

2016 Fall ADVOCACY BRIEF

To: GBCA & Cultural Colleagues

From: Laurie Dean Torrell 11/04/16

FRAMING ADVOCACY

As members of the cultural community, and organizations who benefit from public support, it's essential to take a proactive approach to advocacy. This means educating our elected officials about the importance and value of the work we do (individually and as a sector); thanking our elected officials for any support received; and urging continued and increased support over time.

Times when critical funding issues are on the table provide a rich opportunity for us to engage with our elected officials and do direct advocacy. We have seen direct results come from this—such as when Erie County Cultural Funding was restored several years ago, and City of Buffalo Cultural and Anti-Violence Grants were initiated. In years when there is not a dramatic crisis—perhaps especially then—we need to seize the opportunity to thank, further educate and excite our elected officials about all that is being made possible through their support of cultural funding. We can do this through activities such as writing letters, making personal visits and attending funding hearings.

The Greater Buffalo Cultural Alliance's goal since its inception has been to take a proactive, positive stance in positioning arts, culture and creativity as critical **community assets** and **priority areas** for public and private investment and engagement. Our ultimate goal is long term: increased funding; increased visibility, full valuing, and a community that fully values arts and culture and the integral role we play in our region's future.

FALL 2016 CULTURAL FUNDING ADVOCACY OPPORTUNITIES

#1 – 2017 ERIE COUNTY CULTURAL FUNDING

Erie County Executive Mark Poloncarz has released the 2017 proposed budget includes recommended funding for cultural agencies of \$6,104,709. This is a \$219,934 increase over last year and includes 6 new organizations.

ASI has shared the list of arts and cultural organizations and the amount recommended for funding. If you are a recommended organization, please be sure to send letters to the County Executive thanking him for his long-standing support of the cultural community; his support of your organization; and recommendation of an increase in overall funding for the arts and cultural.

Steps to take NOW

Personal outreach to the Erie County Legislators

Write, call and/or visit to make your support of cultural funding known to the Erie County Legislators, encouraging them to support and uphold the County Executive's proposed budget.

The Erie County Legislators "the Legislature" is the body that will approve the County Executive's recommended budget. Ideal is to reach out to all of them. Contact the legislator in whose district your organization is headquartered; Chairman John Mills, Majority Joseph Lorigo, and Minority Leader Thomas Loughran. Tap board members or supporters to send letter to their own legislator. Especially powerful can be business owners and employers within a district, whose voices often carry extra weight with legislators.

Great turnout for budget hearing

We need everyone to attend & bring supporters to the budget hearing on NOVEMBER 21 at 6PM at Chambers of the Legislature, 4th Floor at Old County Hall, 92 Franklin St., Buffalo, NY 14202. Sign up to speak in advance 858.7500 – or sign up that night!

Key Talking Points

- **A – ASK:** For full support of the county executive's recommended funding for cultural agencies (\$6,104,709);
- **B – BECAUSE OF YOU:** SHARE with them one or two stories or stats that really paints a picture of what your organization does—and tie it to them/Erie County Funding playing an important role in helping make this possible. Let them know why county cultural funding is a wise investment for your organization and the cultural sector, and the impact your organization has on Erie County (quality of life and/or tourism, economic development, education, etc.);
- **C – CONTINUED SUPPORT:** THANK them for Erie County's long-standing support of Erie County's arts & cultural organizations & ask for their continued support which is more important now than ever.

Additional points you can use:

- **VIBRANT KEY ASSET** - Erie County cultural organizations comprise a vibrant community asset which supports everything from quality of life to tourism. Erie County cultural funding has helped create this vibrant, vital sector through a long history of providing cultural funding support. This funding must be seen as an investment to maintain this world class asset here;
- **WIDESPREAD PARTICIPATION & SUPPORT** - Erie County's arts and cultural organizations have widespread support and participation from across the county, and all legislative districts. Our organizations draw their audience/staff/board

members/participants from throughout Erie County, including the districts of every legislator, with benefits that accrue throughout Erie County;

- PAYS DIVIDENDS - Funding for Erie County's cultural organizations is a wise investment that pays tangible dividends back to the county. This is demonstrated across many dimensions including: visitors, audience, grants leveraged, national and state profile, economic vitality, community quality of life. Together we one of the main keys to a vibrant, thriving economy;
- Arts & Cultural organizations offer enormous return on investment. Erie County's investment of \$5.8M in public funds for Cultural organizations last year leveraged a return of over \$7M in outside funding through the supported institutions;
- Quality of Life in Western New York is dramatically enhanced by our rich array of Arts and Cultural organizations;
- CNBC has named Buffalo the 2nd most desirable city in the country to relocate to. In its summary, it hailed Buffalo's "growing Arts scene." The Arts helps to make Erie County attractive to people who want to relocate here and bring NEW DOLLARS to our community, as well as being integral for quality of life for those living and working here.

Additional opportunity

Join ASI, the Greater Buffalo Cultural Alliance, the Cultural Alliance of Niagara, and representatives from the 5 County Cultural Summit to learn more about **Advocacy at the State Level and the Erie County Budget Process**:

Tuesday, November 8

4:00pm mingle, 4:30pm start

Buffalo & Erie County Botanical Gardens Administrative Building
2655 South Park Avenue, Buffalo, NY 14218

NEXT UP (December into first quarter of 2017)

#1 – POST ELECTION ANALYSIS AND PLAN FOR MEETING NEW AND RE-ELECTED OFFICIALS

#2 – CITY OF BUFFALO CULTURAL AND ANTI-VIOLENCE GRANTS

The City of Buffalo once again became an active participant in cultural funding by issuing grants in the fall of 2011 for the first time in over 10 years. Grant RFPs were put out, and grants were made in March 2012 (FY2011/12); July 2013 (FY12/13); January 2015 (FY2013/14); and most recently in contracts have been received in September 2016 (from 2015/16 budget allocation of \$250K-the City's budget year is July 1- June 30th). If you have received a grant, write a letter thanking the mayor and your common council member. Tell them what this funding is making possible and provide maximum encouragement for this funding to continue and overall funding to be increased. **Next point of advocacy is to make sure funding is included in 2016/17 City of Buffalo budget. We need to make sure no years are missed as happened in FY14/15.** For us, having the City of Buffalo back at the table has helped us

make a strong case to funders outside of this community, having secured strong local support FIRST from all levels of government on behalf of Arts & Culture.

#3 – NEW YORK STATE, NYSCA AND REDC GRANTS

The New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA) is the state's smallest agency — with a current staff of only 30 and a budget of \$5.2 million — its impact far exceeding its size. NYSCA awards approximately 2,500 competitive grants annually to arts groups each year, preserving and expanding cultural resources throughout the state and increasing access to the arts for all state residence.

NYSCA has a new Executive Director Mara Manus and a new Chair Barbaralee Diamondstein-Spielvogel. You can read the full announcements on the NYSCA website nysca.org.

In terms of New York State Advocacy, the group ArtsNYS has agreed to expand their existing unincorporated organization to embrace a broader coalition of organizations representing arts forms and geographic areas of the state. This is the group, led primarily by DEC site leaders, that was the force behind securing the \$5M increase to NYSCA in FY15 which provided so much benefit. Watch for emails from ASI and Americans for the Arts inviting us to participate and/or take action.

Input to NYSCA on REDC FY18 Guidelines

The Regional Economic Development grants (offered via NYSCA since FY13) have come to play an increasingly large role in available state arts funding. If you want to reach out to your NYSCA Program officer and/or NYSCA REDC program officer Mr. Arian Blanco to offer input into the continued evolution of these important grants, here are a few talking points:

- We are extremely grateful for the opportunity offered to arts organizations via the REDC grant process. We recognize that REDC grants play an increasing large role in available NYSCA funding; and represent a special, rare and important funding opportunity for many arts organizations to bring exceptional programs to communities throughout NYS;
- After noting increased restrictions in FY16, urge that the guidelines defining eligible FY17 NYSCA REDC projects and categories of support remain as broad as possible. For example, we hope in FY17 NYSCA will be open to more organizationally-defined arts- projects that represent exciting new opportunities to expand their work in new directions. We feel that this input is aligned with NYSCA's tradition of providing maximum freedom for organizations to self-determine projects, and will enable the REDC grants to continue providing maximum benefit to communities across NYS.

#4 – CONTINUED ELIMINATION OF ARTS COVERAGE BY LOCAL MEDIA OUTLETS

- This goes beyond any one reporter or one season of coverage and is being felt throughout the arts & cultural community.
- GBCA would like to link with other concerned groups in the community to frame an action plan in early 2017.