

**New York State Council on the Arts  
Council Meeting Minutes  
November 30, 2021 11:00 AM- 3:00PM  
Held via Video and Teleconference**

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Present:

Katherine Nicholls (Chair), Monica Angle, Lisa Baker, Lawrence Cook II, Scott Eberle, Aaron Flagg, Janet Kagan, Hildy Kuryk, Eric Latzky, James Lemons, Andrea Louie, Laudelina Martinez, Elsie McCabe-Thompson, David Alan Miller, Mahnaz Moinian, Catherine Schwoeffermann, Adriana Trigiani

Quorum present: Yes

Others in attendance:

Mara Manus, Executive Director, NYSCA

Megan White, Deputy Director of Programs, NYSCA

Abigail Young, Deputy Director of Operations and General Counsel, NYSCA

Abby Adler, Executive Assistant, NYSCA

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*Roll call conducted by Abby Adler and quorum was confirmed. Meeting called to order by Chair Katherine Nicholls at approximately 11:10AM.*

**CHAIR'S WELCOME**

**KATHERINE NICHOLLS:** Good afternoon and welcome to the New York State Council on the Arts' November 30, 2021 joint Committee and Council meeting. I am KATHERINE NICHOLLS, the Chair of the New York State Council on the Arts.

Thank you to our Council Members for joining us today. To remind all in attendance; this is a public meeting that is being recorded. As authorized by the Governor and the New York State Legislature on September 1, 2021, this meeting will be conducted by teleconference and video participation. A recording and transcript of the meeting will be made available on the NYSCA website.

Since our last Council meeting On September 9, New York arts and culture venues have continued to reopen, bringing life back to our communities. After so many months marked with closures and restrictions, performance arts are finally making a comeback! As you know NYSCA grants this fiscal year have supported a total of 777 "Rapid live Performance" grants which are ongoing and vital to our recovery! Many grant recipients have been featured on NYSCA's website so please continue to check in to our site as it is a source for grantee activation.

Last year international tourism was down 86% in New York State. Our vast Tourism economy accounts for over 800,000 jobs, many within the Arts and Culture sector. Finally, on November

8, 2021 the United States reopened its borders to international visitors; safely welcoming back travelers who come to New York seeking the breadth of our attractions, cultural anchors, and main street businesses. From international travelers arriving at our airports to Canadians crossing our land borders, New York State's economy is powered by tourism. On November 8, at the American Museum of Natural History, Executive Director Mara Manus and I attended Governor Hochul's announcement of a \$450 mm "BRING BACK TOURISM, BRING BACK JOBS" inclusive recovery package which includes grants to encourage the rehiring of industry staff, one-time payments for the hardest hit tourism workers, and funds to revitalize the sector by helping small businesses and venues reopen. The time to visit New York is now and we are grateful to Governor Hochul and our state's leadership for this responsive economic recovery package.

At today's meeting, we will review and vote on Fiscal Year 2022 Panelist Roster recommendations and the Fiscal Year 2022 Round Three grant recommendations, including Support for Organizations, Support for Artists, Special Opportunities, and Recovery Grants. The meeting materials were sent to Council on Tuesday, November 23, 2021.

The application portal for the Round 3 opportunities opened July 19 and closed September 1 at 4PM.

Between October 8 and November 18, NYSCA staff conducted 26 peer review panels and welcomed 135 panelists for the programs we will review today. Several members of our council and I were fortunate to observe a number of panel sessions and on behalf of the NYSCA Council we wish to acknowledge and thank our peer review panelists for their time, their professionalism, and their commitment to this most important part of our grant making process.

This year NYSCA launched new guidelines and program categories, and our peer review panelists came to these sessions prepared with thoughtful comments, insights, and their shared experiences to review and make recommendations that come before council today. Thank you also to NYSCA's Deputy Director of Programs Megan White, Director of Operations and GC, Abigail Young, our Program and Operations teams for their leadership in conducting our panels. Your professional stewardship of this process is what gives us confidence in our role as Council in reviewing your recommendations today.

A reminder that the FY2022 opportunities have been constructed to achieve the following:

- Significantly streamline the application process to reduce burden for applying, especially for new applicants and smaller organizations.
- Provide immediate support for live performance – an area of our sector that has had its doors shuttered since March 2020 with a significant unemployed workforce
- Expand eligibility and access to funding for underrepresented communities, smaller organizations, and a broader range of artistic practices
- Provide flexible funding to be responsive to the fluidity of our times

In an effort to continually engage our field and to ensure that our process and opportunities meet the needs of the field, NYSCA has already completed a Round 3 Applicant Survey. In this survey, NYSCA received input from 500 respondents from all 10 regions of our state. Among the topics covered, the survey engaged the field about the resources they used to complete the application process, how effective their communication with NYSCA was throughout the application process, time spent applying, and their access and eligibility to FY 2022 opportunities.

Overall results indicated both positive and constructive feedback that will continue to impact the evolution of NYSCA. Some highlights include:

- Approximately 75% of respondents indicated that completing an application took between 5-20 hours this year – a significant improvement over reported timelines from previous years.
- Of all the resources offered, approximately 95% of respondents said our information resources prepared them well or extremely well in their completion of the application process.
- 85% indicated NYSCA's responsiveness was good or excellent
- 98% of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the level of communication from NYSCA

I would like to thank our respondents and acknowledge the work of our incredible staff. This encouraging feedback and insight ensure that NYSCA is continually shaping our future to accommodate the needs of our vast and diverse field!

I am now pleased to welcome NYSCA's Executive Director, MARA MANUS. Mara- over the last 2 years during these incredibly challenging times, NYSCA has created more avenues for communication and connectivity for our field, which has shaped our grantmaking and process. we thank you so much and I'm pleased to turn this meeting over to you.

### **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR WELCOME**

#### **MARA MANUS:**

Thank you, KATHERINE! It is wonderful to be here with you all today. I'd like to give a big shout out to Abigail and Megan as well as our incredible staff – it's really a team effort.

As Katherine noted, the recent reopening of our indoor performance spaces and our borders to international travelers has been invigorating for our sector. Some of us have had the immense pleasure of stepping foot inside of theaters for the first time in almost 2 years, and for me has been thrilling and healing to experience the energy of live performance once again.

Over the Fall, I had the distinct pleasure of attending reopening events for Manhattan Theatre Club and Jack Arts in Brooklyn (where Jack welcomed a brand-new space). I also joined the Chocolate Factory in Queens as the celebrated the opening of a permanent home in Long Island City.

I traveled to Buffalo earlier this month, where I was joined by Council Member Scott Eberle and new Council Members Monica Angle and Larry Cook. My first stop was a visit to Albright Knox, and then we went to Buffalo Arts Studio and finally Buffalo String Works. As some council members may remember, Alma Carillo from Buffalo Arts Studio joined us for a Grantee Conversation at our July 2021 Council meeting.

*Executive Director Manus shared a 10-slide presentation of pictures from site visits during a trip to Buffalo on November 4, 2021. Site visits included the Albright Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo Arts Studio, and Buffalo String Works. A copy of the presentation deck can be viewed, [here](#).*

Restart NY:

I'm pleased to provide an update on our Restart NY: Live Performance Grants. Performances continue across all 10 regions of our state, and 70% of our grantees have submitted their Restart events form. From Battery Dance's first annual gallery crawl in Tribeca, which paired movement with the visual arts, to Geva Theatre Center's annual production of A Christmas Carol in Rochester! More than 600 events have occurred and 100 more are upcoming.

A reminder that you can find a list of upcoming Restart performances on the NYSCA website under the "NYSArts Now" tab. Many thanks to Lia Capotorto, NYSCA's Interim Communications Manager, and Sana Colter, NYSCA's VISTA Member, for continuing to lead the charge on this communications initiative!

Capital Opportunity Launch

We officially launched our Capital Projects opportunity on November 1 – this is our final round of FY2022 funding. The portal opened November 23 and will close January 14 at 4PM. We anticipate bringing recommendations to Council in March 2022. The guidelines included all of the application narrative questions so that applicants could begin to compile and develop their application materials in advance of the portal opening.

These projects prioritize the safety, accessibility, and longevity of vital arts and culture spaces, and we are proud to offer this critical support as organizations plan their futures. As you may remember, NYSCA received its first ever capital appropriation in FY18, and then again in FY19. With that combined \$30 million, NYSCA has awarded grants to 88 organizations across the state, including Fort Ticonderoga in North Country, The Albright Knox Art Gallery in Buffalo, The Bushwick Starr in Brooklyn, and the George Eastman Museum in Rochester. As we embark on our multi-year recovery and our sector continues to face the enduring impacts of COVID-19, capital projects remain a key priority for the State.

I want to give a huge shout out to Program Directors David Huff and Katie Steger for their leadership in developing and launching this opportunity, as well as our operations staff for developing the application portal so quickly. We are looking forward to receiving the applications on January 14!

## FY22 Outreach – Capital Webinar Update

As part of our continued outreach for FY22, we held a Capital Opportunity Webinar on November 10, which was attended by more than 350 individuals from all 10 regions of the state! This brings our total audience for FY22 Outreach to 4,500 viewers. A recording of the webinar and a copy of the presentation deck are available on the NYSCA website.

We have also hosted 4 capital opportunity virtual office hour sessions, with more scheduled for December. These office hour sessions provide an opportunity for NYSCA staff to provide incredibly high-touch, 1:1 support to individuals and organizations.

It has been so rewarding to experience the reopenings and the launch of our final FY2022 program – I'm sure you can all hear my enthusiasm! We continue to be inspired by our field and I look forward to sharing more reopening and Capital updates with you.

*A motion is made and seconded to enter Executive Session. The meeting continues in Executive Session for Council members and invited guests until 2:45PM.*

**KATHERINE NICHOLLS:** Welcome back to the public portion of the Council meeting for the New York State Council on the Arts. I am Katherine Nicholls, Chair of the New York State Council on the Arts. Thank you all for joining us. To remind all in attendance; this is a public meeting that is being recorded.

## **FY2022 Panelist Roster Recommendations**

### **MEGAN WHITE:**

NYSCA strongly believes in maintaining the public voice in our grantmaking process, and as such, peer-review panels are a cornerstone of NYSCA's mission and grantmaking. As reviewed at previous Council meetings, the executive leadership and program staff streamlined our panel process to address our current fiscal reality as well as the safety challenges presented by COVID-19.

- All panels were held virtually
- We utilized a new online platform SmartSimple, that allowed panelists to obtain applications, and input scores and comments remotely.
- Panelists were given several weeks to read and pre-rate the applications on the portal before the panel meeting.
- Panelists were also expected to enter their own comments in SmartSimple prior to the meeting.
- Ratings were tabulated and ranked prior to the panel meeting.
- Only certain applications were discussed in the panel room at the motion of one or more panelist. NYSCA staff kept a written record of the discussions. The final panel notes on each application include any such discussion as well as pertinent notes from the panelists.

- There were five panelists and each program reviewed their requests in a one day meeting except for those larger programs that maintained over 100 requests – those programs were allowed to hold two day meetings. Overall NYSCA engaged a total of 135 panelists for 27 sessions.
- Due to the continuing uncertainty of the arts and cultural environment, Panelists were charged to examine requests with the understanding that NYSCA intends to allow maximum flexibility in grants and focus on the applicant’s capacity to deliver on its mission.
- Panelists were furthermore charged to examine applicants track record, vision and approach, and to use application as a window into how organization operates not only internally but, in its community.

Over the past two years we have been refining the way we interact with and instruct panelists, through panelist training webinars, panel handbook, and a panel charge statement that is provided in writing and also reviewed and discussed at the top of each meeting. As mentioned previously, changes to NYSCA guidelines were some of the largest in the last 20 years at NYSCA and it remains important that our panels understand our intent and direction in these changes. Program staff responded by holding virtual live pre-panel orientations to field advance questions, and also acted as a team building exercise, helping to build camaraderie albeit in the virtual space.

NYSCA will once again conduct a post panel survey all participating panelists across programs, and be invited to give feedback on such items as

- Funding Opportunities
- Grant application (including questions or format)
- Virtual panel meeting process (including training, panel charge, pre-rating, panel discussions, and use of SmartSimple and Zoom)

Survey feedback will be taken into consideration when planning our FY23 grant cycle.

Today you are being asked to approve three panelists rosters – Folk Arts, Individual Artists, and Capital Projects. All panel members serve single year terms, and may be reappointed for a term of up to three years.

As a reminder, advisory panelists are required to act with impartiality with respect to the evaluation and rating of applications and to protect panel deliberations from any potential conflict of interest or the appearance of such a conflict. Prior to serving, panelists are required to acknowledge any affiliations with organizations making applications to the Council and must comply with New York State Ethics Laws.

*A copy of the panelist roster recommendations can be viewed, [here](#).*

*At the request of Chair Katherine Nicholls, a motion is made and seconded to bring the FY2022 Panelist Roster recommendations, and the FY2022 NYSCA Round 3 Support for Organizations, Support for Artists, Special Opportunity, and Recovery Grant recommendations to a vote.*

**KATHERINE NICHOLLS:** I would now like to ask Megan White if there are any recusals to report. Those with a conflict will be deemed recused on their vote for the applicable application.

**MEGAN WHITE:** Thank you Katherine. I have the following conflicts to report for the record:

1. American Symphony Orchestra League (DBA League of American Orchestras) – Support for Organizations: Aaron Flagg and David Alan Miller
2. Bellevue Literary Press - Support for Organizations: Andrea Louie
3. Buffalo Fine Arts Academy (DBA Albright Knox)- Support for Organizations: Monica Angle
4. Classical Theatre of Harlem - Recovery Grants: Elsie McCabe-Thompson
5. Cornell University - Support for Organizations: Lisa Baker
6. Intrepid Museum Foundation- Support for Organizations: Hildy Kuryk
7. Julliard School- Support for Organizations: Aaron Flagg
8. Just Buffalo Literary Center- Support for Organizations: Andrea Louie
9. Lake Placid Association for Music, Drama and Art - Support for Organizations: James Lemons
10. Queensboro Dance Festival - Support for Organizations: Andrea Louie
11. Solomon Guggenheim Foundation- Support for Organizations: Lisa Baker
12. The Research Foundation of CUNY - Support for Organizations: Elsie McCabe-Thompson
13. Trust for Governor's Island- Support for Organizations: Carolee Fink
14. Westbeth Corp. Housing Development - Support for Organizations, Recovery Fund: Elsie McCabe-Thompson

*Following the reading of the recusals, the motion carries unanimously by the Council members.*

**KATHERINE NICHOLLS:**

Today NYSCA has taken another important step forward in aiding the recovery of our not-for-profit arts and culture sector. These grants will no doubt make an incredible difference to the recipients as they reopen in communities all across New York State.

On Friday, November 26, Governor Hochul declared a State of Emergency in New York in response to the evolving COVID-19 Omicron variant. This declaration allows for our state to respond and prepare as appropriate. We have learned over the last 21 months that our sector's responsiveness and observance of government health protocols has allowed us to get back to work and return to our enjoyment of the arts. There are no further announcements impacting our sector at this time, and we wish our field great success as they continue to return to the work that they love, and that we have the privilege to enjoy.

Our next meeting will be held in Spring of 2022, where Council will review and vote on the Round 4 Capital Project grant recommendations. The portal for these applications will close on January 14 and we will announce the date of the next Council meeting shortly after the deadline passes.

Again, I would like to thank the NYSCA staff, Council, and panelists, as today in doing our civic duty we have approved over \$45 million in vital funding in support for New York's arts and culture sector.

I wish everyone good health, and this concludes our Council meeting for today! I will now ask for a motion and a second to adjourn the meeting.

*At the request of Chair Katherine Nicholls, a motion for the Council to adjourn the meeting is made and seconded. The motion carries unanimously by the Council members.*

**Meeting adjourns at 3:00PM.**

**End of Council Meeting Minutes.**

**All grants approved at this meeting can be found on the NYSCA grant search feature at [www.arts.ny.gov](http://www.arts.ny.gov) .**