

ASIAN  
AMERICAN  
ARTS

>alliance

## THE FUTURE OF ARTS & CULTURE IN NYC: A CONVENING & ONLINE SURVEY

In February 2017, the Asian American Arts Alliance and facilitator and writer, Anjali Deshmukh, partnered to develop a community convening and online survey to gather feedback for the city's Cultural Plan.

During this process, a visually engaging, interactive workshop and online survey were developed, asking the Alliance's constituents and partner organizations what they believed was and wasn't working when it came to arts and culture in New York City. Approximately 48 people attended the workshop, while 69 respondents participated in the online survey.

Through dialogue and online responses, several broad themes emerged.

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## THE FUTURE OF ARTS & CULTURE IN NYC

### WHAT DOES EQUITY TAKE?

The challenges of fostering an equitable and vibrant environment for arts & culture in NYC are interrelated with the challenges of the city as a whole. Participants discussed the importance of affordable housing, arts education, and recognizing that the arts can be a tool to foster a more compassionate and equitable culture. In discussions, they moved fluidly between social issues, economic issues, and recommendations specific to makers and arts & culture institutions.

From participants' concerns, it is clear that fostering arts and culture in the city is as much about shifting mindset as it is about implementing a series of tactics to achieve certain goals. If we want to protect the future vibrancy of the city, then we must see the arts as integral to health and development, supporting STEAM from the beginning of education; if we want arts and culture planning and funding to be equitable and inclusive, then city employees must first deeply understand and acknowledge the manifestations of prejudice and bias before they can build processes that will be successful. These goals require common strategy across many government agencies.

"Help us control the out-of-control rents in New York City. It is choking everyone on all levels. The biggest expense for artists, especially performing artists, is space. When artists cannot afford space, no art will be created. For communities, the struggle to afford rent has a hugely negative impact on our quality of life, our ability to progress in our career endeavors, and how we spend our time and money... The arts are leaving New York City because it is simply impossible to survive here."--Survey Respondent

In particular, issues of affordable housing and community development repeatedly surfaced in conversations. While some comments were specific to the housing or space needs of artists, others were focused on gentrification and protecting lower income housing for all New Yorkers in need.

### THE IMPORTANCE OF ENGAGEMENT

The Asian American Arts Alliance applauds the Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA) for taking this step to gather feedback from communities across the city. Many participants in the workshop expressed appreciation for the opportunity to voice their concerns and contribute their

creativity. What the Alliance recognized in planning for feedback, however, was that there are no common definitions or understanding of what 'arts' and 'culture' is--let alone what they should be. To understand what's missing and needed requires ongoing engagement, listening, and time.

The Alliance encourages the DCA to integrate ongoing engagement and feedback loops into the ten-year plan itself, particularly if DCA is committed to equity and seeks to build relationships with communities that are currently not included in dialogue.

#### WHAT'S WORKING

Although the majority of feedback focused on challenges, participants also expressed appreciation for aspects of the city that were already fostering vibrant arts and culture.

#### NYC TRANSIT

One participant appreciated the ability to travel using New York City's vast public transportation.

#### SPONSORED ADMISSION

One participant expressed appreciation for the free admission days offered by the city's museums.

#### DCA

Participants noted that DCA funding was easy to navigate and expressed appreciation for specific programs and the Cultural Planning effort.



## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS & QUALITATIVE OBSERVATIONS

### IDENTIFY CLEAR GOALS FOR EQUITY AND INCLUSION, WITH TRANSPARENT MONITORING.

Attendees urgently expressed the need for more inclusive decision-making and funding, for many different communities and populations, including underrepresented ethnicities, older populations, LGBTQ communities, artists themselves, and more. At the Alliance event, topics associated with inclusivity appeared to be a high priority.

#### LISTEN MORE FREQUENTLY AND PAY ATTENTION TO WHO YOU'RE LISTENING TO

Art and culture are everywhere. They are sets of behaviors that shape individuals, homes, communities, institutions, and our systems. Yet who decides what arts and culture actually are? And how might those decisionmakers be privileging certain forms of art or culture over others? While the community engagement strategy for the Cultural Plan itself is a step forward, there are concerns about how inclusive it truly is.

#### EXAMINE AND ADDRESS FUNDING DISPARITIES AT PRECINCT LEVEL

Is funding more available in certain neighborhoods? Who has less access? Why? And how do we keep track of these disparities?

#### FOSTER INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP

Create incentives for orgs to build more diverse boards with meaningful roles in decisionmaking

#### INVEST IN TRAINING, SET GOALS, MEASURE, AUDIT

Expressing commitment isn't enough. City officials should invest in deep education and measure progress.

#### FOSTER INCLUSIVE DECISIONMAKING

"Arts decisions often come from administrators, rather than artists."

#### COMMUNICATE MORE FREQUENTLY AND PAY ATTENTION TO WHO YOU'RE COMMUNICATING WITH

Several participants & survey respondents remarked on the lack of inclusivity in city communications, marketing, & advertising; and how English is so heavily privileged over other languages--many of which are widely spoken in New York's diverse communities.

*"I feel that the city officials can survey more often which community are not just under-served financially but also culturally and socially. I think the arts and culture represents the identity of our extremely diverse city and therefore city officials must go the extra mile looking to support the creation of content that can be culturally specific while also inclusive."--Survey Respondent*

### BREAK DOWN SILOES, CREATE HEALTHY EXCHANGE, AND BUILD HEALTHY, INCLUSIVE, & COMPASSIONATE COMMUNITIES.

Arts and culture shape all aspects of our society, far beyond the walls of individual institutions. Advancing arts and culture is also about housing, education, health, human services, transportation, and more.

#### SUPPORT ARTS EDUCATION

In surveys and dialogue, participants frequently raised the importance of supporting arts in New York's school system. Not only is creativity and the arts essential to human development and health, they suggested; it is critical to a long-term strategy for arts and culture, in New York and in the country.

#### INVEST IN BUILDING CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING AND EXCHANGE

Repeatedly, fostering exchange or connections between different people & communities surfaced: connecting older generations to younger ones; people of different ethnicities; established and emerging artists. Several noted that the community engagement of the event itself played a valuable role.

#### BUILD DEEPER INTEGRATION BETWEEN DCA AND OTHER GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

Arts and culture are inherently connected to every other government program. We recognize that interagency cooperation can be difficult. Nonetheless, participants expressed the need for more and better partnerships, with common goals.

*"Using digital kiosks [in subways] to display art, stories or immigrants from past 300+ years, journeys that connect us all."--Workshop Respondent*

*"Building bridges of disparate communities of color through art. We are heading towards more interracial discrimination as white systems of power exert increasingly more influence on politics and economics."--Workshop Respondent*

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS & QUALITATIVE

### MAKE HOUSING, SPACE, AND FACILITIES AFFORDABLE AND ACCESSIBLE.

Many attendees noted that costs are pushing residents out of the city. Eventually, they say, it will have a serious effect on the city's culture and vibrance.

#### CREATE PATHS TO OWNERSHIP OR BETTER SUBSIDIZATION

Support home buying for artists and low income residents, facility purchases or rental support for NPOs, subsidized space, rent-to-own/loan programs

#### MAXIMIZE USE OF EMPTY SPACES

If a building remains empty for a certain amount of time, can it be used for arts and culture activities? Create a registry of unused spaces?

#### MAXIMIZE COMMUNITY/BUSINESS SPACE USE

Can we make better use of community spaces after hours? A registry of local businesses willing to offer space?

*"I'm working on a dance piece with 2 other dancers, one who's coming from the U.K. The lead dancer/choreographer is guest teaching at Colorado College. Because housing and rehearsal space is so EXPENSIVE, it's more affordable for us to fly out to Colorado to research for ten intensive 8-hour days than to rent rehearsal space in NYC, where the show will be...." --Workshop Respondent*

### ADDRESS THE FULL SCOPE OF SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES FOR ARTS & CULTURE PRODUCERS AND ADMINISTRATORS.

Repeatedly, arts & culture producers and administrators expressed frustration about being chronically underpaid for their work and time. In addition to making more funding available, how do we address fair wages & promote a more equitable economy?

#### EXAMINE THE FINANCIAL ECOSYSTEM OF THE BUYERS, SELLERS, & PRODUCERS OF ARTS & CULTURE, FOR BARRIERS TO EQUITABLE PAY & SUSTAINABILITY

Compensation in arts and culture--and the social sector as a whole--is a complex issue that deserves further analysis for any Cultural Plan. How do we address fair treatment of artists and other workers, the barriers to sustainability for nonprofits, and how the arts market helps--and harms--the city's culture?

#### REDUCE THE BARRIERS OF ACCESS TO FUNDING, ESPECIALLY FOR SMALL, COMMUNITY-BASED, AND/OR FISCALLY SPONSORE ORGANIZATIONS & INDIVIDUALS

One way to do this is through increasing the number and amounts of re-granting programs through borough arts councils

#### OFFER MORE (AND MORE FLEXIBLE) FUNDING!

Many noted that there is not enough non-institutional sources of funding--for an individual or group of artists--and that flexible funding, rather than capacity building support or project grants, is virtually non-existent. These themes were echoed among

### MAKE INFORMATION ON ARTS AND CULTURE MORE ACCESSIBLE.

In addition to emphasizing inclusivity when it comes to access to information (described on previous page) many participants said they struggled to find out what's going on in the city and often found about events they were interested in far too late.

#### CREATE A WELL-DESIGNED (AND INCLUSIVE) WEB DIRECTORY OF NYC HAPPENINGS

The majority of the solutions associated with improving web platforms, apps, or other technology tools to help people access events and tailor them according to their preferences.

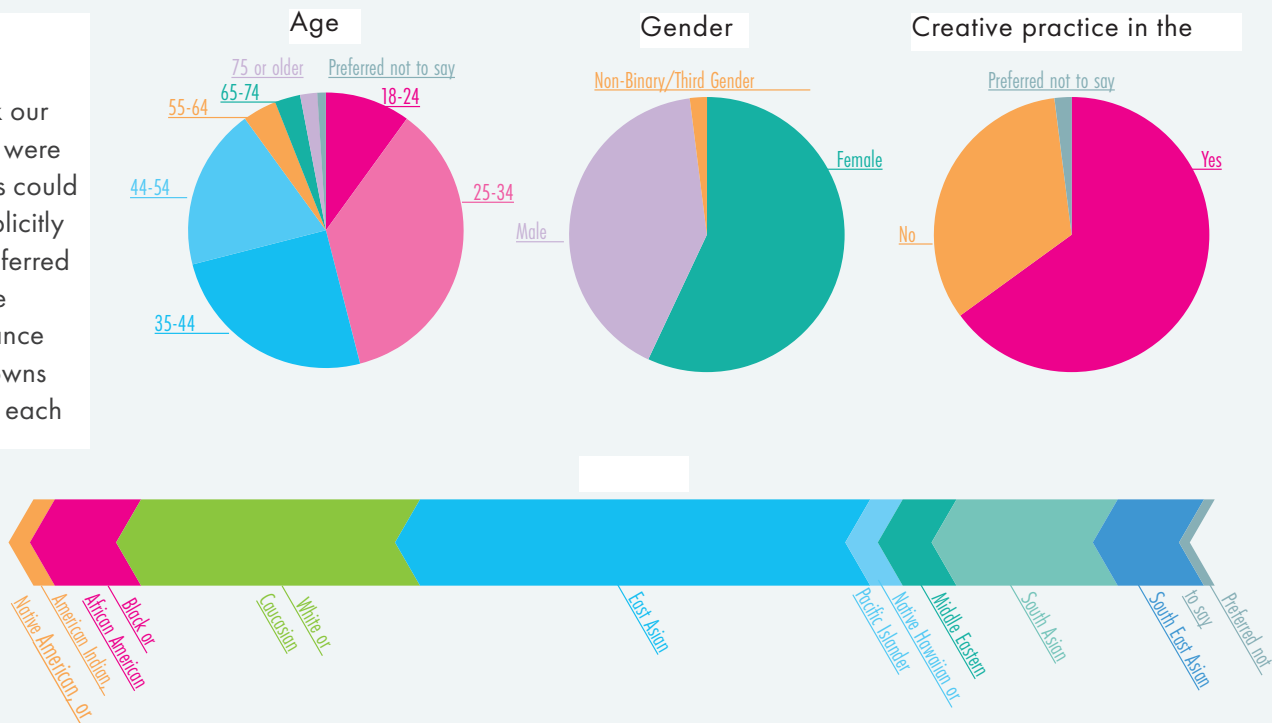
#### BUILD RELATIONSHIPS WITH LOCAL NONPROFITS AND COMMUNITIES

Event participants felt that the event itself was a positive step and had the potential to inform people about organizations and events in their community. How can we continue to engage communities more regularly, maintaining the momentum gained?

## ONLINE SURVEY: QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

### ABOUT

**69** respondents took our survey. All questions were optional. Participants could skip questions or explicitly express that they preferred to not answer. Please reach out to the Alliance for detailed breakdowns of response rates for each

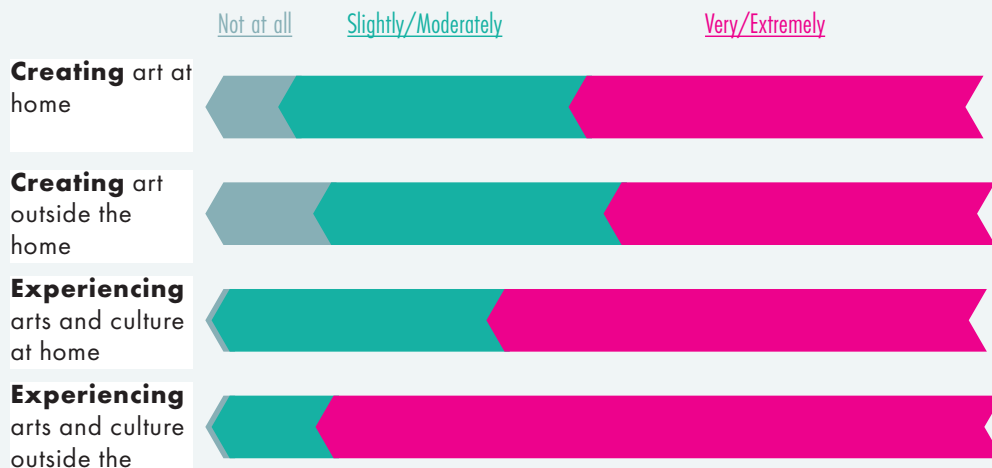


\*0% of respondents identified as: Hispanic, Latino, Latina, or Latinx; or Central

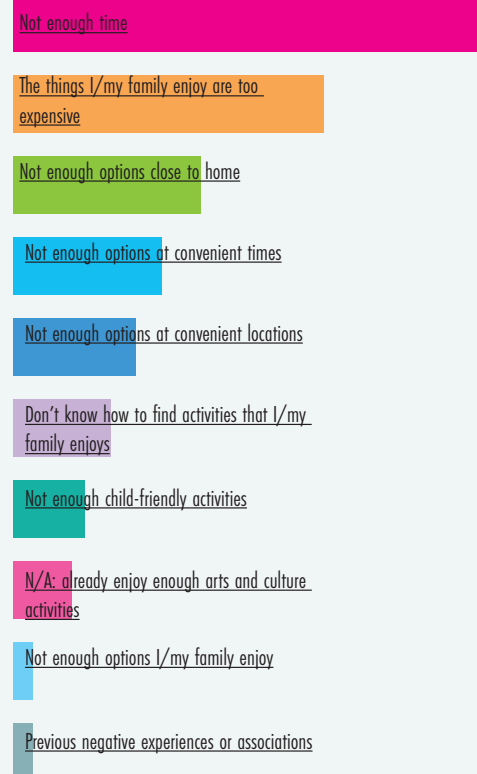
### PARTICIPATION

The Alliance's online survey asked primarily qualitative questions to capture a more nuanced understanding of the issues facing its community. Qualitative observations from survey responses were combined with observations from the Community Convening.

How much do you/your family enjoy the following activities?



What prevents you/your family from enjoying more arts and culture activities in





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## APPENDIX

- Volunteer facilitator guide and worksheets, describing the event purpose and role of facilitators throughout the evening
- Visual display, describing how participants documented their thoughts
- Workshop Photos documenting participation and engagement
- Workshop agenda and informational materials for participants

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## THANK YOU!

Thank you for joining the Alliance community as a volunteer on March 6th. During this event, we're hoping to gather feedback that will inform New York City's first-ever Cultural Plan and the Alliance's future programs. This document gives you a brief outline of what we're hoping to accomplish on March 6th and the important role you play in the event's success!

## OUR GOALS

At this event, we want to hear about what matters to the Alliance's community when it comes to arts and culture in the City. This feedback will shape our own activities and be shared with the NYC Dept. of Cultural Affairs. [Click here](#) or visit <http://createnyc.org/en/home/> to learn more about NYC's Cultural Planning process.

To achieve these goals above, volunteers play a critical role. They:

- **Help participants fill up a Topic Wall as much as possible:** We'll rely on volunteers to encourage participants to contribute ideas, goals, stories and more to a Topic Wall. We want your ideas as well!
- **Facilitate group discussions:** Each volunteer will facilitate a small discussion group (about 5 participants each). See a discussion worksheet on the following pages. As a facilitator, you spark insight, encourage participation, take notes, and more.
- **Create a positive, welcoming environment:** You play a valuable role in creating an environment where people feel comfortable and motivated to share their ideas.

## WHERE & WHEN

**Mon, March 6, 2017**

**\*\*Volunteers, please arrive at 3:30 PM** for orientation before the event. We'd also love to see you for dinner afterward.

**Volunteer Meeting Location Before Event**

Starbucks, at 86-51 Broadway in Elmhurst, Queens

## FACILITATION TIPS

- **Know the goals:** We've provided a checklist of questions to help jumpstart dialogue, but they do not need to all be used. We're looking for goals, challenges, and solutions to recommend to the city. Rely on the framework of the Topic Wall for what to listen for!
- **Create a positive space and set a positive tone:** All groups should start with introductions to create a relaxed and positive space. Encourage movement!
- **Remain neutral:** The role of facilitators is to stay neutral and delve further into ideas that the audience brings up. Avoid leading questions.
- **Stay in the background:** If conversation is moving without you, all the better! Facilitators should have the least airtime and only intervene if the conversation is stuck or needs to be teased out.
- **Be inclusive:** Some people will speak more than others. Use prompts to encourage quieter voices, such as making eye contact with all participants, and asking "what do others think?"
- **If conversation is going off topic, guide it back:** "I want to return to an issue we touched on earlier..."
- **Take notes:** We hope that most participants feel comfortable adding to the Topic Wall. However, we'd still love you to take notes in case we have participants



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## AGENDA

The schedule below provides an overview of our agenda for March 6th. It is subject to small changes as we learn more about the number of attendees and read responses to the survey shared above.

### 3:30-4:20: ORIENTATION

Let's meet at Starbucks at 86-51 Broadway in Elmhurst, Queens (a few doors away from the library) for a quick volunteer orientation in advance of the event.

### 4:25-5:00: PRE-EVENT SET UP

Staff and volunteers will be given assignments before, during, and after the event. Activities include arranging food, organizing supplies and the Topic Wall, and more. Please do fill up the Topic Wall and contribute your ideas before the event-- and during if you aren't busy supporting participants.

### 5:00-5:15: WRITE & REFRESH

As participants arrive and get refreshments, volunteers will go to their assigned posts. Volunteers can encourage participants to use available supplies to add comments to the Topic Wall, providing guidance to supplement signage. They also assist staff with arranging name tags and video waivers for the participants.

### 5:15-5:30: WHY ARE WE HERE? INTROS

Andrea will encourage everyone to take their seats, thank attendees, and introduce the Alliance before handing off to Anjali. Anjali will explain the event goals, Topic Wall, and agenda; will introduce volunteers, Alliance staff, and various roles; and remind guests to leave behind name tags at the end of the evening. VIP Guest Confirmed: Joanne Choi, Assistant Director of Constituencies for Asian American Affairs for the Executive Chamber. Possible VIP Guest: Jimmy Van Bramer, Major Leader & Chair of the NYC Council Committee on Cultural Affairs.

### 5:30-6:10: DISCUSSION

Volunteer facilitators go to their assigned group and hand out blank name tags for participants to fill in. Facilitators are provided with a note-taking sheet and questions to spark conversation. At any time, participants can add to the Topic Wall, or take breaks. Please request a volunteer Group Speaker to represent the group in the final discussion at the end of the evening.

### 6:10-6:20: WRITE & REFRESH

Anjali encourages people go back to fill in Topic Wall or take a break before we gather for a final group discussion by the Topic Wall.

### 6:20-6:35- ROOM DISCUSSION

Anjali facilitates final discussion around the Topic Wall and asks for group speakers to share a recap and notable solutions. Conclude with thank yous, reminder to leave behind name tag to assigned volunteers by the entrance, and information about where to find a recap of the night's findings.

### 6:35-7:00: DOCUMENT & CLEAN

Volunteers will be assigned to systematically photograph and videotape the Topic Wall. We'll also need help with clean-up and packing.

### 7:15-8:15: DINNER & REGROUP

We'll go to a nearby restaurant to hear your thoughts on the event and capture more of your feedback as we move into the next phase of writing up feedback to share with the city.



## VOLUNTEER FACILITATOR CHECKLIST (FRONT)

FACILITATOR NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

## HOUSEKEEPING CHECKLIST

## INTRODUCE YOURSELVES

"Before we get started, let's go around and introduce ourselves. In about 30 seconds, I'd love to hear your name, anything you'd like to share about yourself, and why you're here today." Start by introducing yourself.

## PASS OUT NAME TAGS AND PENS

People may fill out as much as they'd like. Remind them we'll be collecting them at end to understand participants as we put together feedback for the city.

## ASSIGN A GROUP SPEAKER

"One last housekeeping item. Is there anyone that would like to volunteer to provide reflections on our discussion when we re-gather as a group in forty minutes?" Note their name. If no no volunteers, the facilitator can play this role.

## ENCOURAGE MOVEMENT

"Ok, let's get started. We're going to go through lots of things today, but remember, at any time, feel free to stand up, move, or go write a thought on the topic wall."

## QUESTIONS SHORTLIST

- “What do the terms ‘arts’ and ‘culture’ mean to you? They’re actually very undefined terms, so we’re curious about what those words really mean for you.”
- “What are your most memorable stories of arts and culture in NYC? What made them so memorable?”
- “What particular arts and culture activities are important to you, your community, and/or your neighborhood?”
- “What do you think is working when it comes to NYC’s arts and culture, and why? What’s not working, and why?”
- “What motivates you to--or prevents you from--enjoying arts and culture activities? How about your community or neighborhood?”
- “What goals would you set for the city as it develops a Cultural Plan? What do you think makes it hard for the city to achieve those goals, and how would you solve them?”
- “What advice or ideas would you give city officials about how to improve your family, community and/or neighborhood’s experience of arts and culture?”

## NOTE-TAKING

## VOLUNTEER FACILITATOR CHECKLIST (BACK)

FACILITATOR NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

## NOTE-TAKING

[illegible]

## QUESTION LIST

## PULSE CHECK

"What do the terms 'arts' and 'culture' mean to you? They're very undefined terms, so we're curious about what those words really mean."

"What are your most memorable stories of arts and culture in NYC?"

“What particular arts and culture activities are important to you, your community, and/or your neighborhood?”

"How do you prefer enjoying the arts? For example, do you prefer to make it or experience it? Do you prefer doing it at home alone, or going to social events? And why?"

"Approximately how often do you attend arts and culture activities in NYC?"

## BARRIERS & CHALLENGES

"What do you think is working when it comes to NYC's arts and culture, and why? What's not working, and why?"

"What motivates you to--or prevents you from--enjoying arts and culture activities?"

"What motivates your communities to--or prevents them from-- enjoying arts and culture activities? What about your neighborhood?"

## RECOMMENDATIONS/SOLUTIONS

“What advice or ideas would you give city officials about how to improve your/ your family’s ability to enjoy arts and culture experiences?”

"What advice / ideas would you give city officials about how to improve your **community/ neighborhood's** experience of arts and culture?"

"What would inspire you/your family to try arts and culture activities that are unfamiliar to you?"

"What goals would you set for the city as it develops a Cultural Plan? What do you think makes it hard for the city to achieve those goals, and how would you solve them?"



MARCH 6TH, 5-6:45PM  
THE FUTURE OF ARTS & CULTURE IN

VISIT [BIT.LY/CREATENYCQUEENS](http://BIT.LY/CREATENYCQUEENS) TO TAKE OUR SURVEY BEFORE  
3/10!

## ADD TO THE TOPIC WALL

Fill up the wall with as many comments and ideas as possible, using the color coded sticky notes below!

### STICKY NOTES

ADD  
GOALS  
THAT MATTER  
TO YOU

SHARE  
WHAT'S  
NOT  
WORKING

SHARE WHAT  
IS  
WORKING

SHARE A  
SOLUTION  
OR IDEA

SHARE A  
STORY OR  
EXPERIENCE

AGREE/VOTE 'UP'

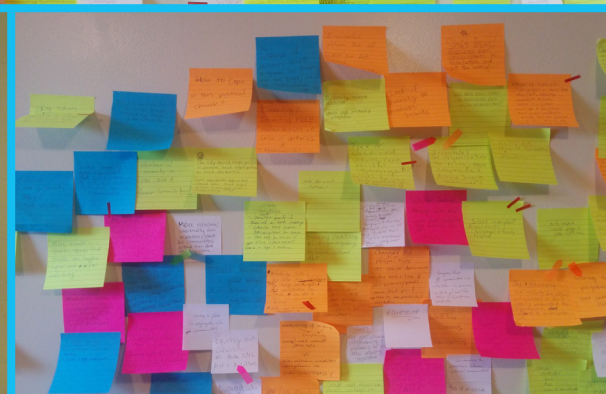
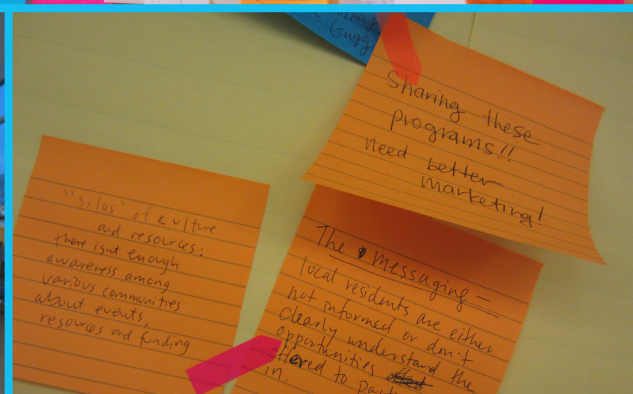
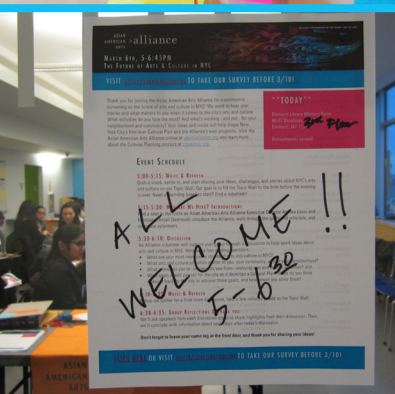
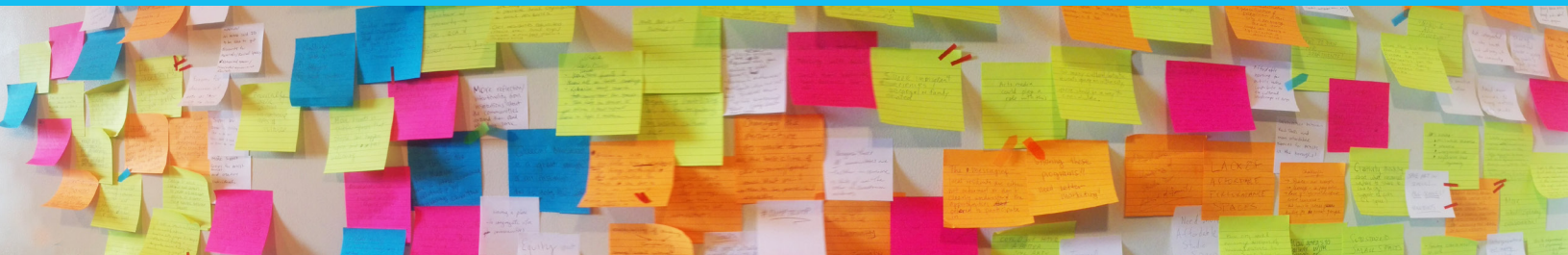
Connect or respond directly using any of the multi-colored arrows:





MARCH 6TH, 5-6:45PM  
THE FUTURE OF ARTS & CULTURE IN

EVENT DOCUMENTATION: VISIT [BIT.LY/CREATENYCQUEENSVIDEO](http://BIT.LY/CREATENYCQUEENSVIDEO) TO SEE A VIDEO OF THE WORKSHOP.





VISIT [BIT.LY/CREATENYCQUEENS](http://bit.ly/createnycqueens) TO TAKE OUR SURVEY BEFORE

Thank you for joining the Asian American Arts Alliance for a community convening on the future of arts and culture in NYC! We want to hear your stories and what matters to you when it comes to the city's arts and culture. What activities do you love the most? And what's working - and not - for your neighborhood and community? Your ideas and vision will help shape New York City's first-ever Cultural Plan and the Alliance's own programs. Visit the Asian American Arts Alliance online at [aaartsalliance.org](http://aaartsalliance.org) and learn more about the Cultural Planning process at [createnyc.org](http://createnyc.org).

**\*\*TODAY\*\***

Elmhurst Library Meeting Room  
86-07 Broadway, 2nd Floor  
Elmhurst, NY 11373

Refreshments served!

## EVENT SCHEDULE

### 5:00-5:20: WRITE & REFRESH

Grab a snack, settle in, and start sharing your ideas, challenges, and stories about NYC's arts & culture on our Topic Wall. Our goal is to fill the Topic Wall to the brim before the evening is over. Need a sounding board to start? Find a volunteer!

### 5:20-5:30: WHY ARE WE HERE? INTRODUCTIONS

Find a seat in the circle, as Asian American Arts Alliance Executive Director, Andrea Louie, and Facilitator, Anjali Deshmukh, introduce the Alliance, walk through the goals and schedule, and introduce volunteers.

### 5:30-6:10: DISCUSSION

An Alliance volunteer will support your group through a discussion to help spark ideas about arts & culture in NYC. Here are a few guiding questions:

- What are your most memorable stories of Arts & Culture in NYC?
- What arts & culture activities matter to you, your community, and/or your neighborhood?
- What motivates you to--or prevents you from-- enjoying arts & culture activities?
- What goals would you set for the city as it develops a Cultural Plan? What do you think makes it hard for the city to achieve those goals, and how would you solve them?

### 6:10-6:20: WRITE & REFRESH

Before we gather for a final room discussion, take a few minutes to add to the Topic Wall.

### 6:20-6:35: GROUP REFLECTIONS & THANK YOU

We'll ask speakers from each discussion group to share highlights from their discussion. Then, we'll conclude with information about next steps after today's discussion.