

WORKSHOP PRESENTED BY



Arts & Culture: Needs of the Sector in Yolo County

Workshop highlights needs and opportunities of a struggling sector

“We believe in what we do. It is essential to the community. Now more than ever, the arts and culture practice can be a vital and transformational method to respond to the trauma and restore wellness within our communities.” – Alison Flory, YoloArts

During a virtual workshop on August 30, representatives from the arts and culture sector came together to discuss the impact of the pandemic on organizations in Yolo County. The workshop was hosted by Arts Alliance Davis, Yolo Community Foundation, and YoloArts.

The workshop opened with results from a local survey of arts and culture nonprofits:

- If the crisis persists, 35.5% of organizations in Yolo County are moderately to significantly concerned about permanent closure.
- An additional 58.1% expect to return at lower operational capacity than pre-pandemic.
- 35.4% remain unsure if they will ever regain the personnel laid off or reduced in a response to the pandemic.
- 83.9% of organizations have had a decrease in income. 38.7% of those have seen a decrease of more than 60%.
- For any given public relief funding program, up to 87% of organizations were unable to apply due to limited staff, not meeting qualifications, or not being a priority for the funder.

“What we lose if we lose the arts and culture organizations – besides the economic driver, besides the major job losses – we lose an opportunity to gain empathy for others. We lose the mental health benefits of making art. We lose the events that are the fabric of our community, the ones we desperately need as we come out of this pandemic.” – Stacie Frerichs, Davis Arts Center

Panelists provided context and insights:

- Eight panelists representing a variety of arts and culture nonprofits throughout Yolo County spoke about the impact of the pandemic on their organizations, what has been needed to persist, and what challenges remain to be faced during recovery.
- “We really need to focus on rebuilding our programs to stabilize. What we need funding for is...our staff.” – Shelly Gilbride, International House Davis
- “Funding is really scarce. We want to get out and keep making a change...I hope we can find a path forward.” – J.R. Yancher, Bike City Theatre
- Garth Lewis, Yolo County Superintendent of Schools, told of a student’s work of art hanging in his office titled “Art Brought Me Back to Life” and shared of the efforts to maintain arts education for students during the pandemic.

- Adelita Serena, Calpulli Tlayotli, talked about the critical need and challenge of finding outdoor space for practice and performances.
- Many organizational representatives also talked about critical collaborations and coming together to support each other, and continue providing services to the community.

“Once bustling places are still shuttered and although we’ve done a number of successful pivots, the enduring loss of income and opportunity leaves many of us in a position from which we’re not sure we’ll recover.” – Autumn Labbe-Renault, Arts Alliance Davis/Davis Media Access

What can we do? Ideas from breakout group discussions:

- The greatest need is unrestricted funding. Several attendees shared challenges with funders focused on special projects when the organizations need support to keep critical staff, without whom they cannot launch projects. They need unrestricted funding from individual donors, government entities, grantmakers, and corporate funders.
- Organizations also seek collaborations with the local business, nonprofit, and government communities to include arts organizations in planning and visibility.
- Marketing and awareness that arts and culture organizations are critical for mental health, wellness, economic development, and vibrant communities will be critical in recovery. The organizations expressed a desire for a joint marketing campaign.
- The ability to safely return to hosting live events, which will require outdoor facilities and clear best practices, is also crucial. There is a lack of outdoor performance venues available.
- Maintaining and recovering staff will be a key factor in recovery.

“We’re very discouraged but we’re not done.” – J.R. Yancher, Bike City Theatre

Panelists, presenters, and facilitators: José A. Arenas with Taller Arte del Nuevo Amanecer, Mark Fink with Yolo County Library, Joseph Fletcher with Veterans Memorial Community Theatre, Alison Flory with YoloArts, Stacie Frerichs with Davis Arts Center, Shelly Gilbride with International House Davis, Rachel Hartsough with City of Davis, Emily Henderson with Acme Theatre Company, Jessica Hubbard with Yolo Community Foundation, Autumn Labbe-Renault with Davis Media Access, Garth Lewis with Yolo County Office of Education, Natalie Nelson with Pence Gallery, Rob Salas with Davis Shakespeare, Adelita Serena with Calpulli Tlayotli, Valerie Whitworth with Winters Participation Gallery for the Arts, and J.R. Yancher with Bike City Theatre Company.

Visit www.bit.ly/YoloArtsWorkshopVideo to see the full recording. Contact info@yolocf.org with resources for the arts and culture community.



Photo provided by Yolo Office of Education



Photo provided by Bike City Theatre