as areas of high unemployment and pervasive poverty.

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arts, the type of creative making that could be seen to fall under “culture,” which has come to be defined in general parlance as “the way we do things around here.”

The TAP is making grants through four initiatives:

- (1) Teaching Artists in Residence Program — This program has invested \$420,000 to enable seven teaching artists to work 25 hours a week in a two-year residency with arts organizations and programs based **in** African American/distressed neighborhoods or in arts organizations or programs primarily serving youth **from** those neighborhoods.
- (2) Capital Improvement Grants — Six \$10,000 grants were awarded to arts organizations based in African American/distressed neighborhoods, or serving youth from those neighborhoods, for technological or physical improvements to spaces.
- (3) Youth Artist Grants — This track will enable 10 arts organizations to partner with youth who receive \$15,000 awards to create or present their own work and/or the work of other youth.
- (4) Emerging Artist Awards — This grants process, managed by the social innovation nonprofit New Sun Rising, will allocate 20, \$5,000-\$6,000 awards over the course of two years and provide recognition to teaching artists doing transformative work in African American and distressed neighborhoods.

As part of these grants programs, the strategy includes nonfinancial support to applicants, networking and professional development opportunities as well as marketing support to the award winners. Since the program explicitly targets African American/distressed neighborhoods, we are giving priority to those youth, programs and teaching artists who have direct experience living and/or working in those communities. All applicants will have the same opportunities to participate in the networking and professional development activities that we plan to offer as part of the field-building strategy, **but participation in these activities will be required for all award winners.**

Central to the development of this strategy over the course of the last two years has been our engagement with the Transformative Arts Process Advisory Board, which is made up of both adult and youth members of the field and includes teaching artists, artists, students, arts administrators and grantmakers. Throughout this time period, they have made thoughtful suggestions about our focus and approach, and have added a tremendous amount of expertise to this work. We would not be at this place without them, and we can’t thank them enough for this work.