### StreamBox

CDN Creative Placemaking Convocation

Workshop - Engstrom

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English Transcript

>>> hello, everybody. How are you? Happy Thursday.

I think we're about to get started. Can folks hear me okay?

Yes, no, perhaps?

Oh, hey. Coming on-line. Thank you for that.

Hi. My name is Randy. Randy Engstrom. I'm director of arts and culture for the city of Seattle. Anarchist republic of Seattle, if you're keeping track at home. I appreciate you taking the time to join this conversation today.

I'm just going to do a little bit of level setting, and I hope that general speaking, this is more conversational. I'm not here to lecture you as an expert. I'm here to share some experiences that I've had and be in dialogue with all you've around what will be most valuable for this work.

The umbrella was equity in the culture sector and this is the line through everything I'm hoping to talk about but I'm going to do it through a context of sort of what is the history of local arts agency answers cultural policy. Where has it been? Where is it now? Where is it going? And bring you through three case studies of how we've tried to really operationalize and live into our equity commitment in practice. Then there is a fair amount of sort of forecasting of where I think this work is going.

Like I said, I think it is more of a conversation more than a lecture. I would like to know from all of you who you are and where you're from and what you hope to get out of this conversation.

If you don't mind putting in the chat, just name where you are coming from.

Maybe your gender pronoun if you would. Then maybe we can just do a quick introduction in realtime just so I can raryn your name answers where you're coming from and get a sense of the context that folks enter the room with. Then I will dive into sort of the meat of the presentation if that sounds okay to folks. I did put in the chat earlier, there is a closed captioning option at the bottom with that CC puton. Can you track what we are saying in realtime in closed captioning. Shout out to the organizers for that feature.

And with that, I would love if we could just go around and folks could tell me their name, pronoun and where they are coming from. And anyone can start.

>> Hey.

I'm Libby. I'm with Colorado creative industry. She-her/hers. Excited to be here today.

>> I'll go next.

I'm Sarah mer wit Pennsylvania council on the arts. She/hers.

>> Hello, Brianna dance. She/her/hers. I'm with the Ohio arts council based in Columbus.

>> Lisa Burke McCoy, she/her/hers with the New Hampshire state council of the arts.

>> Hello. My name is Janet perkins. She/her. And I'm with the Arkansas arts council. In little rock, Arkansas.

>> Mary Eileen with the New Jersey state council and the arts, she/her. And I'm in Asbury park, New Jersey.

>> Hi, I'm Rebecca Cruz, I'm with the South Dakota arts council. I'm in the black hills of South Dakota part way between hot springs and Custer. She/her are my pronounes.

>> Good afternoon, everyone. I'm Encarnacion eej with the arts agency in Chicago.

>> Hi, emp. Hi, Randy, thanks for doing this today. I'm Kelly Barsdate. I'm from NASAA. My pronouns are she/her/hers and I'm logged in today from the ancestral lands in Gaithersburg, Maryland.

>> I'll follow up of that. I'm with the Maryland state arts council but I'm up in Baltimore today. And she/her pronouns.

>> Is that all of us?

It's all of us enough. Thank you for that. Like I said, my name is Randy Engstrom. I've been the director of office arts and culture in the people's republic of Seattle for eight years. A lot of what I will talk about today is how we've wandered our way through this journey around racial equity, around cultural policy and really look at intersection of place and values and culture in our city.

I also come from the unseeded lands of the muckleshoot and dewammish. Important to recognize all of us still on land. When we talk about equity if our work I have to recognize the phenomenal privilege as a cis white male and I feel like it is partly that privilege that bears the responsibility of doing this work. I think it is healing work and I think it is generational work.

I am going to share my screen and start down this conversation.

Can you all see that okay? Great.

So as I said, I do want this to be more conversational, as we go through the presentation, feel free to raise your hand if there is language I'm using that's unfamiliar or if there is anything have you a question about. We will go through the history of local arts agencies, little bit of conversation about arts policy, the way we have seen that shift. How racial equity shows up in that work. And what are ways we might operationalize our commitment to racial equity as an office.

I recognize that everyone doing this cultural work, this administrative work, this creative work is doing it through the context that they come from. I recognize that Seattle is a dark blue dot in a light blue state and that what we do may not look like what everyone can do where they are.

But I think everyone has the ability to do work from the position they enter from and to lean on unique strength and assets from the community that you come from. Arts as the how is a frame I've used pretty much since I've come into this job because it describes the way I see culture and the way it is evolving. In particular we are in this absolutely cataclysmic and transformational moment both of COVID-19 and attended economic hardship it has caused and black lives matter movement and sort of racialized reconning that I think our country is wrestling with. Our country and our field. So it is that context in which this presentation is offered to you.

I ground it in the history of deurlal policy in this country has largely been in by my purview in these four areas. We have been grant makers, we have invested in the cultural sector. We have pioneered and led the art field starting in the early '70s. We have owned, managed, maintained, cultural festivals and owned cultural facilities. All do some combination of these four things. And this is the context in which this field was built out of the 1960s with the birth of the endowment for the arts. These are all important activities. I would offer that I think something that has happen said that these interventions of funding public arts and facilities can often be an end to themselves and what we have tried to ask is why do we do these things in what is the value of investing in arts and culture? Why do we have a public art program? What is the purpose of the festival in the community? why is there an office of arts and culture in Seattle? I think as our field wrestled with some of these conversations, what are the emerging practices of deurlal policy beyond just the first four things that we talked about and look at early 2,000s in the rise of arts education and more recently in the last decade a lot of work around creative place making. There is a long standing arc of work around diversity and then inclusion and then equity.

But I think the field recognized that it is privileged some forms and not others.

So there is a conversation ongoing about that work. And creative economy. Not to lay it all at the feet of Richard Florida but a lot of conversations around value of arts and culture have been translated into a real argument and the future of work with the rise of AI and 5g automation.

But these are the four areas of practice that I think that been shaping deurlal policy over the last 20 years or so.

So what does that trend look like and what does that mean going forward? I would offer that it is moving from what to how. Culture in our communities is less about that things on the stage, painting on the wall, sculpture in the park, and more about the way it advances intersectional priorities in a community. How we prepare our young people to be successful in school and life. How we will grow our local economy. How we bring tourists back to our city when it is safe to reopen. I think the role of artists and role of culture is going to look different and be more explicitly intersectional in the way in which it is applied and in the way in which it is resourced particularly coming out of COVID-19 and in response to black lives matter moment that we're all in.

This is a slide I stole from the not just money equity issues and by Holly sid Ford and many of you are probably familiar with this work.

They did a report about ten years ago showing that the lion's share of arts philanthropy both public and private goes to 2% of organizations that overwhelm Ily represent the white and cultural culture np is now 2017, where these numbers are from, is that while we talk about equity a lot, our numbers are actually worse. And now 58% of the money goes to 2% of the organizations representing budgets of greater than $5 million year. We also know that organizations with budgets greater than $5 million are overwhelmingly white and western. This is a symptom after structure. It is not the menacing act of individual criminals Orvilleians, just the end result of a system built with privilege certain function overs others. So in that context that we start with sort of racial equity and arts philanthropy and these are some slides that I use in doing some trainings that I've done on the board of grant makers and arts. I give grant makers and the arts a lot of credit, particularly the philanthropic sector.

We do work with GIA and I also offer some of our work as a case study. And you know, one thing I will say is that in the context of trying to do racial equity work and particularly in local government it is a journey, not an action, meaning like this is something we are going to be doing and continually working at for a long time.

Part of how we do that is we look at practices that guide our work.

These are the guard rails that have allowed us to explore this over the last seven or eight years as a department. In no way does this mean we have it right or have it figured out. It just means that this is the process we hold ourselves to to try and move this work forward. We are explicit about naming and centering race. There is a long conversation this we can have or not today about cultural equity versus racial equity as a city and as a department we choose to say what we mean and mean what we say. When we talk about equity, we talk about racial equity.

We talk about seizing, you see the black lives matter mural painted here after the chop was established and post black lives matter protest in Seattle.

There are moments where the ground beneath us shift and those are moments where radical change will be possible and there are a number of events that happened in the time I've been in this job and what I try o did is capitalize on those moments. COVID is another one of those moments.

Another is interrogating moments. And the act of pursuing moments you have to imagine something that never existed and try to bring that thing into the world and I think the act of pursuing equity is the interrogation of hard question answers hard truths about our history.

I have a lot of appreciation for the 1619 project and for similar interventions that have really asked us to look at and not just where we are but how we got here. If we can't understand our history, we are never going to be able to mitigate its historical impact and move forward together.

And the last element is that this is not a transactional practice, this is a transformational practice. We have to move towards culture shift. We have to make the culture of our organization different, not just our practice. Culture eats strategy, I was once told. You can have the best strategic plan in the world but if your culture won't embrace that strategy, it will fail. We always have to push a culture shift. In the presentation we did with GIA we used a couple of case studies in our work. One is about how you can bring a new program intervention to bear that focuses on an underserved population, in our case with arts education and other is how you might look at an existing body of work and make it more racially equitable through a process. In this case we call it a rishly equitable ool kit. There is partnership that our office began with the Seattle school district.

Seattle public schools in 2007 prior to 1980s Seattle had one of the best arts curriculums in the country. It gave us folks like Jimmy Hendrix and Kurt Cobain. And due to the rise of Regan omics, steady disinvestment in primary and secondary education, arts education was systematically removed unless your school could raise funds. We noticed a gap and could you have access to arts education by race and family income and home language. In 2007 we approached the school district and said if we give you $100,000 a year will you reconstitute your arts department. That brought in new classes in our 102 public schools and caught attention of the Wallace foundation who gave us enough money to build a comprehensive plan.

That plan's goal is to restore arts learning to every student in Seattle public schools by 2020. I will sigh had COVID not hit we couldn't be celebrating that milestone today and we have a few more schools still to reach.

But this program with the needs furthest from justice the ones most by the data unlikely to have access to arts learning, and it has been sucksful both in its reach and implementation and incredibly successful in student outcomes.

The media arts skill center which is an arts integrated vocational school in the district, was the most successful school in retaining students once COVID hit and everything went remote. We are having a difficult time as I imagine most school districts are. Tracking young people with the digital divide and other obstacles we have, getting lost, and students lost by our public school system and the programs that have had the most success in retaining student have been those that are arts ipt grated and have a relationship to the advantaged.

I with describe as what John Powell calls targeted universalism. We wanted to bring arts education access to every single of the 54,000 student in Seattle public schools by targeting those who are the furthest from educational justice. By prioritizing need of the students with the least access and in doing so we have been successful and we are on track to meet the goal of every student having access. It will be by 2020, we are hoping by 2021, hashtag who knows because COVID is a monster. The second process we used and the city of Seattle has add race and social justice initiative since 2007.

It has sur rifed more mayors than I have. I've been through five mayors, this one has been through six. The race and social justice system exists because the city of Seattle recognizes that the public sector and public policy is complicit in the jo ut comes that are experienced by communities of color in our city therefore we have a responsibility to practice some restorative justice and change the way in which we do our work to rebalance the outcomes that folks experience.

Racial equity tool kit is a process by which you look at a program, policy or initiative and you center the community that you want to be serving. You center the community that you want to benefit from this policy and you ask a bunch of questions, like what are the unintended consequences. What are the barriers to participation. Are there things like this that exist already?

And it is really putting the most impacted folks at the sent are of what you want to do in order to arrive at a different outcome. We have a cultural facilities fund. Many of you have a capital funding in your world, in your departments. And we with are in a moment where Seattle was a booming economy. Our cultural, facilities fund was going from $250,000 to $1 million. As that climb happened we didn't want the usual suspects to just corner the market on those resources and so we said, how are we going to ensure that communities that haven't had access to these resources can. And we did a tool kit process. We convened about a hundred artists of color and arts administrators of color and asked them, what are the barriers, what are the opportunities. We found up competely changing criteria. You are no longer required to be a nonprofit. There is a bunch of changes we made to the fund and as result in the previous year, prior to the racial equity tool kit we funded I think 32% of the organizations where represented organizations of color and after that tool kit the number went to 78%. Largely by being intentional about saying who you want it serve and why you want to serve them. And in that way, it creates the prioritization and context of your panel process and application.

If you have a result you want to see you have to design a process that can get to you that result and this is a bit of what a racial equity tool kit can help you do.

It also recognize he we don't have the answers. Lord knows government doesn't have all of the answers. And community is well aware and equipped to be able to respond to what it is that they need. And what this process does is try to invite a conversation between the two.

So this is just sort of what we have learned through doing this work over many years. Censoring those most impacted and that is the racial tool kit predicate. Support staff leadership development. The thing I'm most proud of are the staff who moved up and out of our office and are running institutions throughout Seattle. In fact there will be a time not far from now when I need to step aside and let the next lead are of the office take it to where it needs to go.

We have to interrogate the ways in which we are complicit. The government has done and continues to do harm. We can talk about the last four months and what it has been like to work in city government. It's been really challenging.

But we are complicit and we are upholding oppression and we have to look at ways we do that so we can unpack it. We have to foster internal and external systems of accountability so we have changed team inside of our office and we also have external accountability partners in community to help us stay honest in this work.

We are a very outcome society and you have to have strong outcomes but the process is important to.

The way we get to the facilities fund matters as much as the outcome. We aspire to be transformational as much as transactional. You heard me say that at top of this presentation. At the end of the day the arts can transform us and when we get trapped in a transactional binary gain we are not at our strongest. Be bold because imagination drives everything. If we can't see a better world we will never make the fundamental change we need to. Don't be afraid to pause and attend to the trauma that inevitably come up.

Niece are heavy intergenerational cross sector systemic challenges we are wrestling about and we are going to make mistakes. So don't be afraid to pause and to look at the ways in which we can meet the means that emerge. I want it pivot in T.O. way in which we try to operationalize some of that work. I said earlier, arts education, and grant make, those are two very tried and true practices in emerging social poll spip I think there are always ways to improve them and they will always matter and be a core part of our practice but this cop September, cultural space agency, is born out of the same concept that or same programmatic area in our office that gave us the cultural facilities fund and its attended racial equity tool kit. I think we still have the only cultural space affordability program in the country. Partly because by are one of the most expensive cities in the country and we recognized many years ago, that you can give 5 and $10,000 grants for the next 50 years, but you are never going to keep up with the cost of living in our city.

We need policy tools. We need affordability. Pathways to ownership. Foster community wealth building. We to get way big earn way more structural or we will be chasing an ever increasing rent proposition. The cultural space agency is essentially its thesis. It is a new organization we are chartering. It is a quasi governmental, called public development authority, which means it can utilize public dollars and it can actually have public land which we can't legally give to a nonprofit or for profit and it is explicitly about community wealth build eang preserving culture in our city.

Here is our wordier description.

An independent, mission-driven cultural real estate development agency. We are trained in our neocultural habits to respond and react to the market and to follow what the market will bear. This says no, we will try to hack cap it'llism and try to hack the system and see if we can't come up with a better outcome. The cultural space agency is the same thing in its 38-page charter are its values. And its values were cocreated with community. We did a year and half long tool kit with 60 members that designed how this model would work. Complicit community control. And total self determination. And a real clear path for community to realize meaningful wealth creation on their own terms. So we talk about keeping race in the room. We talk about building community wealth. This idea of who decides who decides and Regina Smith gets credit for that phrase. And we will be transparent with how these decisions were made. Folks are a lot more willing to live a decision made if they understand where and how it was made. Even if it wasn't the decision they would make. And I think that sometimes we try to be radically democratic but there is always one more level of who decides. So the panelists selected this award. That's great. Who selected the panelists. And who selected the people that selected the panelists. So we tried to be as transparent as we can about that construct. We really leaned into this idea of assets not always being financial. Cultural wisdom has value. Community experience has value. Lived experience has value. Sweat equity has value. What we are trying to did is translate cultural capital into cultural capital.

We have developed a lot of work through the cohort that is called build art space equitably which is 40POC individual members, half from the real estate community and half from the cultural community who cocreated a curriculum around teaching folks how to be savvy. So we are trying to translate both the value upteam and access to capital down stream. And finally always be learning.

If there is anything I have taken away, it is that we never have all of the answers. We have to be hummable and we have to know that things will continue to shift and continue to change.

The last thing I want to talk about with you before we open it up for discussion is sort of the thesis of I think my eight ears in this job and to me it is what I think the answer is to the triple crisis we found ourselves in. I think that we are approaching a new works progress administration moment as a country. I think COVID will be with us for some time. Best case scenario through the end of next year. Small businesses, large business webs for-profits, no one profits who have plan to be closed for a year and half, I think the nature of this disease and the response it managed created a situation which will require government to take a more active role than it has taken in the past and I would offer candidly, we are staring down what could be as close to an extinction as we will see in both the cultural sector, nonprofit cultural eco system that I have worked in for most of my adult life and local government. Because we are seeing local revenues reduced and seeing folks collapse, the nonprofit sector wasn't very well capitalized before this time and now it is really being tested.

So what is likely in my opinion to come in a first wave of resource is going to be some form of work force or infrastructure stimulus. If we can guide that work force or infrastructure stimulus, we can both meet the hardest hit needs first. Our sector was completely hammered in early March. The entire cultural sector and artistes who depend on it for their income and administrators and state technicians, immediately sidelined.

Secondly, there is an opportunity to redeploy and what artists have been bringing to their communities throughout this pandemic, I have never been more inspired in my life with the art being created as I have been in this, the scariest and darkest of times for a lot of the work and institutions that they are trying to work within and this is our opportunity to radically reimagine the field.

To put a down payment on the world not as it was but as it could be. Office of arts and culture chartered in 1971 from 34 mayor the same year that Boeing laid off 65% of its work force. In a city that wasn't that big.

Were laid off. A building said will the last person out of Seattle please turn out the lights. And someone asked the mayor why he would form a local arts agency in the context of Seattle's greatest recession in its history and he said because we have to give people hope. And it is in that context that we are launching hope corps.

This is essentially a work force redeployment strategy. We have seen artists meet these needs around belonging and social cohesion around arts education and around mental health and around story telling and journalism and media. Can we formalize that process and the incredible value that our arts community brings and apply to to both short term and long-term needs that emerged in this moment? We also are keenly aware that it was the bipoc community hit the most, they are the most vulnerable and need the most help and this is the time to censor their voice and amplify and fuel their work. It won't be exclusive to BIPOC communities but it will center their voice and prioritize their work. I also think that we spent all of 2019 creating a roadmap for a creative economy. One that could grow our creative industries while reducing racial disparities within the creative economy. This is our opportunity to invest heavily in that.

Our goal is to put essentially five, we view this as a pilot, we put 500 creative folks to work over the course of the next year, prioritizing those most impacted, they would come together in cohorts so they could have a peer learning community. We would pay for professional development. They would help cocreate the intervention answers we would essentially hire them as contractors. Why contractors? Well we don't want -- trying to employ them through city government would be a nightmare. We don't have a good intermediary and we could do a lot of them as contractors and we have a lot of rosters of existing artists that we have a relationship with that we could deploy quick when and at scale. We have done a lot of cohort model learning over the last five or six years and it is a powerful co-creation space.

We picked these six categories. Whatever you know you know what needs are in your community. We are very alarmed at threat of media and journalist eanl yet sort of the on the ground community-based journalism that covered black lives matter moment and chop and Chaz during that time was incredibly important in our work. Vulnerability of our food system and the rise of local farming has emerged. We think that is cultural work. We are working with a number of department owns that issue.

We are struggling to get the word out, y'all. We are struggling to get people to understand what they need to did to protect themselves and others and we think artists could be some of the most powerful carriers of that message.

I think we are at the edge of a fourth crisis and it will be around mental health. We are as social creatures are not designed to be isolated from one another in this way a and we need to intentionally invest in social cohesion and belonging and connection and that is something artists are so skilled at.

We have great success early in the pandemic. It was able to pivot all of its resource answers hire a huge number of artists, teaching artists, to stream content. Having three ten-minute lesson plans streamed on the city school channel, city channel and YouTube and parents now like me homeschooling children had access to arts curriculum in April. Not even a month into the pandemic. The school district is still struggling so hard it meet this moment and understandably so.

But our creative community could pivot first. This is more about media and journalism, cohort, more about food security and urban farming. I should shout out to the chefs and all of the culinary workers. A bunch of restaurants immediately pivoted to mass feeding programs. They have a existential threat for their livelihood.

But their first thought was feeding people. We believe the arts community could be incredibly helpful. Mental health, healing. Art circles. I think we could capitalize on that. I think a belonging is a corner stone of the if you tour of cultural policy in our cities. And so that's going to be one of the cohorts. Arts education. Which we have talked about a lot.

And here is the thesis, right? Income to those who are first and hardest hit. Redeploying artists to meet the emergent immediate needs through COVID and civil rights unrest we are experiencing and and opportunity to build back better.

I will say I put the build back better thing in there before it was a Biden campaign slogan. That is just the phrase we were using in March and April. So I will stop sharing my screen.

I just talked a lot. That was a lot of words.

We have like half an hour of just sort of discussion time. To talk about anything that has been or was coming up with. We have to stop at 25 after.

I wanted to give a couple of pieces. I wanted to give sort of like how cultural policy has been shifting. I wanted to talk complicitly about racial equity work. I want to talk about how you put that in practice and where I think this is going. If you're like me, our revenue stream as a department, office of arts and culture is funded by the missions tax. That tax is down by 90% because everything is closed and there are no admissions.

So we got to be awfully creative about how we pivot our work to take advantage of the resources we can find, which is why we put a lot of our time into the hope corps model. We believe we can redeploy that community to demonstrates arts and culture on a scale we haven't seen in my life. That is a lot of things p.m.. I'm happy to about any of it. I'm curious, what might have you questions about?

Or Thomas can just put Duran Duran on. We had that coming into the session. Get back to Rio.

>> Did I miss how you're funding the hope program?

>> No. So the -- this came out of the head of intergovernmental relations. So our D.C. and state liaison department, they reached out to me in April when the cares act funding was supposed to come alive. It was supposed to be for new program, not to offset losses. They said, do have you a creative way we can meet immediate needs through your work? And that is how we developed the model. It was predicated on leveraging C.A.R.E.S. money act. In talking to Jamie bennett and other national partners they suggested that philanthropy having some skin in the game would help.

We have a pix of art money and grant money and you know we are kind of, well the whole world is in wait and see mode until November 3. Because that the determine what kind of stimulus, and what we are doing in the meantime is taking existing programmatic invests and doing a few core horts at a scale.

We have talked it senator patty Murray about this concept and how it might scale. They need enough proof of concept that they can shop an idea like this up the chain of command in D.C.

But it was chief of staff who said when the WPA happened during the new deal it was an infrastructure package and we are talking about a trillion dollar infrastructure package, what if we had 1% of a trillion dollars this could go to something like that but wouldn't have the same constraints as 1% for public art program but could be used the way we utilized in hope corps. Yeah, I would be happy to launch a $50 billion WPA project. That sounds great. Then you obviously, there is a lot between here and there.

But that is ultimately how I hope it is resourced. We have to do our due diligence and prove that it can work. We are doing a cohort of teaching artists, cohort of urban farmer, cohort of journalist and story tellers. And we are trying to get local funders to put more gas in that tank. The problem is that local funders and you may be experiencing this where you are they are just snow blind. No one is prepared for the scale of crisis we are in. Like triple crisis. And we haven't even got to the mental health crisis yet. We are talking about food security. We didn't get CARES Act money as a city. And I'm fine with that. I'm the recovery and philanthropy lead for the city. I'm like, no, let's stop a mass efiction crisis from happening. Let's make sure that family kes feed their kids. Can we please get digital access for every student so we aren't just losing kids in the educational system. I think artists can be involved in all of it.

Cultural organizations are businesses too and they should have access to that money. We saw that bear out with PPP. Very long and winding answer to your question. We hope it is a mix of our own resources, largely stimulus dollars, and philanthropy in the mid toll scale it up.

>> Randy, hi. Hi, everybody. That was so great. Thank you so much for sharing. I learned a lot in terms of the language you gave for it. Thank you for that. It was helpful to see. Just to that point, this is not so much a question, more after comment observation thing that might turn into a question. So bear with me.

One of the things I feel like I've notice bed your work and where you sit is that there has been an enablingern viernment for it. And in conversationes about creative place making or how we get support for our field, the one thing I feel like I hear over and over again a is it is just to dependent on how how every place and kind of who, what relationships have you that are strong and where you can draw on like that interagency partnership and just based on some of the things you said about why you were able to get to where you are and it is because there was a lot of that ground work laid already and so maybe I guess the question is like knowing that the relationships, that that is a key thing, I guess this might not be something you can easily answer because I think it is so state by state and place specific, so maybe other folks can chime in if that's actually something that they are struggling with and how do approach that so this is maybe not just a question for you Randy but like how do you all approach that or what has been a success story of you know, building that foundation for those relationships so can you get some of the stuff to happen and folks can trust new the first place.

>> Do you want it speak to that?

>> I can name, and feel free to come off mute if you want it say something.

But to that point, and I said this at the beginning, it is not lost on me that I'm in a liberal city and pretty liberal state and there for the more progressive things we want to do are probably easier to do.

And Kelly and I used to be on a trip once a year to go to D.C. and meet and talk about why the dog and pony show is good and bring them Skittles or whatever treats and someone I learned from that is that you know, at that time, there is more of a split pr Washington but they all were really excited about the creative economy. They all were really excited about arts education. One year when we met with Kathy McMorris Roger she shared she played piano in her high school musical. There is a humanity be it, you know, if we can get there main that's naive and not in the world we are in now but most people want it see their local economy succeed. Most communities want to see their young people succeed. I found a lot of success in the one thing that robots can't taken a one thing we will never automate is creativity. Human empathy can't be automated. So if we can invest in that we are readying our students and local economy to be more competitive when that work continues to happen.

You definitely have to take an approach that will find an audience but despite the eco chamber rhetoric that exists and I'm complicit in, there are still basic, you know, people want to be safe, they want to be healthy, they want their kids to succeed and they want there to be an Earth, for most part, an Earth for their kids to inherit. There are ways to make that connection and everything is relationships. If I came into this job eight years ago and just had this sweeping new agenda that I thought was really great, it wouldn't have worked. We had to cocreate it. We today have trust. In our city right now we are in a very scare impasse. Even in deep blue liberal Seattle, mayor, council, police department and activist community are all in different corners and they are dug in. And until we can find a way to have enough trust to find a story about the city that could be that one or more people can move from their corners we are just in this, we are frozen. And I feel like we have seen our Federal Government be frozen for the last several months.

We have to have a way to build relationship and build trust. You are right, you have to understand your community and what is unique to your community and be able to work from where you are and build your relationships and find those common grounds.

P.

>> I'm going to comment on something I heard you say, and that led me so T.O. something I've been thinking a lot about. You said until we can build a story. That brings us together.

And I think that that gets at something that we talk a lot about --

[ Inaudible ]

-- in our case for the arts.

But I think that idea of the role that the arts play in bringing us together, in all of these other areas of our lives and in health and food security, you know, in we have the opportunity to tell that story better and to put an emphasis on the importance of the arts in bringing our nation together and communities back together. And you are thinking about in terms of how you are messaging the value of the arts and it is so hard, you know, I this toy make the case for funding the arts. And yet those of us who work in this area see everyday how just, just how the arts are so imperative across sectors.

>> I think you're right.

And I think that I have been spending a lot of time lately with my mentor and friend Roberto, who is director of city afirst for the city of Oakland. When he came into the job he did a cultural plan but the cultural plan is called belonging in Oakland. He put forth in idea that belonging is at core of what a local arts agency does. Creates a permission structure to lift up stories and to celebrate who we are and where we are and I this I what that leads to hopefully is a civic narrative.

To your point of my way of cutting through four corners of our leadership and police department and activist community is, is to foster a civic narrative that a lot of people can see themselves in. And weirdly not the police department but the other three branches of that conversation are similarly aligned. So if we can tell a story, that everyone can see themselves in, and with the binary conflict or weird "Game of Thrones" that seems to happen and direct it toward a place where we can all be part of something bigger, I think were conditioned to form the circular firing squad.

We are conditioned to where we have to be pitted against each other and could that be a role in the deurl imral sector plays that we are the way by which we get through that. We have a bigger story of what we do and we value story telling as critical part of the work of a city, after community, of a state, of a county. The absence of identity work then we are all just victims of brands. I don't think that's where folks want to be. I would offer that if our historical work was around grantmaking an art I think our future is belonging and civic narrative. Public art was the original creative place making. Around investing in artists to physically shape the environment where when investments are made to articulate the identity and expression of a city. I would argue, it got a little boutiquey and moved a little bit away from the community engaged origin that I think it had. Became Providence middle age white dudes and it brought in planning and community engagement and other elements of that work.

But it is grounded in the same and I believe the rise of local arts agencies was fundamentally a democratic undertaking. About everyone deserving access to stories and their stories being told. I'm an optimist so that's my reading of it. There were privileged organizations that could raise a lot of money.

If we follow in that tradition of democratic story telling then we have public sector agencies to make sure everyone has access. Everyone has an opportunity. Everyone can see themselves and we know who is and isn't represented right now. We know where the gaps are and what the data tells us. How can we, I think that's with we have a responsibility to right that wrong.

>> Randy, thank you so much for sharing the inspiration in the new programs and new initiatives that you are originating.

The way you are able to sentor an new vision for the role of a public agency is really inspiring. I would like you to talk more if you could about the legacy programs, though.

Because in addition to all of this new initiating effort and energy, I know that you also have grant programs and legacy programs that will continue to be part of your portfolio. Can you talk about how you are engineering shifts in some of that legacy grantmaking to be more equitable and to meet this moment?

>> That is a great question. You are absolutely right. We funded seven organizations. Probably guess which seven those are or guess what kind they were. Now we have nine funding programs. The cultural facilities fund because we put forward the cultural fund as our sackry official fund and people are just trying to stay alive. We have a $200,000 arts education program and 100,000 arts fund and 50,000 rolling deadline super easy 500 to $1 1,000 grant fund. But the program that is almost $2 million we have been on this long journey where we are trying to get particularly larger organizations to see how doing this work is in their interest and we have done cohort training models and I think we have done a good job in Seattle of establishing that racial equity work is the right thing to do.

How people are doing it, how well that shows up on their staff is a mixed bag.

But we have largely tried to catch more bees with honey than with vinegar, is that the phrase? We use more honey, more carrots than sticks. We are now at a point where we are going to start flipping some switches.

For example, we will take budget size out of the allocation formula.

Which is going to brick the symphony grant from 150,000 it $15,000. They won't like that conversation.

But I will meet with each of the larger organizations taking significant cuts and refer them back it their statement from black lives they put out in June and I'm going to invite them to join us on this journey. This is all of our work. We are all complicit in the system that we have and are all equally able to do this work together and let's talk about the ways we can partner. Because again, the grant writing game left unto itself without any other relationship is transactional. We have money, they want money. They submit a grant. We write them a check. And grant cycles are usually one by you know, grant writing contests won by good grant writers who can probably tell you that of course the symphony exist for black lives. And you can tell a good story. And we don't have the capacity to audit the 208 organizations that we fund and I bet that they all need it. I bet they all do want to be doing that work or even think that they are.

I think we have to invite another layer of accountability and I think in particular most of our work we have done a good job of walking or talking equity. In arts education work and most funding programs, even in public art we have done a good job of investing dollars in BIPOC community, except that one. Except the general operating support program.

And we have 42 staff and 14 are black and 14 black staff wrote app open letter to the office and they said, we need to do better. We have done good. We appreciate what we have done. We are demanding that the office do these seven things if it is going to claim that it stands for black lives. It was an incredibly courageous and powerful thing that they did.

Now it is the black led union now and we meet with them about every two weeks, myself and my deputy director. It was, you know, what that -- there's been a lot of working around the edges to refine and the panelists do apt eye bias training and by identify where you are on the continuum and there are more trainings. That's good. That's readiness work. Like okay, now we have to move. We have to make the harder switch.

Now we have to say we will redistribute the money. And redistributing the money because it is the thing we said we need to do for 10 years and now we are doing it and we need to be part of doing that and what are the other ways to partner and can we bring our cultural institutions and big anchor institutions to a bigger civic table where we can all be part of the civic problem solving that is going to be required of us particularly to come out of COVID? I also think the average life span after small business is two years and average of a nonprofit is forever and I'm not sure that every nonprofit needs to exist until the end of time. And if we can create some kind of organizational hospice, some kind of merger fund where a couple of different institutions can come together and probably be more successful because they can share in some of that overhead, particularly the facilities side, I feel like that's a thing that's going to happen.

By have done all of the readiness work we can do. We add stay.

For racial equity on our website in 2016. We felt really good about it and still feel good about it.

But that's not enough, right? Sphrs whatever we have done and as good as it has been, it hasn't been good enough. We have to keep going. The one thing I think you can never do in this work is assume you are not there.

The government is still super problematic. I want to do whatever I can to help us be better. And I have to accept that we will likely never get all the way there and this is a muscle have to work everyday in order to learn how to use it. And it is a mussel that our office only started using a couple years before I got there. Of course it will take time.

We have a sector for over a hundred years and only started these conversations in the '80s. We are definitely having those conversations to the side. The ADA budget is $280,000 and urban is like -- and that's just to say this work is a journey and we all come to it from where we are and we have to understand that it is going to be a continuous process and a practice versus a check list.

I think that Justin Lang talked about come for the with discomfort. It is important to feel that discomfort and to not only have that accountability but to lean into it and say all right, let's do better.

One of my other mentors, Paul, when I was running the cultural arts center. Ifer with willing to manage conflict, to not just acknowledge that it is there, but get in there and try to figure it out and get to the other side, if can you do that and leave people's dignity in tact and walk your values, I think you actually do yourself a great service.

And I would just offer that no one has this figured out. I don't think. I haven't met anybody that has this figured out.

Certainly no white people and no one that works in government has this figured out.

I think that can be daunting because there is so much structural history and it is so overwhelmingly big and it has gotten louder over the last four years but that spt a reason to not do it. And I think that there are a lot of folks that want to and are doing this work.

And I feel fortunate and privileged to be in conversations to folks committed to this work and are willing to be patient with me while I learn.

>> Randy, this Encarn acion from Chicago. Thanks for offering inspiration and hope. It is great to see a model, especially within government, that is so progressive and open and trying to respond to the times. I think that's great. I'm envious because I think it is different for municipalities.

So I love the fact that you mention ips pi racing, you mention journey. It is never over. That you talk with the intersectionality of these types. As a person of color, and an older person of color, there are some things I have experienced and learned through time. Sometimes when you are dealing with cultural change you can take a long time. You have it wait for sometimes for people to leave their positions with to be get fired, to quit or to die.

That's reality. As a person of color, who was born in the 50s, I've experienced a lot of different times in this country where antiracism, social equity has gone in negative ways and in good wayes.

I've seen our society, and I'm talking about the U.S., make progressive launches forward to try it make amends to try to repair, to try to meet that goal that we are all on in our jeurpy after democracy and equitable democracy. I think that one of the things that I love about your presentation is that you expose that even during times of crisis or chaotic time like right now, there are possibilities of opportunities and one of the things that as a person of color has gone through a lot of things over the years and has seen us move forwards and backwards, right now what we are presented with is that especially around antiracism is that things are exposed, down to the core. We can see thing. We can see where things need to be worked on and things aren't working out. And we also, and there is also a plant form during these times. For those voices to be amplified and be heard.

So I think one of the things I draw on what you are saying and one of the things that I think is that yes, these are times of opportunity and these are times where things are exposed.

And for my colleagues, taking us back four or five months when the chaos broke out and people joined together our humanity exposed and financial resources needed at that time, so I that I was a great thing.

But I guess what I would like to say is that we should keep that in mind that things can be flexible. Things can change. We are living in a time where there could be a lot of rapid change culturally. So I really appreciate you presenting your models and talking about some of the programs that have you presented but also the thought process behind that. Because this work, we are at a pivotal time but even post COVID or post election all of this work will continue. And what we have been exposed to is whether the state agency or nonprofit, what is your mission? Is your noition serve your community and to look at it through the current lens and say oh, yeah, we say we serve our community but do we really serve our community? As well as in funding and in large institutions.

And it is time, it is an opportunity to revert things and try to even the field. And like you say, this is a constant journey we are on. And at different times there are good opportunities and other times you just have to kind of keep your nose to the grind stone and keep going forward. Sorry I went on so long.

Sorry it came off as statement but I appreciate your presentation.

>> I appreciate that. I co-sign everything you said and I think a might be a good place it leave the conversation, actually. A mic drop.

I think about your change as constant cannot be overstated and no matter what happens on November 3, the country is going to change dramatically. In very different ways probably.

Though I predict we probably might not be nicer to each other. That might take a while.

But for better for worse I have regular check-ins with the Department of Health here in Seattle. And I think winter is going to be hard at best.

And there is a lot we don't know. We were already coming into this time of great disruption with AI and automation and 5g and consolidation and I think we have to really own adaptive management and adaptive practice as our way of being. We can't ever sit still because I think that the world will change too much. And point taken about the state level.

One thing I will say, in my federal stimulus aspirations, I that I money is likely to come through states.

And so I think it is you all helping design that system. With the eun service of the NASAA and state agencies and regionals that have you those conversations and hey I really appreciate you all spending an hour and 15 minutes with me. I need hand it back it Thomas. Who is our guide.

And if you want to talk more and I have done everything I've been paid to do for eight years under the domain, it is all public record and all for you, you or anyone else who can find it useful. I enjoyed spending time with you. Thank you.

>> Thank you. Virtual round of applause. Thank you. Thank you so much. Folks, if you can believe it or not. We are coming to the close of this convocation. How exciting and bitter sweet at the same time. Our left session, Leila will be leading it. So it is not a 30-minute break. Only 15-minute break. Get a glass of water. Use the rest room, check e-mail quickly.

But we have to jump right into the session. And we have this commissioned music piece to wrap up our week. You don't want to miss that. Vocal percussion, piano, trumpet. Stay tuned for that. Take a m minute. It is probably memorized by now how to join but you will find the link to the next session right in there. Thank you begin, Randy. Thank you so much. See you in about 15 minutes.