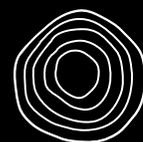


# **DATA, POWER, JUSTICE**

**The State of Open Data  
in New York City  
Culture and Arts Ecosystem**

**A Report by  
Mauricio Delfin and Gonzalo Casals**



**Culture & Arts  
Policy Institute**

The **Culture & Arts Policy Institute** advances systemic change in the culture and arts sector across New York City and the United States by addressing challenges in cultural governance, fair and inclusive access to resources, and collaborative data practices. We champion open government principles (transparency, participation, and accountability) through data-driven research, strategic capacity building, and fostering dialogue across sectors.

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All authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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Over the past year, we engaged artists, cultural workers, policymakers, and funders to identify structural problems in NYC’s culture and arts sector and explore pathways to systemic change. One challenge that stood out across conversations was the strained relationship between our industry and data.

Although data collection and sharing are touted as paths to transparency, innovation, and effectiveness, in practice, they are often designed and interpreted inequitably. Structural barriers and misaligned priorities have alienated artists and small-budget organizations, turning data work into a source of exclusion and eroding trust in data practices.

This report takes up open data — data that can be freely used, modified, and shared by anyone for any purpose — as a strategic tool to rebuild trust and strengthen civic participation in cultural policymaking. We argue that, when stewarded as a common good, open data can support civil society advocacy, help government improve service delivery, and broadly enable civic and public innovation.

Realizing this potential requires that stakeholders co-create a shared agenda for open data in NYC’s culture and arts ecosystem. This report contributes to that effort by outlining the current landscape, identifying the barriers, and offering recommendations for a more equitable, community-governed, and commons-oriented approach to data in NYC’s culture and arts sector.

**Mauricio Delfin and Gonzalo Casals**

Co-Directors

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## Objectives

This study examines open data practices within the NYC Culture and Arts ecosystem.

1. Identifies key stakeholders, data literacy, and proficiency.
2. Assesses challenges and opportunities in open data use and provision.
3. Recommends actions to strengthen data literacy and open data practices to enhance collaboration, accessibility, and impact.

## Methodology

We aim to understand the current data practices, gaps, and challenges within the culture and arts sector. Our methodology consists of:

1. A brief literature review on current open data practices by local governments.
2. Analysis of open datasets related to culture and arts found in NYC's Open Data Portal.
3. Interviews with data stakeholders, including leaders of arts service organizations, New York City Council Members, city administrators, and program officers of philanthropic institutions.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## **BUILDING AN OPEN DATA ECOSYSTEM FOR NEW YORK CITY'S CULTURE AND ARTS SECTOR**

Open data serves as a critical foundation for transparency, evidence-based policymaking, civic engagement, and public accountability across all sectors. In New York City's cultural ecosystem, specifically, open data becomes even more essential, given the sector's recent history of data privatization, limited government transparency, and systemic inequities in funding allocation.

The report reveals that despite NYC's leadership in open data through Local Law 11 of 2012, the culture and arts field continues to face significant barriers that limit its ability to participate in and benefit from the open data ecosystem fully. With only nine datasets from the Department of Cultural Affairs (DCLA) available in NYC's Open Data Portal (which hosts approximately 3,000 total datasets), all of which fail to meet all open data standards for currency, completeness, and metadata, the cultural sector lacks the transparent, accessible information needed to conduct equity analyses, track funding trends, coordinate advocacy efforts, and make informed policy decisions.

Open data in this context represents not just a technical solution, but a pathway toward data justice that can shift power to historically excluded communities, enable grassroots organizations to participate meaningfully in policy discussions, and transform data from a tool of institutional control into a shared public good that serves artists, cultural workers, and the communities they represent<sup>1</sup>. Building an open data ecosystem for culture and the arts in NYC is not simply a technical challenge—it is also a governance and equity issue. Only through sustained collaboration, shared standards, and intentional investment can open data truly serve as a tool for cultural policy, sector innovation, and civic empowerment.

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<sup>1</sup> We have not included Culture and Creative Industries and Higher Education institutions in this initial study, as we are placing greater emphasis on the relationship between the government and civil society.

# KEY FINDINGS

## EXECUTIVE BRANCH

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### *Department of Cultural Affairs (DCLA)*

- a. Culture and arts data are severely underrepresented on NYC Open Data, with only nine DCLA datasets among more than 3,000 citywide.
- b. Published DCLA datasets frequently fail to meet open-data standards, lacking timeliness, completeness, and adequate metadata or documentation.
- c. Cultural-sector government data tend toward privatization and siloing, limiting public access, accountability, and trust, and constraining collaboration.

### *Office of Technology and Innovation (OTI) – Open Data Program*

- a. Open Data Week remains the primary recurring open-data forum, yet arts-sector participation is minimal, limiting data literacy, collaboration, and influence.
- b. The absence of a dedicated “Culture and Arts” category on the Open Data Portal reduces discoverability, analysis, and coordinated policy action.

## LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

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- a. NYC’s Open Data Law emphasizes transparency over enforcement, relying on reporting and reputational pressure rather than sanctions for noncompliance.
- b. Agency compliance is procedurally defined but weakly compelled, reinforcing formal adherence without enforceable consequences.
- c. Public participation mechanisms increase visibility of demand, but agencies are only required to consider requests, not act on them.
- d. The City Council serves as the primary institutional champion of open data, expanding transparency through legislative amendments and oversight tools such as Schedule C.

## OVERSIGHT AGENCIES

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- a. Effective oversight is constrained by the absence of standardized identifiers and metadata, limiting cross-agency tracking, equity analysis, and accountability in cultural funding.

## CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

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- a. Most arts organizations neither generate nor effectively use open data and remain largely absent from open-data policymaking and implementation.
- b. Limited data literacy, capacity, and resources—especially among small organizations—constrain data collection, use, and communication.
- c. A small number of organizations have advanced research capacity, but their data outputs are rarely published as open data, limiting reuse and impact.
- d. The lack of shared open-data standards undermines data quality, comparability, collaboration, and borough-wide advocacy.
- e. Repeated, uncoordinated data requests from funders and agencies impose administrative burdens that displace analysis, advocacy, and strategic planning.

## PHILANTHROPY

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- a. Funders frequently request data and support data-driven initiatives without adopting open-data standards themselves, reinforcing strain on fragile infrastructure.
- b. Systematized, aggregated, and privacy-preserving insights are rarely returned to the field, limiting shared learning, evidence-based advocacy, and coordination.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. EXECUTIVE BRANCH

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#### *Department of Cultural Affairs (DCLA)*

- a. Comply with Open Data Law standards by publishing machine-readable, documented, timely datasets with clear update schedules and interoperable formats.
- b. Standardize identifiers and metadata by adopting consistent organization identifiers and shared schemas to enable integration, tracking, and sector-wide analysis.
- c. Enhance budget transparency by developing a cross-agency cultural spending taxonomy and publishing disaggregated, consistently formatted financial data.
- d. Engage the arts community through recurring, structured collaborations to identify data needs and co-design effective, transparent data-sharing practices.

### *Office of Technology and Innovation (OTI) – Open Data Program*

- a. Strengthen arts-sector engagement by establishing regular forums that position cultural organizations as active partners in Open Data initiatives.
- b. Facilitate capacity-building by expanding data literacy programs and initiatives like Open Data Ambassadors for arts and cultural organizations.
- c. Improve discoverability by creating a dedicated “Culture and Arts” category on the Open Data Portal.

## **2. LEGISLATIVE BRANCH**

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- a. Institutionalize internal accountability by requiring performance reviews or audit flags when agencies repeatedly fail to meet Open Data obligations.
- b. Formalize escalation pathways that automatically refer chronic noncompliance to Council committees or other oversight bodies.
- c. Strengthen public participation by presuming dataset publication when requests are recurring or high-impact unless legal barriers apply.
- d. Embed proactive oversight by using hearings, reporting requirements, and Schedule C to monitor agency-wide Open Data compliance trends.

## **3. OVERSIGHT AGENCIES**

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- a. Develop strategic data-sharing guidance by co-creating sector-specific standards for budgets, metadata, identifiers, and reporting templates.

## **4. CIVIL SOCIETY**

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- a. Advocate collectively for stronger DCLA compliance with the Open Data Law to promote accountability and proactive transparency.
- b. Advance multi-stakeholder collaboration by convening regular forums and data camps with DCLA, OTI, and cultural-sector partners.
- c. Build sector-wide data literacy by co-developing capacity-building programs enabling arts organizations to use data for advocacy and storytelling.

- d. Catalyze cross-sector data sharing by coordinating with health, transportation, hospitality, and education partners to integrate datasets.
- e. Establish a civic-led open-data commons with participatory governance to ensure equitable, trusted, and sustainable data stewardship.
- f. Co-create a shared arts-sector open-data agenda aligned around priority datasets, common standards, and coordinated advocacy.

## 5. PHILANTHROPY

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- a. Co-create shared open-data infrastructure and standards with public agencies to reduce reporting burdens and strengthen ecosystem interoperability.
- b. Invest in sector-wide data literacy by funding training and technical assistance for under-resourced cultural organizations.
- c. Close the feedback loop by returning aggregated, privacy-preserving insights to the field to support transparency and equitable decision-making.

# INTRODUCTION

## OPEN DATA AS A TOOL FOR JUSTICE

We situate open data within the broader framework of transparency, which is a core principle of **open government** alongside participation and accountability.

Open government can be defined as a multilateral, political, and social process that includes, in particular, transparent, collaborative, and participatory actions by government and administration (Wirtz and Birkmeyer, 2015). Open Data is a tool for transparency, which reinforces the public's right to information, enabling informed decision-making, enhancing civic engagement, and strengthening accountability.

We approach this study through the lens of **data justice**, which recognizes data as both a subject and a tool of justice, reflecting and reinforcing power dynamics while shaping institutional decisions (Boyd & Crawford, 2012; Van Dijck, 2014; Dencik, Hintz, & Cable, 2017). We employ this framework because research indicates that data collection and use are shaped by political and economic structures, which in turn influence how social issues are defined and addressed (Dencik, 2025). By integrating data concerns into broader social justice efforts, we ensure that equity and governance matters are addressed comprehensively (Dencik, Hintz, & Cable, 2017).

Different perspectives on data justice highlight tensions around how the term is defined. However, all these approaches emphasize *the need to use data responsibly to challenge systemic inequities and promote fair outcomes*.

## WHAT WE KNOW

Open data refers to information that can be freely used, modified, and shared by anyone for any purpose (Bruce and McGregor, 2015). Over the years, a set of open data standards has been developed, which stipulate that open data must be complete, accessible, timely, available, machine-readable, and non-discriminatory (See Table 1).

Open Data Standards facilitate data sharing and collaboration, reduce duplication, improve decision-making, and enhance public accountability. Governments, businesses, and researchers can unlock the full potential of open data for innovation and social impact by adhering to them.

While research on open government data is extensive, studies on open data in the culture and arts sector are only just emerging (Delfin, 2021; 2022). However, current research on open data in various sectors (education, environment, health, etc.) and at the local government level reveals that there are distinct benefits to working with open data (Benmohamed, 2024).

We know that by adopting open data principles and standards, city governments and foundations can enhance budget transparency, improve service delivery, encourage innovation, foster civic engagement, and strengthen stakeholder roles and relationships within the data ecosystem (Okunleye, 2024).

**TABLE 1: OPEN DATA STANDARDS**

<b>AVAILABLE</b>	Data should be publicly available online in a convenient and modifiable format without barriers restricting access.
<b>CURRENT</b>	Data should be updated regularly to reflect the most recent available information, ensuring relevance and usability.
<b>COMPLETE</b>	The data should include all necessary details without any omissions, ensuring a comprehensive and accurate dataset.
<b>FREE OF CHARGE</b>	Data should be accessible without cost to promote equitable use and encourage broad adoption.
<b>OPEN LICENSE</b>	Data should be released under an open license that allows anyone to freely use, modify, and share it without legal restrictions.
<b>MACHINE-READABLE</b>	Data should be structured in a format that allows for automated processing, such as CSV, JSON, or XML.
<b>SINGLE DOWNLOAD</b>	Data should be available in bulk as a single downloadable file, rather than requiring multiple requests or fragmented retrieval.
<b>NON-PROPRIETARY FORMATS</b>	Data should be provided in formats that do not require proprietary software to access, ensuring broad accessibility (e.g., CSV files instead of Excel files).
<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	Data should be easily discoverable, retrievable, and usable by diverse users, including those with disabilities.
<b>METADATA</b>	Data should be accompanied by descriptive metadata that provides context, source information, and documentation to aid understanding and reuse.

**Working with open data can facilitate stronger collaborations among stakeholders.** For example, it can enhance collaboration between philanthropy and government, helping to align funding strategies and refine foundation priorities (Verhulst, 2018). Various sectors, including civic technology, journalism, and academia, rely on open data for research and innovation.

**Open data portals are a crucial resource and tool for sharing open data.** An Open Data Portal is a web-based system used to collect existing datasets from multiple sources, which may be in different formats, and publish them on user-friendly dashboards that users can view, download, and access via an Application Programming Interface (API) (Máchová & Lnenicka, 2017).

In an Open Data Law, government datasets are organized into a searchable catalog, which strengthens public accountability and enables independent oversight of city programs (Lnenicka & Nikiforova, 2021). This kind of proactive transparency (Demšar, 2024; Alom, 2018) helps ensure that government decisions and resource allocations can be evaluated and challenged when necessary.

**Open data can facilitate the development of evidence-based policies by public institutions and enhance the efficiency of information sharing within organizations.** Working with open data can foster transparency and accountability in public institutions, advancing good governance, social well-being, and inclusion.

**Philanthropic institutions can also leverage open data to enhance impact while ensuring ethical stewardship.** By embracing data-driven strategies, philanthropy can enhance transparency, effectiveness, and social impact, ensuring that digital transformation serves the public good rather than private interests (Verhulst, 2018).

**Unfortunately, much government data remains inaccessible, limiting its potential to serve the public good.** Research shows that, despite its promise, the full value of local administrative data—generated by public institutions—remains underutilized due to organizational, technological, and legal barriers (Fusi, 2021; Sandoval-Almazan et al., 2021).

**Involving civil society in the publication of open government data can lead to improved service delivery, increased budget transparency, and, more importantly, increased public trust.** Research on the Third Wave of Open Data reveals that open data is based on the principle of accessibility, and a significant challenge is making data both usable and understandable to the public. In other words, the goal is not simply to publish data, but to make it usable and relevant for people and communities (Verhulst et al., 2020).

**Today, the discussion on open data is expanding to encompass its relationship with the growing use of artificial intelligence across all aspects of society** (Simonofski et al., 2025; Sieker et al., 2025).

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF OPEN DATA IN NEW YORK CITY

New York City's history of using open data to promote government transparency and expose corruption dates back at least to 1873. That is the year that the New York Department of Citywide Administrative Services began publishing the City Record in response to the scandalous malfeasance of Boss Tweed and Tammany Hall<sup>2</sup> (Lynch, 2002). During the Progressive Era (1890s–1920s), reformers in New York City promoted government transparency by creating accountability measures, including civil service reforms and contract award rules.

Throughout the years, various attempts were made to provide public access to government information, including the 1974 New York State Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) which guaranteed public access to government records, and the Public Data Directory, an inventory of city agencies' digital databases released in 1993, when the World Wide Web was still in its infancy. Published by the newly established NYC Commission on Public Information and Communication (COPIC), the Public Data Directory functioned like a printed phone book of city agencies. By law, their datasets were required to be publicly accessible (Campbell, 2017).

In 2007, Tim O'Reilly convened a conference in Sebastopol, California, leading to the "Eight Principles of Open Government Data", advocating for transparency, accessibility, and reusability of public data (Currie, 2016). The momentum grew nationally in 2009, bolstered by President Obama's "Memorandum on Transparency and Open Government", establishing the federal government's first open data policy.

Locally, under Mayor Bloomberg, New York City launched two key open data initiatives in 2009: the NYC BigApps competition, which encouraged developers to build civic tech tools using public data, and the NYC Data Mine, a precursor to the current Open Data Portal, which initially offered 170 datasets for public use (Pescovitz, 2009; Carr & Lassiter, 2016).

The turning point came in 2012 when New York City became one of the first municipalities in the U.S. to pass an Open Data Law (Local Law 11), introduced by Council Member Gale Brewer in 2010 and signed by Mayor Bloomberg. This law preceded the federal government in codifying a commitment to transparency and is one of the first municipal laws of its kind in the world. The law mandated that all city agencies publish datasets publicly. Mayor de Blasio's 2015 "Open Data for All" initiative reaffirmed this push.

Between 2015 and 2016, the New York City Council passed amendments to the Open Data Law to enhance

The turning point came in 2012 when New York City became one of the first municipalities in the U.S. to pass an Open Data Law, introduced by Council Member Gale Brewer.

<sup>2</sup> In the 1870s, Boss Tweed and the Tammany Hall political machine embezzled tens of millions of dollars from New York City through inflated contracts, kickbacks, and falsified records. Their scheme exploited the lack of financial transparency in city government and led to widespread outrage, Tweed's arrest, and early calls for public access to government data and reform.

transparency, including FOIL reporting requirements for datasets, a public nominations process, and an “Examinations and Verifications” process to ensure all eligible datasets are disclosed. By 2019, over 1,600 datasets from more than 60 agencies were accessible.

In recent years, various NYC Council Members, including Gale A. Brewer, Eric Dinowitz, Jennifer Gutiérrez, Keith Powers, Lincoln Restler, Carlina Rivera, and Julie Won, have supported organizations like BetaNYC’s digital and open data literacy programs.

## A CULTURE OF DATA PRIVATIZATION

In New York City’s cultural and arts sector, the trajectory of open data has followed two divergent paths: (1) a municipal push for transparency through landmark open-data policies and Open Data Programs, and (2) the expansion of privately controlled data infrastructures used in the culture and arts sector. In practice, data generated by nonprofit arts organizations—often to satisfy funder reporting—has frequently been centralized and governed by third-party intermediaries, amounting to a de facto privatization of information about the sector.

The Cultural Data Project (CDP) illustrates this model. Launched in 2004 and merged in 2018 with SMU’s National Center for Arts Research to form SMU DataArts, the CDP aggregated extensive financial, operational, and programmatic data from thousands of organizations. Although framed as a nonprofit capacity-building tool, access to raw, disaggregated data remained confined mainly to the platform and its funding partners. At the same time, participating organizations received only limited benchmarking outputs (King, 2021). Despite the clear sector-wide value of these data, no open-access framework enabled broad public use, collective analysis, or governance by the field that produced them—thereby limiting public access, reinforcing power asymmetries, and constraining independent research and advocacy (King, 2021).

More broadly, substantial cultural sector datasets—across city agencies, funders, and research intermediaries—have been collected without transparent protocols for public access, field ownership, or reuse. As a result, information that could inform policy, equity initiatives, and resource allocation often remains fragmented, proprietary, or sequestered behind institutional firewalls. Addressing this legacy requires not only strengthening open-data policy but also reconfiguring data governance models that privilege institutional control over collective stewardship.

Privatized cultural data centralizes authority, restricts access for grassroots organizations, and undermines equity. While proponents cite data quality and sustainability, such arrangements tend to narrow transparency and accountability. A more just alternative centers on participatory data governance and meaningful public access, treating cultural data as a shared public good—or as a data commons (King, 2021; Marttila et al., 2025; van Maanen et al, 2024).

Privatized cultural data centralizes authority, restricts access for grassroots organizations, and undermines equity.

An alternative approach to data governance is *data commoning*. Commons can be thought of as entanglements of shared resources, people, institutions, rules, and principles, which a human collective cares to maintain, sustain, and preserve (Marttila, 2025). An essential aspect of commoning, as both a verb and an action, is the incorporation of participatory design and collaborative principles. From our perspective, this should be the direction of data collecting, sharing, and stewarding practices. Another key element in this new direction is approaching the culture and arts sector as an ecosystem, focusing on relationships and processes, rather than just on actors and products.

# MAPPING THE OPEN DATA ECOSYSTEM

## NEW YORK CITY'S CULTURE AND ARTS OPEN DATA ECOSYSTEM

Approaching open data as an ecosystem is essential. It clarifies not only who the actors are, but also their roles, relationships, shared resources, and the events that shape the system. Within such ecosystems, actors collaborate around data and resources (e.g., software and standards) through exchanges of information, capabilities, and artifacts (Runeson, 2021).

This first open data study is intentionally focused on New York City's local government and nonprofit cultural sector –its actors, roles, relationships, and resources. While it does not extend to state or federal agencies, academic institutions, or the for-profit Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs), this local emphasis enables a deeper and more grounded analysis of the stakeholders most directly shaping and impacted by NYC's culture and arts data landscape.

These sections provide a brief overview of the various stakeholders in NYC's cultural and arts ecosystem. In the section that follows, we will dive deeper into some of these stakeholders and their data practices.

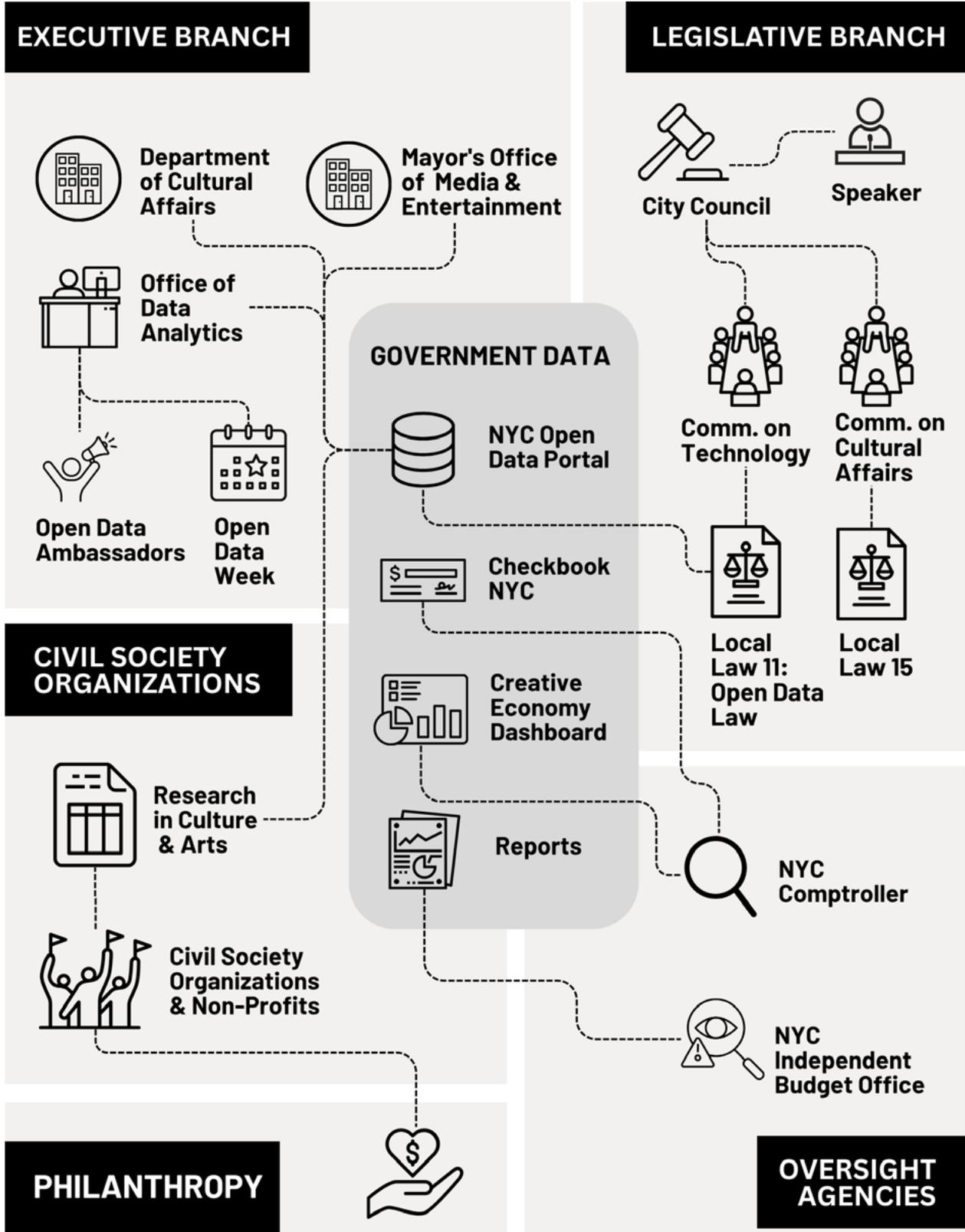


Diagram: Stakeholders Of Open Data In NYC's Culture and Arts Ecosystem

## EXECUTIVE BRANCH

Within the executive branch, many city agencies routinely collect, generate, and manage data as part of their operational mandates. This study centers explicitly on two key agencies with sector-specific mandates: the **DCLA** and the **Mayor's Office of Media and Entertainment (MOME)**. These agencies play central roles in the administration and support of the city's culture and arts ecosystem, maintaining significant datasets. As of this writing, DCLA has published only nine datasets and MOME just two on the NYC Open Data Portal.

While other agencies, such as the **Department of Education**, the **Department of Youth and Community Development**, and the **Department of Parks and Recreation**, fund and engage with, or generate data relevant to, cultural nonprofits, they are outside the scope of this initial study.

Additionally, the **NYC Office of Technology and Innovation (OTI)**, responsible for the planning, governance, and execution of citywide technology initiatives, oversees the implementation of the **Open Data Program** through its **Office of Data Analytics**. This includes managing the City's **Open Data Portal**—a platform hosting approximately 3,000 datasets from across agencies—as well as coordinating initiatives such as **Open Data Week**.

## LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

In their oversight and regulatory role of City Administration, the **New York City Council** has played a key role in shaping open data policy and cultural data infrastructure. This includes the passage and continued oversight of Local Law 11 of 2012 (Open Data Law), sponsored by Council Member Brewer. The legislation requires New York City agencies to publish final versions of statistical or factual information—structured as lists, tables, charts, or other non-narrative formats—that record a measurement, transaction, or determination related to the agency's mission. These datasets must be made available through a centralized Open Data Portal in formats that allow for automated processing and public reuse.

More recently, Council Member Ossé sponsored Local Law 15 of 2024 (Annual reporting on Department of Cultural Affairs) which requires the DCLA to publish an annual public report detailing all funding to arts and cultural organizations and institutions, disaggregated by organization, type of funding (e.g., program, capital, capacity-building), location, and—when available—demographic data on both leadership and communities served. The law also mandates the inclusion of agency operational costs, funding trends, and any challenges in data collection. The report must be submitted by September 30 each year and made publicly accessible online.

The Council's **Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and International Intergroup Relations**, along with the **Committee on Technology**, is directly responsible for legislative oversight in areas connected to open data and the culture and arts sector. These committees regularly

hold public hearings to question agencies, review proposed legislation, and surface public concerns. Their work is central to monitoring the implementation of laws such as the Open Data Law and Local Law 15, and they provide a formal venue for advocates, researchers, and cultural organizations to shape the city's data and cultural policy through testimony and engagement.

## OVERSIGHT AGENCIES

The **NYC Comptroller's Office** and the **Independent Budget Office (IBO)** are two critical fiscal oversight entities that contribute to transparency and accountability in city governance.

The Comptroller's Office is part of the executive branch, though it operates independently from the Mayor. As the city's chief financial officer, the Comptroller audits agencies, registers contracts, oversees public pension funds, and produces financial reports and budget analyses. While structurally part of the city administration, the Comptroller is an independently elected official who acts as a watchdog over city spending.

The IBO, by contrast, is a non-mayoral, nonpartisan agency created by the City Charter. It reports to both the City Council and the public, providing objective economic and budgetary analysis to counterbalance mayoral budget power. The IBO operates independently from the executive branch, even though it is publicly funded.

These agencies provide analysis and tools to support transparency in the cultural sector. The NYC Comptroller publishes citywide financial data and audits. This office's key data initiatives include **Checkbook NYC**, a tool that offers real-time access to city payments, contracts, and financial transactions—including those related to cultural organizations. Of particular relevance is the **Creative Economy Dashboard**, which aggregates and visualizes economic indicators associated with NYC's creative sector, utilizing data from the New York State Department of Labor, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, and Moody's Economy.com. It's important to note that these tools do not rely on open data as defined by the city's Open Data Law, but rather on financial and labor data made available in various formats by public institutions.

The IBO, which regularly analyzes cultural funding allocations and patterns, has worked directly with DCLA datasets and open data sources. Notable publications include *How Much Did New York City Pay to Nonprofit Cultural Organizations in 2022?* (2022) and *Where Are Cultural Development Fund Awards Distributed Throughout New York City?* (2023).

## CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

This study examines Culture and Arts Organizations that are Civil Society Organizations (CSOs): organized groups that operate independently from both the state and the private sector (Bassi et al., 2025). While CSOs are not always formal, and their definition may vary across regions and scholarly debates (Rutherford et al., 2025), this report focuses on CSOs that are formally registered as non-profits.

Nonprofit organizations (NPOs) are legally recognized entities governed by the “non-distribution constraint” (Valentinov, 2008), which permits them to generate revenue but prohibits distributing profits to managers, employees, or stakeholders (Vaceková, 2014). In New York City’s cultural and arts sector, NPOs encompass a diverse array of institutions, including community arts organizations, arts councils, performing arts groups, artist-run spaces, arts alliances, museums, and advocacy organizations. These organizations regularly collect operational, audience, and programmatic data.

Among NPOs, Arts Service Organizations (ASOs) play a leading role in collecting, analyzing, and sharing data across the field. ASOs are nonprofit entities dedicated to supporting artists, cultural organizations, and arts educators through services such as professional development, technical assistance, advocacy, funding opportunities, convenings, field research, and networking.

Unlike cultural producers or presenters, ASOs typically do not create or present artistic work. Instead, their mission is to strengthen the cultural ecosystem’s infrastructure. They may operate within a single discipline (e.g., dance, theater, visual arts) or across multiple disciplines, and function at local, regional, or national scales. Their core mandate is capacity-building rather than direct cultural programming (Duque-Cifuentes & Blake, 2024).

## PHILANTHROPY

Philanthropic organizations hold a wealth of information—grantmaking records, program evaluations, and operational data—that too often remains underutilized. Verhulst (2018) argues that while the sector increasingly acknowledges the potential of data, much decision-making still relies on tradition and intuition. This limits philanthropy’s ability to identify patterns, allocate resources strategically, and assess outcomes with rigor. The call is for a shift toward systematic, data-informed practice, where foundations treat their data as a resource for accountability, transparency, and more responsive action in the communities they serve.

Building on this, Verhulst (2024) frames philanthropy not only as a user of data but also as a steward of data for the public good. He outlines five areas where data can become central to philanthropic work: improving how organizations utilize their internal data, enabling cross-sector data collaboratives, enhancing decision-making tools, supporting data science and AI

innovation, and advancing the inclusive governance of data systems. These insights position data not simply as a by-product of philanthropic activity but as a strategic asset—one that, if managed responsibly, could expand philanthropy’s capacity to innovate, adapt, and increase its impact.

Having examined the main stakeholders of open data in NYC’s culture and arts sector, we proceed to an in-depth analysis of some of these actors and a closer look at their data collection and sharing practices.

# HOW STAKEHOLDERS PRODUCE DATA

## EXECUTIVE BRANCH

### NYC OFFICE OF TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION (OTI)

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The idea of open data is how you connect people with their government and how you make government more transparent by default.

— Zachary Feder, Office of Data Analytics

#### NYC Open Data Program

The city's Open Data Program is designed to provide public access to government datasets, ensuring transparency and accountability in city operations. The initiative aims to make government functions more understandable to residents, journalists, and researchers.

Initially, the program focused on large enterprise systems—core city databases that had been in existence for decades, such as property tax records and building permits. Since 1993, around the time when the data directory was published, NYC introduced open data coordinators in each agency to identify and manage data, ensure proper documentation, and standardize formats across agencies. Over time, the role was formalized and codified into law. A key shift has been the move toward automation, ensuring data sets update themselves without requiring manual intervention.

The Office of Data Analytics (ODA) at OTI continues to work on improving data governance, documentation, accessibility, and engagement. For example, the Open Data Ambassadors

program — launched as a joint effort with BetaNYC in 2019, initially in collaboration with the Queens Library System — trains volunteers to teach data literacy, enabling communities to access and effectively utilize open data. Similarly, **Open Data Week**, an annual festival that began in 2017 — organized by the Office of Data Analytics in collaboration with BetaNYC — has grown from a dozen events to over 100 sessions and 6,000 attendees, showcasing open data applications across various industries, including real estate and transportation advocacy.

## NYC Open Data Portal

The Open Data Portal is maintained by the city’s Open Data Program, which is part of the Office of Data Analytics, a division of the Office of Technology and Innovation.

The city launched its modern Open Data Portal in 2011, before the Open Data Law was passed. The portal revolutionized access by allowing users to download and interact with data sets directly online. Today, NYC’s Open Data Portal hosts approximately 3,000 datasets, with approximately 1,500 public inquiries annually, often leading to updates or new data publications. Agencies must report annually on their datasets, detailing what is pending publication on Open Data, what is shared publicly otherwise, and what remains restricted due to privacy or security concerns.

### *Challenges and Opportunities*

Open data has proven to be a valuable resource for city government, informing policies, programs, and government actions. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, wastewater surveillance data from treatment plants were made available, enabling officials to track infection levels.

Additionally, Vision Zero data, used to track traffic safety incidents, has been instrumental in efforts to redesign streets and lower speed limits to prevent accidents. Council Member Brewer’s office, for example, analyzes 311 requests via the portal to identify patterns in district complaints, such as noise issues, sanitation problems, and infrastructure failures.

There are, however, two main challenges with the City’s open data resources:

- 1) Technology and Data Governance:** Although the Open Data Portal’s infrastructure and user interface are regularly updated by the city’s vendor, Tyler Technologies, usability challenges are driven less by the age of the platform than by weaknesses in data governance. The absence of consistent metadata, documentation, and shared standards across agencies limits users’ ability to understand, trust, and reuse datasets. These governance gaps—rather than interface design alone—present the most significant barriers to effective use by residents and agencies.
- 2) Regulatory:** The Open Data Law lacks enforcement mechanisms. While residents can submit complaints if agencies fail to publish their data, there are no penalties for noncompliance. Real accountability requires commitment from the mayor and the heads of each agency.

## NYC DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS (DCLA)

The **DCLA** is the principal municipal agency responsible for sustaining and advancing the City’s cultural ecosystem. Its portfolio encompasses direct operating support for the 34 members of the **Cultural Institutions Group (CIG)** – City-owned cultural facilities stewarded by independent nonprofits – as well as discretionary and programmatic funding for more than 1,000 nonprofit arts and cultural organizations across all five boroughs (NYC Office of Operations, 2025).

In FY2022, DCLA directed approximately \$126 million in baseline operating subsidies to the CIG, complemented by roughly \$50 million in project-based allocations through the **Cultural Development Fund (CDF)**, the City’s competitive grants program for nonprofit cultural providers (NYC Independent Budget Office, 2023).

Beyond grantmaking, DCLA manages a substantial capital program, financing renovations, expansions, and new construction across the cultural sector’s physical plant – an infrastructure portfolio that consistently ranks among the largest of any local cultural agency in the United States. It also administers **Materials for the Arts (MFTA)**. This nationally recognized creative reuse initiative redistributes in-kind donations of equipment, furniture, and supplies valued at more than \$6 million annually to public schools, cultural nonprofits, and social service organizations (Materials for the Arts, 2024). Finally, through the **Percent for Art program**, DCLA commissions permanent site-specific artworks integrated into eligible City-funded capital projects, embedding cultural expression into the civic and built environment (CreateNYC, 2017).

### DCLA’s Open Data

As the central municipal authority for cultural support, funding, and infrastructure, DCLA collects data from all its programs. Currently, however, only nine datasets have been posted in the city’s Open Data Portal (See Table 2).

**TABLE 2: DATASETS PUBLISHED BY DCLA IN THE OPEN DATA PORTAL (3/23/25)**

	Dataset Name	Last Updated	Views	Description
1	DCLA Programs Funding	10/18/23	8400	This dataset contains Program funding award amount by fiscal year (FY12-FY23).
2	DCLA Cultural Organizations	06/25/21	6827	A listing of all Cultural Organizations in the DCLA’s directory (2,300 organizations).
3	Completed Percent for Art projects with artist information	06/18/21	2741	This dataset contains the current listing of the DCLA’s completed Percent for Art projects.
4	DCLA Cultural Organizations Capital Funding	06/18/21	2186	Organizations awarded Capital Projects funding.
5	DCLA Cultural Institutions Group (CIG) Funding	06/18/21	1887	DCLA provides operating and energy support funding to CIG members.
6	DCLA Materials For The Arts - Donor Information	06/18/21	896	Data regarding donations processed through MFTA.

7	DCLA Program Funding for FY11	05/09/22	1332	This dataset contains the Programs' funding award amount for FY11.
8	DCLA: Programs Funding for FY2010	05/09/22	1023	This dataset contains the Programs' funding award amount for FY10.
9	DCLA Cultural Organization Resources	02/07/20	1516	A list of organizations that provide services and/or valuable information to artists and cultural organizations.

## Challenges and Opportunities

### DATA UNDERREPRESENTATION AND NON-COMPLIANCE WITH STANDARDS

Currently, DCLA has published only nine datasets in the city's Open Data Portal, out of about 3,000 datasets published citywide. This underrepresentation of open data restricts public insight into the cultural sector and highlights the need for greater transparency and data sharing from the agency.

The nine published datasets reveal incomplete alignment with open data standards. They fall short in (1) timeliness, (2) completeness, and (3) metadata and documentation (See Table 3). These under-adherences to open data standards generate multiple challenges:

#### » *Lack of Timeliness:*

Not all DCLA datasets are regularly updated, which undermines their usefulness for current analysis, planning, or decision-making. Open data must be kept current to retain relevance and support public accountability.

#### » *Incomplete and Aggregation opacity:*

The datasets lack disaggregated and comprehensive information. Without the full scope of available data, users are unable to analyze patterns across geography, demographics, or program-level outcomes — significantly limiting their potential for oversight and impact.

**TABLE 3: EVALUATION OF DATA SETS ACCORDING TO OPEN DATA STANDARDS**

DATASET NAME	AVAILABILITY	FREE OF CHARGE	OPEN LICENSE	MACHINE READABLE	SINGLE DOWNLOAD	NON-PROPRIETARY FORMATS	ACCESSIBLE	CURRENT	COMPLETE	META DATA
DCLA Programs Funding	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO
DCLA Cultural Organizations	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO
Completed Percent for Art projects	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO
DCLA Cultural Orgs Capital Funding	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO
DCLA CIG Funding	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO
DCLA Materials for The Arts - Donor Information	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO
DCLA Program Funding for FY11	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO
DCLA: Programs Funding for FY2010	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO
DCLA Cultural Organization Resources	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO

» **Insufficient Metadata and Documentation:**

All DCLA datasets published on the Open Data Portal include data dictionary files, in line with Open Data Law requirements. However, the quality of these materials is uneven and often limits their usefulness: many are incomplete or outdated and provide minimal descriptive information about data context, scope, or limitations. As a result, while metadata is formally present, it does not consistently function as effective interpretive documentation, which is essential for responsible use (Brandusescu and Lämmerhirt, 2018).

**THE POTENTIAL OF CDF DATA**

One of the most noticeable absences from the data published by DCLA in the Open Data Portal is information about the **CDF** program. The CDF program collects extensive information from over 1,300 organizations across the cultural sector yearly, ranging from budget lines and staffing structures to board demographics and neighborhood service areas.

Taken together, these inputs generate a uniquely detailed dataset that provides a **comprehensive view of the sector’s strengths and weaknesses**. Examples of data collection include the following dimensions:

DIMENSION	EXAMPLES OF DATA COLLECTED
<b>Organizational Profile</b>	Mission, year founded, annual budget
<b>Leadership &amp; Staffing</b>	Demographics of senior staff and boards
<b>Programmatic Focus</b>	Artistic disciplines, audience reach, and venues
<b>Financial Health</b>	Revenue sources, expense categories
<b>Workforce &amp; Artist Pay</b>	Compensation policies, hiring practices
<b>Education &amp; Access</b>	School partnerships, community programs
<b>Equity Metrics</b>	DEI initiatives, ADA compliance
<b>Geography</b>	Borough, district, and neighborhood served

### Insights from Aggregation

- » **Financial resilience:** When aggregated longitudinally, the data can reveal how organizations of different sizes and in different boroughs respond to economic shocks. For example, it could show whether small organizations in the Bronx recover at the same rate as midsize institutions in Manhattan.
- » **Geographic coverage:** With neighborhood-level tagging, policymakers could identify cultural “cold spots” and direct resources to areas most in need.

### Workforce and Equity Measures

- » **Compensation and staffing:** Fields related to artist pay, staffing structures, and leadership demographics enable the tracking of equity and representation within the workforce.
- » **Audience and access:** Information on education programs, audience engagement, and accessibility practices highlights who is being reached, the inclusivity of those efforts, and where systemic gaps remain.

### From Administrative Data to Public Good

Publishing the CDF dataset openly—**disaggregated, updated annually, and with explicit metadata**—would transform a grant-management archive into a **shared civic resource**.

- » **Researchers** could trace long-term trends in cultural participation.
- » **Funders** could benchmark progress toward equity goals.
- » **Advocates** could ground arguments in evidence rather than anecdotes.
- » **Communities** could see themselves reflected in the data and hold institutions accountable for the cultural life of their neighborhoods.

The CDF applications constitute an exceptionally detailed record of New York City’s cultural ecosystem. If released as open data, they could illuminate **who creates culture, where it happens, how it is financed, and whom it serves**. Opening CDF data is therefore more than a transparency measure—it is an invitation to **build a more equitable, evidence-informed, and collaborative cultural sector for New York City**.

## CROSS SECTOR DATA

Beyond the issue of limited data availability from DCLA, other concerns emerge when examining cross-sector data relevant to the culture and arts ecosystem.

**The lack of a standardized taxonomy presents challenges in locating relevant data.** Some of the datasets listed in Table 4, which do not come from DCLA, were retrieved using tags such as “culture” and “arts”. In contrast, others were found by navigating agency-specific datasets known to include cultural activities.

**The inconsistency in categorization and tagging limits discoverability.** For instance, DCLA datasets are typically classified under “Recreation”, PDC’s public art inventory appears under “Housing & Development”, and datasets on botanical gardens are listed under “Environment”. Introducing a dedicated “Culture” category and tag, and standardizing metadata practices would enhance access and contextual clarity for users seeking cultural data.

The following table displays datasets published by various agencies related to the culture and arts sector. They have been compiled by analyzing how these are tagged in the Open Data Law (“culture,” “arts,” etc.) or by identifying their relationship as specified in their titles.

**TABLE 4: OTHER DATASETS RELATED TO CULTURE AND ARTS (3/23/2025)**

Dataset Name	Agency <sup>3</sup>	Description	Updated	Views
Open Streets Locations Map	DOT	Map of NYC’s Open Streets program locations.	01/12/24	1886
Temporary Art Program	DOT	Data on temporary art on NYC Department of Transportation (DOT) property.	04/26/24	1258
Latin Media Organization Map	MOME	Map showing locations of Latin media organizations.	09/11/18	7874
Latin Cultural Organizations Map	MOME	Map showing locations of Latin cultural organizations.	09/11/18	6670

<sup>3</sup> The New York City Office of Technology and Innovation (OTI), formerly the Department of Information Technology and Telecommunications (DoITT), was renamed in 2022. Both names refer to the same agency responsible for citywide technology, privacy, cybersecurity, infrastructure, and telecommunications.

Latin Cultural Organizations	MOME	Listing of Latin cultural organizations.	09/10/18	4631
Latin Media Organizations	MOME	Listing of Latin media organizations.	09/10/18	2972
Broadway Events Calendar	NYC & Co	Calendar for Broadway events.	09/10/18	2662
Public Design Commission Outdoor Public Art Inventory	PDC	Inventory of monuments, memorials, artworks, and historic markers installed outdoors on City-owned property.	01/24/24	2079
Agency Voter Registration Activity	OPS	Data on voter registration activities by agencies. NYC Mayor's Office of Operations.	02/15/24	1179
DOITT Classical Music	OTI	Classical music locations map.	12/12/23	2468
New York City Art Galleries	OTI	Map showing locations of NYC Art Galleries.	02/19/24	15360
New York City Museums	OTI	Map of locations of NYC Museums.	02/19/24	7873
MUSEUM	OTI	Dataset of NYC Museum locations.	02/19/24	408
ART_GALLERY	OTI	Dataset detailing NYC Art Gallery locations.	02/19/24	152
Theaters	OTI	Listing of NYC theaters	02/19/24	13756
Museums and Galleries	NYC & Co	NYC and Co. museums and galleries	09/10/18	9978
Art in DOE buildings	SCA	List of art, artists, media, and locations in DOE buildings.	02/11/19	1364

# LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

## NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL

I passed the Open Data Law because government works for everyone, and unless there's a good reason not to, datasets built by government agencies should be available for everyone to analyze, use for research, problem-solve, and build new apps and tools around.

— Council Member Gale Brewer (in Chan, 2020)

New York City was the first city to pass an open data law in 2012, making it the oldest and most established open data program at the local level in the United States (Schwoerer, 2022). A key factor in this accomplishment was the support this initiative had from the City Council.

Council Member Gale Brewer, a long-standing champion of data transparency in New York City, advocated for public access to information well before she successfully championed the Open Data Law. During Mayor Dinkins's administration (1990–1993), before the era of widespread internet use, Brewer worked with IBM to install data kiosks at City Hall, allowing the public to access city data. The kiosks remained in place for close to five years, providing an early model for making government data accessible.

Brewer worked for years to pass Local Law 11, overcoming significant resistance from agencies, many of which were unaware of the data they possessed. The campaign to pass this legislation made it clear that City agencies themselves were essential stakeholders regarding open data. Indeed, research shows that many city agencies rely on open data to understand the activities of other departments, helping to inform their planning and programming.

### Local Law 11: Open Data for All

In March 2012, Mayor Michael Bloomberg signed into law Local Law 11, known as the “Open Data for All” bill. This landmark legislation required that all public datasets maintained by City agencies be made accessible through a single online portal by the end of 2018 (Okamoto, 2016).

The law codified the objectives of this policy by embedding them in the process for prioritizing whether a data set should be made public, and in what order:

“For purposes of prioritizing public data sets, agencies shall consider whether information embodied in the public data set: (1) can be used to increase agency accountability and responsiveness; (2) improves public knowledge of the agency and its operations; (3) furthers the mission of the agency; (4) creates economic opportunity; or (5) responds to a need or demand identified by public consultation” (Local Law 11, 2012 in Chan, 2020).

The law defined a public dataset as any comprehensive collection of data held on a computer system by or on behalf of a City agency. Following its passage, the newly created NYC Open Data Team began the complex process of implementation. Over time, the City learned from this work and started refining the law to improve the usability, transparency, and oversight of the Open Data Portal.

In 2015, Local Laws 106 through 110 significantly expanded the framework. These amendments addressed data retention and archiving to ensure the preservation of the City's historical record, mandated plain-language data dictionaries for every dataset, required that address datasets include coordinates and political boundaries, guaranteed timely responses to public requests for new datasets, and compelled agencies to ensure that data published on their websites was also included and regularly updated on the Open Data Portal.

Further reforms came in 2016. Local Laws 7 and 244 linked the Open Data program with the FOIL, requiring agencies to review FOIL requests that contained data and to publish those datasets when appropriate. Local Law 8 went a step further by mandating that the Mayor's Office of Data Analytics (MODA) conduct annual examinations of at least three mayoral agencies to verify that all eligible datasets were disclosed.

In 2017, Local Law 251 clarified that the "single web portal" referenced in the original 2012 law referred explicitly to the NYC Open Data Portal. It also strengthened accountability by requiring each agency commissioner to appoint an official Open Data Coordinator, tasked with ensuring compliance and serving as a liaison to the citywide program.

Together, these legislative milestones demonstrate how New York City's Open Data Law has evolved from a single mandate for disclosure into a more comprehensive **governance framework**, embedding transparency, accountability, and data stewardship across the municipal landscape (Chan, 2020).

## Local Law 15: Annual Reporting on Cultural Affairs Funding

Enacted by the New York City Council twelve years after passage of the Open Data Law, Local Law No. 15 of 2024 requires the Commissioner of Cultural Affairs to submit an annual public report detailing how the Department of Cultural Affairs (DCLA) allocates funding to arts and cultural organizations and institutions across the city. The law mandates that, beginning September 30, 2024, and annually thereafter, the Commissioner must report on:

1. The names, locations (by zip code, borough, community board, and council district), and funding amounts received by each organization or institution.
2. A breakdown of funding types, including program funding, capital funding, cultural institution funding, and capacity-building grants.
3. Available demographic data on both the populations served by these organizations and the demographic profile of their leadership (when disclosed).
4. Total departmental staff and operating costs for the prior fiscal year.

5. Notable trends or changes in funding patterns.
6. Challenges encountered in collecting the necessary data.

This recent legislation aims to promote greater transparency, equity, and accountability in the city's cultural funding ecosystem, with a particular focus on the representation and support of historically marginalized communities. While Local Law 15 does not explicitly mention open data, it does require the creation of datasets for public use, which, as codified by Law 11, should be shared in an open data format.

## Schedule C

**Schedule C is the City Council's official record of discretionary funding allocations and a key transparency point in the municipal budget process.** Each fiscal year, during budget negotiations with the Mayor's office, Council Members designate discretionary funds to not-for-profit organizations, local initiatives, and specific agency projects that respond to community needs or fill gaps in executive budget priorities. These allocations are compiled into a consolidated Schedule C document—the Adopted Expense Budget Adjustment Summary—showing how discretionary resources are distributed across programs and organizations as part of the Council's adopted expense budget. This reflects the Council's policy priorities and funding decisions in a standardized public format that can be reviewed as part of the city's overall budget transparency efforts.

Schedule C data is also made available through the City's open data infrastructure, reinforcing public visibility and reuse. The Council's discretionary funds listings, including Schedule C, are published on NYC Open Data, allowing researchers, community groups, and the public to analyze where Council discretionary dollars are allocated over time. This aligns with the broader Open Data Law mandate that public financial information be accessible through a single portal, enabling structured analysis, comparisons, and accountability over how legislative budget actions translate into funded services and community impact.

### Challenges and Opportunities

- » *The City's open-data framework operates without real consequences, which weakens accountability.*

Because the law carries no penalties, agency compliance often depends on goodwill rather than obligation. Through stronger oversight—such as targeted hearings, clearer reporting requirements, and periodic legislative updates—the Council can reinforce expectations and make transparency a routine part of agency performance.

- » *Significant gaps and inconsistencies in cultural funding data make it difficult to assess equity across the sector.*

Missing identifiers, uneven metadata, and the absence of key datasets like CDF information limit the city's ability to understand who receives support and why. By setting clearer

standards for what must be reported and how, the Council can ensure that cultural data is complete, comparable, and useful for public accountability.

- » *Limited participation from arts organizations in open-data spaces leaves the sector without a strong voice in shaping transparency policy.*

Many groups remain outside these discussions simply because there are few structured entry points. The Council can help change this by convening regular forums, elevating cultural data within its committee work, and ensuring that public input plays a more direct role in setting data priorities.

## OVERSIGHT AGENCIES

### THE INDEPENDENT BUDGET OFFICE (IBO)

The issue that often arises when attempting to tie operational data to the New York City budget is that the budget is not structured to promote transparency; instead, it is structured to comply with generally accepted accounting principles. That means you get a lot of things in there that make it difficult to suss out what's happening programmatically.

– Logan Clark, Assistant Director, Budget Review IBO

The IBO of New York City is a nonpartisan, publicly funded agency that independently analyzes the city's budget, economy, and fiscal policies. Established in 1989 through a voter-approved referendum, the IBO was created to check the mayoral administration's financial decisions, offering transparency and accountability in municipal budgeting. The IBO is a fiscal oversight agency that regularly utilizes open government data.

The IBO has published reports, such as *"Where Are Cultural Development Fund Awards Distributed Throughout New York City?"* (IBO, 2023), analyzing the geographic distribution of CDF grants awarded by the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs, highlighting disparities in funding allocation across boroughs and identifying trends in cultural investment. It also published *"Giving Some Back, Leaving Others Out: IBO's Analysis of the Administration's Second Consecutive Program to Eliminate the Gap This Fiscal Year"* (IBO, 2024), a study that examines the NYC administration's fiscal strategy for closing budget gaps, assessing how funding restorations and cuts impact various agencies and programs, with a focus on transparency and equity in budget decisions.

***The following section will discuss the IBO Report on "Identifying New York City Payments to Cultural Nonprofit Organizations" (IBO, 2023), which sheds light on the challenges faced when gathering government data on the culture and arts sector.***

## Report on NYC Payments to Cultural Nonprofits

The IBO developed this report in response to a request to estimate the city's total investment in the cultural sector. While cultural funding is often associated with the DCLA and public libraries, the report sought to explore an overlooked funding stream: payments made to cultural nonprofits through the city's procurement system.

The study builds on IBO's broader research efforts on municipal arts funding but narrows the focus to payments made in the 2022 fiscal year. The research was shaped by data availability, relying on financial transaction records rather than self-reported data from cultural organizations.

### Research Implementation and Methodology

The report's methodology was designed to track city payments to cultural nonprofits as accurately as possible. It involved:

1. **Data matching:** Cross-referencing payment data from the city's Financial Management System (FMS) with IRS nonprofit records.
2. **Validation:** The dataset was cross-checked against known grantees of DCLA and the CIG to ensure consistency.
3. **Public data release:** The IBO published an aggregated dataset alongside the report to facilitate further independent analysis.

### Key Findings and Insights

The report revealed that in 2022, New York City spent approximately \$727 million on cultural nonprofits. The majority of this support—roughly \$638 million—was distributed by the DCLA and the public library systems. In comparison, an additional \$89 million flowed through procurement contracts managed by other City agencies.

Among the agencies outside of DCLA, the Department of Education (DOE) emerged as the most significant cultural funder, distributing roughly \$27 million, followed by the Department of Youth and Community Development with \$21 million, and the Department of Parks and Recreation with \$19 million. These allocations demonstrate how cultural support is integrated into a broad range of municipal functions, extending beyond the traditional arts infrastructure.

Funding patterns by industry also revealed clear priorities. Zoos and botanical gardens received the largest share of cultural allocations (about \$19 million), followed by organizations in other grantmaking services (\$12 million) and the broader category of arts, entertainment, and recreation (\$11 million). Geographically, Manhattan-based cultural nonprofits attracted the largest share of municipal investment (\$36 million), with Brooklyn and the Bronx close behind at \$24 million and \$23 million, respectively.

Taken together, these findings underscore that the City’s cultural investment is not limited to DCLA but spreads across multiple agencies and sectors. Yet, because there is no systematic method for tracking cultural spending across the municipal budget, the actual scale of City investment in nonprofit culture is almost certainly higher than the reported figures suggest.

## **Challenges and Opportunities**

The IBO faced several obstacles in preparing this report, each pointing to broader structural issues in how New York City tracks and reports cultural spending.

### **1. Data availability and design limitations:**

The report relied on administrative records that were not created for research purposes. Because the City does not explicitly tag payments as “cultural,” IBO had to identify relevant nonprofits using North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) codes — a federal standard for classifying business establishments. This approach makes categorization and tracking of arts funding imprecise and potentially incomplete.

### **2. Budget transparency constraints:**

The City’s budget system is designed primarily for accounting compliance rather than public transparency. As a result, tracing cultural investments across agencies is challenging, limiting the public’s ability to understand how cultural dollars are allocated outside of DCLA.

### **3. Absence of unique identifiers:**

Payment records do not include Employer Identification Numbers (EINs), which made it harder for IBO to confirm which recipients were cultural organizations. The absence of consistent identifiers exposes a weakness in financial data management and creates significant challenges when cross-referencing City records with external datasets, such as IRS 990 filings<sup>4</sup>.

Despite these limitations, the IBO report marks an essential step toward a fuller picture of New York City’s cultural investment — extending well beyond DCLA’s established grant programs. At the same time, the findings underscore the need for stronger financial data practices, greater budget transparency, and continued cross-agency analysis to capture the true scope of municipal support for culture and the arts.

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<sup>4</sup> IRS Form 990, officially known as the “Return of Organization Exempt from Income Tax,” is an annual informational tax return that most tax-exempt organizations are required to file with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS).

## CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

Arts organizations produce and work with data every day. Organizations utilize data for various purposes, including improving their planning and decision-making, presenting compelling cases to funders and other stakeholders, promoting innovation and access, and informing their advocacy agendas.

The following section presents three case studies of Arts Service Organizations (ASOs) that conduct research projects, collecting and sharing data. Not all of them utilize open data in their research, but all have taken action to share their research findings publicly and increase accessibility.

### DANCE/NYC

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Dance/NYC's mission is to champion the New York City metropolitan area dance sector by fostering a more just, equitable, and inclusive landscape where dance workers and organizations can thrive. Its constituents include over 6,000 individual dance workers and 1,700 dance entities.

#### Dance Industry Census

Dance/NYC's 2023 Dance Industry Census builds on the organization's longstanding commitment to collecting data on the dance sector, a commitment dating back to its establishment as an independent organization in 2012.

However, before the Census, studies — including the four State of New York City Dance reports — relied primarily on Cultural Data Profile (CDP) data. Because the CDP covers only 501(c)(3) organizations and excludes independent artists, for-profit entities, and fiscally sponsored groups, Dance/NYC undertook primary data collection to provide a more complete picture of the dance ecosystem.

#### **Survey Implementation and Methodology**

The 2023 Census was developed to count as many dance workers in New York City as possible. It included:

- » *Two distinct surveys:* One for individual dance workers and one for dance-related organizations and entities.
- » *Qualitative research:* Borough-specific focus groups to supplement quantitative data with anecdotal reportage on the lived experiences of dancers and other members of the dance community.

- » **Comparative analysis:** Cross-referencing data from external sources such as the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), New York City Comptroller’s Creative Economy Report, and other state and federal datasets.

The census sought to address gaps in existing data by capturing information on employment, compensation, working conditions, demographics, and the overall structure of dance work.

The Dance Workforce Resilience 2022 Task Force and the 2023 Advisory Group provided important feedback and guidance at various stages of the research process. This cross-section of leaders, supporters, workers, and advocates reviewed and commented on survey drafts, preliminary data, initial findings, report framework, and recommended actions. Their insights and direction were valuable and critical to this work.

### **Key Findings and Insights**

- » The dance sector in NYC is less diverse than the city’s overall population.
- » Many dance workers, with significant income instability, rely on multiple jobs or freelance arrangements.
- » Immigrant artists tend to have fewer financial safety nets than non-immigrant artists.
- » Dance workers operate under various models, including LLCs, fiscally sponsored projects, and collectives, highlighting the fluid nature of the field.
- » Compensation emerged as a significant concern, prompting Dance/NYC to explore wage standards and advocate for more precise guidelines on fair pay.

### **Use of Data and Advocacy Impact**

- » Findings support advocacy efforts for improved funding structures, fair wages, and equitable policies in the dance industry.
- » The data is also used to inform funders, policymakers, and other arts service organizations about the needs of dance workers.
- » Insights from the census have influenced Dance/NYC’s subsidized rehearsal space program and broader discussions on cultural workforce resilience.
- » The census data is publicly available on Dance/NYC’s website in both raw and summarized formats, reinforcing the organization’s commitment to transparency.
- » Recommendations from the census catalyzed Our New York City Dance campaign, an annual citywide advocacy and civic engagement campaign to advance policies, investments, and practices that support the stability, sustainability, and dignity of dance workers and organizations across the five boroughs.

## Challenges and Opportunities

The Dance Industry Census represents a critical effort to fill data gaps in the dance sector, providing evidence-based advocacy tools for artists, organizations, and policymakers. It highlights the need for independent data initiatives in the absence of comprehensive, government-provided data on the cultural workforce. Dance/NYC recognizes that data access and transparency are essential, but capacity limitations and a lack of institutional support for sustained research often constrain them. While the organization does not work with open data, it identifies with its ideas.

Looking ahead, Dance/NYC will refine its data collection methods to capture the nuances of dance employment more accurately and use future census iterations to track changes over time. Building on this evidence base, the organization will deepen its focus on compensation and working conditions.

## A.R.T./NEW YORK

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Founded in 1972, the Alliance of Resident Theatres/New York (A.R.T./New York) is the leading arts service organization for NYC's nonprofit theatre community. Serving 400+ member theatres, it helps companies manage effectively, realize their artistic visions, and reach diverse audiences through four core programs: Funding, Training, Space, and Connections.

## Health and Wealth Survey

A.R.T./New York's "[Health + Wealth: Empowering NYC Theatremakers Through Data](#)" report represents the first comprehensive effort to document the financial health and organizational characteristics of the New York City nonprofit theatre field. This initiative was designed to support sector-wide storytelling, advocacy, and strategic decision-making by providing robust data and context on how theatres have navigated financial and operational challenges over time.

The findings in Health + Wealth are informed by survey data from A.R.T./New York's membership reflecting on their operations, finances, staffing, and activities in three years – 2019, 2022, and 2023 – enabling both a pre-COVID baseline and an assessment of post-pandemic change. The survey was developed in collaboration with SMU DataArts, and Skeleton Key Strategies to ensure methodological rigor and relevance to field needs.

The survey explored key questions about trends in financial well-being, workforce conditions, and organizational resilience, including how different budget sizes, workspace relationships (rent vs. own), and community characteristics relate to outcomes for theatres in the field. Health + Wealth complements interpretation of these data with insights about patterns

emerging across the field and calls to action that highlight opportunities for collective advocacy, collaboration, and resource building.

### **Survey Implementation and Methodology**

- » Surveyed nonprofit theatre organizations within A.R.T./New York's membership, examining organizational finances, operations, staffing, and programming.

Structured around three reference years – 2019, 2022, and 2023 – to establish a pre-pandemic baseline and assess post-pandemic conditions, while intentionally excluding 2020–2021 due to their atypical disruptions.

- » Designed as a longitudinal, field-serving research effort rather than a one-time snapshot, enabling comparison over time and deeper analysis of structural conditions affecting nonprofit theatres.
- » Developed and analyzed in collaboration with SMU DataArts and research partners to ensure methodological rigor and relevance to sector-wide advocacy and decision-making.

### **Key Findings and Insights**

- » Small and mid-sized organizations constitute a significant share of New York City's nonprofit theatre ecosystem, with many operating on annual budgets under \$500,000.
- » The data highlight persistent financial precarity across the field, particularly among smaller organizations operating with narrow margins and limited reserves.
- » Workforce structures reflect continued shifts following the pandemic, including increased reliance on freelance and project-based labor.
- » Together, the findings illustrate structural pressures shaping organizational sustainability rather than isolated, short-term disruptions.

### **Use of Data and Advocacy Impact**

- » Fundraising and policy advocacy: Health + Wealth provides a shared evidence base that supports conversations with funders, policymakers, and civic partners around sustainability and equity in nonprofit theatre.
- » Supporting the field: Findings have been shared with sector partners and advocacy coalitions to contextualize funding needs and organizational challenges across different budget sizes.
- » Guiding organizational strategy: A.R.T./New York uses the data to inform member services, professional development offerings, and strategic resource allocation.
- » More broadly, the findings support coordinated, data-informed advocacy by grounding sector narratives in longitudinal evidence rather than anecdote.

### **Challenges and Opportunities**

- » Sustaining longitudinal data collection requires continued investment to maintain regular research cycles capable of tracking long-term trends in organizational health and workforce stability.
- » The project underscores the ongoing burden placed on civil society organizations to generate sector-level data in the absence of timely, disaggregated public funding information.
- » Future work aims to deepen analysis of economic impact, organizational sustainability, and workforce conditions, while reinforcing calls for greater transparency and accessibility in public cultural funding data.

## **A.R.T./NEW YORK & DANCE/NYC**

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### **THE CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT FUND (CDF) SURVEY**

The CDF survey was initiated in response to significant funding changes in DCLA and concerns about a lack of transparency in the distribution of cultural funding.

The initiative arose from frustrations within the culture and arts community, particularly after the FY23 funding cycle, when many organizations noticed abrupt decreases in their funding. These reductions sparked concerns about equity in the allocation process and the absence of publicly available, detailed funding data that could support advocacy efforts.

The need for concrete data was crucial to assess the depth of the funding cuts and their effects on different organizations, disciplines, and communities. Initially, individual organizations, such as Dance/NYC and A.R.T./New York, began gathering information independently but soon recognized the need for a more structured and collaborative approach.

### **Survey Implementation and Methodology**

The survey was first launched in 2022 following the release of CDF award announcements, in a context where timely, disaggregated public data on funding outcomes was not available. To address this gap and better inform sector-wide advocacy, A.R.T./New York initiated a data-collection effort using a short Airtable form to capture core information on changes in award amounts across organizations.

From the outset, the goal was to serve the broader field rather than only A.R.T./New York's membership. To expand the survey's reach beyond its immediate constituents—and based on a shared approach to advocacy and data use—A.R.T./New York invited Dance/NYC to join the effort as a partner.

Building on this collaboration, the second and third iterations of the survey (FY24 and FY25) adopted a more structured methodology. These iterations focused on systematically comparing prior and current award amounts, alongside the collection of demographic, organizational, and sectoral data on recipient organizations, strengthening the survey's capacity to support equity analysis and coordinated advocacy.

### **Specific areas of focus included:**

- » Whether organizations received an increase, a decrease, or were defunded entirely.
- » The proportion of funding cuts across different disciplines (e.g., performing arts, visual arts, cultural services).
- » The impact of funding changes on small and large organizations.
- » The geographic distribution of affected organizations.

Despite increased awareness and refined methodology, the third year of the survey (FY25) had a lower response rate. According to Risa Shoup, Co-Executive Director at A.R.T./New York, the organization attributes this to factors such as advocacy fatigue, political disillusionment, and broader frustration within the sector. The organization has announced they do intend to keep the survey going for FY26.

### **Key Findings and Advocacy Outcomes**

The survey provided critical insights into the patterns and consequences of funding allocation, some of which included:

- » Over two-thirds of surveyed organizations experienced funding decreases.
- » A larger number of organizations were entirely defunded in FY24 compared to FY23.
- » Performing arts and arts service organizations were disproportionately affected by funding reductions.
- » Smaller organizations, which rely heavily on CDF funds, received less total funding than larger institutions.
- » The process remained opaque, with limited data provided by the city, making it difficult for organizations to anticipate or understand funding decisions.

### **Use of Data and Advocacy Impact**

Armed with these insights, the organizations behind the survey engaged in multiple advocacy efforts:

- » Drafting open letters to the mayor, commissioner, and city officials, signed by hundreds of organizations and individuals.

- » Presenting the data to elected officials, cultural committees, and funders to push for policy changes.
- » Securing meetings with key stakeholders, including the deputy commissioner of DCLA, the Cultural Affairs Committee, and the Finance Committee.
- » Using the data to shape funding requests to private foundations, seeking to fill gaps left by public funding.

### *Challenges and Opportunities*

A central challenge prompting the survey was the absence of readily available, disaggregated city funding data. Although the IBO eventually released the data as part of a report, it lacked key details – such as organizational categories, budget sizes, and the process by which allocations were decided – leaving organizations to shoulder a data-collection burden that should rest with the DCLA.

Despite the survey’s financial and labor intensity, Dance/NYC and A.R.T./New York are committed to sustaining the survey over the coming years. Securing direct funding remains difficult: many funders value the results but are reluctant to finance the underlying data collection.

Today, the survey functions as an advocacy tool for the Cultural Equity Coalition – which has a steering committee comprised of leaders from the Asian American Arts Alliance, Dance/NYC, A.R.T./New York, People’s Theater Project, Flushing Town Hall, and the Caribbean Cultural Center African Diaspora Institute (CCCADI) – to push for reforms to the CDF. Beyond immediate budget advocacy, it advances systemic goals: greater transparency and accountability from government agencies, the development of independent data capacities within arts organizations, and the strategic use of data to strengthen collective advocacy and secure equitable funding for marginalized communities.

Ultimately, the CDF survey is a case study in civil society filling a government data gap, illustrating both the obstacles and the possibilities of leveraging data for policy change.

## **NEW YORK CITY ARTS IN EDUCATION ROUNDTABLE**

The **New York City Arts in Education Roundtable** is a service organization and a community of arts education practitioners that shares information, provides professional development, and communicates with the public to promote their work in schools and beyond.

Initially focused on professional development for arts educators, the organization has expanded its role over time. The organization transformed in 2020, driven by the pandemic, strategic planning, and the need for transparency in arts education data, having previously handled some

research and advocacy efforts. The organization functions as an information and resource hub, gathering and analyzing data to support arts education advocacy. It engages in coalition-building, leveraging its long-standing relationships to mobilize stakeholders, influence policy, and advocate for stronger arts education policies.

Currently, the NYC Arts in Education Roundtable leads initiatives like the “It Starts with the Arts” coalition, which encourages engagement with government officials at the city and state levels. The organization works to bridge the gap in data collection and analysis related to arts education, particularly in understanding teaching artist employment trends, arts access in schools, and funding transparency.

## DATA FOR ARTS EDUCATION

The NYC Arts in Education Roundtable uses a range of data sources to support its research and advocacy for arts education in New York City. It analyzes arts access data in schools and communities, as well as workforce data related to arts educators, with a particular focus on teaching artists.

Key reports, such as the Annual Arts in Schools Reports from NYC Public Schools, NY City Council Terms & Conditions on Arts Education listed with each fiscal year budget, and the 2014 “*State of the Arts*” report, provide essential insights into the state of arts education. The Roundtable also examines the Department of Education’s Human Resources records and teacher certification classifications, as well as the Basic Educational Data System (BEDS), to assess employment trends and workforce needs.

In its efforts to advocate for fair compensation and sustainable careers in the field, the organization conducts research on teaching artist compensation and employment trends. Additionally, the Roundtable gathers valuable information from the City Council hearings and collaborates with organizations like Quadrant Research to ensure that comprehensive, data-driven insights inform its advocacy.

### *Challenges and Opportunities*

#### **Access and usability of open data**

The organization utilizes the city’s Open Data Portal for specific datasets, such as pre-pandemic DOE arts-in-schools data; however, it faces significant accessibility and usability challenges. Many previously available datasets have been removed or relocated, making it difficult to track key arts education metrics over time. Even when data is accessible, incomplete data dictionaries or codebooks make interpretation difficult and limit usefulness for advocacy and policy work. In recent years, surveys and reports that were once public – such as the annual arts survey – have also been removed from open data platforms or moved to obscure DOE webpages, making them hard to find.

## Limitations of reporting and funding transparency

The Arts in Education Roundtable relies on data from NYC's Arts in Schools Report to assess the state of arts education, but accuracy and accessibility remain concerns. While the report provides a baseline, its presentation often obscures critical gaps – for example, highlighting the total number of arts teachers without clarifying their distribution across schools, which makes it difficult to identify disparities in access to arts education. Additionally, data on funding remains incomplete, as some reports indicate budgeted funds for arts education, but there is limited transparency regarding actual spending. Without precise, disaggregated data, policymakers, educators, and advocates struggle to assess where investment is most needed to ensure equitable access.

## Advocacy priorities and incremental progress

The Roundtable advocates for expanding open data resources to include arts partnerships and funding allocations, which would clarify how resources are distributed across schools. The current system is fragmented and lacks a centralized, user-friendly structure, which hinders the effective use of data for decision-making and program development. Despite these hurdles, advocacy has led to some progress, such as the inclusion of geographic breakdowns in arts education reports, helping to highlight disparities across school districts.

To summarize, the AER has identified the following gaps in data about arts education:

- 1. *Spending transparency is limited:*** There is limited visibility into how much funding is spent on arts education compared to what is budgeted. Without transparent reporting on expenditures, it is difficult to track how effectively resources are being allocated and whether schools are meeting their arts education commitments.
- 2. *No comprehensive database of cultural partners:*** Although many cultural organizations collaborate with schools, there is no centralized, publicly accessible list of organizations actively providing arts education programming. This lack of readily available information makes it harder to assess coverage, equity, and access across different communities.
- 3. *Fragmented tracking of arts education funding:*** Currently, there is no single database tracking which organizations receive funding, which schools they serve, and how resources are distributed across the city. This limits the ability to identify gaps, ensure accountability, and coordinate efforts among stakeholders.
- 4. *Data aggregation conceals inequities:*** Many arts education reports present high-level, aggregated data rather than breaking it down by school, district, or demographic group. Without disaggregated data, it is challenging to identify and address disparities in access to and quality of arts education.
- 5. *Lack of a standard definition for "arts access":*** The term "arts access" is inconsistently defined – schools may report access even if students only receive a one-time performance rather than a sustained, sequential arts program. Establishing clear, standardized metrics would provide a more accurate picture of arts education availability.

6. *Missing metrics on student participation and program quality:* There is no systematic tracking of the number of students actively participating in arts programs, nor is there a clear understanding of the quality and impact of those programs. Understanding student engagement and learning outcomes is essential for improving and expanding arts education.

## PHILANTHROPY

The philanthropic sector invests significantly in projects that utilize data. While this study does not delve in-depth into these data stakeholders, some findings emerged from conversations with the organizations that were interviewed.

1. **Philanthropic institutions are increasingly relying on grantee data for planning and reporting, which places an additional burden on grantees.** Organizations often invest considerable time in systematizing data for funders, without access to shared infrastructure or guidance.
2. **Foundations do not employ open data standards or accessible, disaggregated databases, which limits broader sector insights.** Grant databases (e.g., Mellon, Ford) reference data-driven projects but rarely provide information in open or usable formats.
3. There is a strategic opportunity to align funders' data needs with civil society efforts by investing in grantee capacity for open data, which could foster collaboration, innovation, and more impactful cultural funding:
  - a. Supporting open data practices would enhance transparency, improve resource targeting, and benefit the cultural field as a whole.
  - b. Building shared protocols and capacity could reduce duplication and encourage more sustainable, data-informed partnerships.

# CONCLUSIONS

## KEY FINDINGS BY STAKEHOLDER

### EXECUTIVE BRANCH

#### Department of Cultural Affairs (DCLA)

**1. Access to open government data on Culture and Arts is minimal:**

NYC's Open Data Portal hosts approximately 3,000 datasets, yet only nine are from the Department of Cultural Affairs. Unlike sectors such as transportation and education, the culture and arts remain underrepresented.

**2. Uncompliance with open data standards:**

The nine datasets published by DCLA do not comply with open data standards. They fall short in timeliness, completeness, and metadata and documentation.

**3. Data Privatization:**

Government data in the culture and arts sector of NYC has tended toward data privatization and data siloing, limiting public access, transparency, and accountability, which has, in turn, generated distrust among stakeholders and created obstacles to potential partnerships.

#### Office of Technology and Innovation (OTI) - Open Data Program:

**1. Limited culture and arts sector engagement in the open-data ecosystem.**

NYC's Open Data Week – led by OTI and BetaNYC – is the only regular forum nurturing the city's open-data community, yet participation from the culture and arts sector is minimal. This limits cross-sector collaboration, dampens data literacy, and reduces the sector's influence on city data practices.

**2. No "Culture and Arts" category on the Open Data Portal.**

The portal lacks a dedicated category, making it difficult to find and analyze cultural funding, resources, infrastructure, and initiatives. This diminishes the sector's visibility as a data ecosystem and hinders coordinated research and policy action.

## LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

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### **1. The Open Data Law relies on weak, non-punitive enforcement mechanisms:**

NYC's Open Data framework explicitly prohibits penalties or private rights of action, limiting enforcement to transparency-based tools such as reporting and public complaints, which undermines accountability and consistency across agencies.

### **2. Agency compliance is procedurally defined but not substantively compelled:**

While agencies are required to publish datasets, meet technical standards, and file compliance plans, failures trigger disclosure and explanation rather than sanctions, reinforcing a culture of formal compliance without enforceable consequences.

### **3. Public participation and oversight mechanisms emphasize visibility over obligation:**

Public forums and dataset request processes increase transparency around demand, but agencies are only required to consider requests, not act on them, leaving follow-through dependent on political will rather than mandate.

### **4. The City Council functions as the central institutional champion of open data:**

Through legislative amendments, engaged members, and oversight tools such as Schedule C, the Council has steadily expanded transparency requirements and plays a critical role in advancing open-data practices—particularly in monitoring agency compliance and supporting culture and arts data initiatives across city government.

## OVERSIGHT AGENCIES

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### **1. Barriers to comprehensive tracking and oversight:**

Cultural funding lacks standards for comprehensive tracking, which helps oversight processes. Current datasets lack essential identifiers, making cross-referencing and equity analysis difficult.

## CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

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### **1. Lack of participation in open data spaces:**

Most cultural and arts organizations are unable to generate and leverage open data in their work. They do not participate in open data spaces and are not engaged in open data policymaking and implementation.

### **2. Lack of data capacities:**

Most culture and arts organizations are unfamiliar with using data in their work, let alone working with open data and Open Data Laws. Generally, culture and arts organizations, especially small ones, lack the resources to collect, leverage, and effectively communicate data.

### **3. Advanced Capacity:**

A few organizations in the sector have developed the advanced capacities to generate data for research and advocacy. While research data is available in many cases, it is not presented as open data, limiting its reuse.

### **4. Lack of shared standards:**

Arts organizations often lack shared open data standards, which makes it difficult to produce high-quality data, collaborate effectively, and avoid inconsistencies. This weakens advocacy efforts across boroughs, which could benefit from more consistent and reliable data to build stronger cases.

### **5. Burden on organizations:**

Arts organizations often experience ongoing strain when responding to data requests from funders and public agencies, as they frequently lack the necessary systems to share information easily. This burdensome process limits their capacity for trend analysis, advocacy, and strategic planning.

## **PHILANTHROPY**

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### **1. Employ open data standards:**

Foundations often request data from grantees and fund data-driven projects, placing extra burden on a precarious data infrastructure, yet they do not employ open data standards themselves.

### **2. Share systematized, aggregated data back to the field:**

Funders and public agencies rarely return systematized or aggregated data to arts organizations, depriving the sector of the insights needed to inform work, build advocacy evidence, and coordinate across organizations and boroughs.

# RECOMMEN- DATIONS

## EXECUTIVE BRANCH

### DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS (DCLA)

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- 1. Comply with Open Data Law and standards.** Keep datasets on the Open Data Portal machine-readable, well-documented, timely, and accessible. Publish data complete and updated dictionaries/codebooks, set and honor update cadences, and align with citywide practices to ensure transparency and interoperability.
- 2. Standardize identifiers and metadata.** Use consistent organization identifiers (e.g., EINs) and a standard metadata schema to enable cross-agency and funder integration, accurate program tracking, and sector-wide analysis and reporting.
- 3. Enhance budget categorization.** Develop a cross-agency taxonomy for cultural spending (not only within DCLA). Publish disaggregated, consistently formatted financial data that is downloadable and suitable for policy analysis, research, and public accountability.
- 4. Engage the arts community through structured collaboration and partnerships.** Host recurring, well-facilitated dialogues/working groups with arts and cultural organizations to surface data needs, increase transparency, and co-design strategies for effective data use.

### OFFICE OF TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION (OTI) - OPEN DATA PROGRAM

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- 1. Strengthen engagement with the culture and arts sector.** Create regular mechanisms and forums to partner with arts organizations, expanding their participation in Open Data initiatives as participants and co-organizers to foster collaboration and cross-sector innovation.

- 2. Facilitate capacity-building for culture and arts organizations.** Engage established and emerging stakeholders in structured dialogue and joint initiatives to enhance data literacy and data sharing and expand programs like Open Data Ambassadors to strengthen organizational data capabilities.
- 3. Add a “Culture and Arts” category to the Open Data Portal.** Enhance discoverability and use of culture and arts datasets by consolidating relevant resources in a single location.

## LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

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- 1. Strengthen internal accountability mechanisms for Open Data compliance**

Introduce basic, non-punitive internal consequences when agencies repeatedly fail to meet Open Data obligations. The City Council can require the use of performance reviews, management reports, or audit flags to ensure persistent noncompliance triggers formal follow-up, reinforcing that open data is a core operational responsibility rather than a voluntary practice.

- 2. Establish a clear escalation and oversight pathway**

Create a defined escalation process for chronic noncompliance with the Open Data Law. When agencies fail to publish or update required datasets over multiple reporting cycles, the issue should automatically advance to higher oversight bodies—such as relevant Council committees, the Comptroller, or the Public Advocate—to ensure sustained attention and corrective action.

- 3. Elevate public dataset requests from advisory to priority-setting signals**

Strengthen the role of public participation by giving greater weight to recurring or high-impact dataset requests. The Council can require agencies to justify non-publication in writing when demand is significant, shifting the presumption toward disclosure unless a clear legal or security rationale exists.

- 4. Use legislative oversight tools to proactively monitor compliance trends**

Leverage hearings, reporting requirements, and instruments such as Schedule C to regularly assess agency-wide open data performance. By institutionalizing periodic reviews of compliance patterns, dataset gaps, and update timeliness, the Council can move from reactive oversight to proactive stewardship of the city’s open-data ecosystem.

## OVERSIGHT AGENCIES

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- 1. Provide strategic recommendations for data sharing.**

Co-develop sector-specific recommendations with DCLA, OTI, and funders to standardize budget categories, metadata schemas, unique identifiers, and reporting templates.

## CIVIL SOCIETY

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### **1. Advocate for stronger DCLA compliance with NYC's Open Data Law:**

Advocate collectively to ensure that DCLA fully complies with the city's Open Data Law, prioritizing broader transparency and accountability in data-sharing practices across the cultural sector. Since the Open Data Law cannot be directly enforced, organizational and advocacy efforts by civil society are essential to ensure accountability and proactive transparency.

### **2. Advance multi-stakeholder spaces and relationships:**

Convene DCLA, OTI, and cultural-sector partners in regular forums and data camps to improve data collection, strengthen cross-agency and community collaboration and reporting, identify and close dataset gaps, and co-develop and leverage the sector's open-data agenda and existing datasets.

### **3. Develop data literacy programs for arts organizations:**

Build sector-wide data literacy and leadership. Co-develop targeted programs with BetaNYC and the NYC Open Data Program to provide shared capacity-building so cultural organizations can generate, manage, and share data effectively, leverage open data for policy reform and impact storytelling, and lead with data-driven advocacy.

### **4. Explore cross-sector data sharing:**

Catalyze cross-sector data integration and collaboration. Coordinate with health, transportation, hospitality, and education partners to break down silos, establish sustained collaboration spaces and shared standards, and integrate datasets—an underused opportunity in current open-data practice.

### **5. Build a civic-led open-data commons:**

Establish a civil-society-run open-data commons. Build an interoperable portal and infrastructure with co-created protocols and standards, governed participatorily to empower grassroots, BIPOC, and historically marginalized cultural groups to decide what's collected, how it's managed, and shared; shift from data privatization to collective stewardship and shared governance to ensure equity, trust, accountability, and long-term sustainability.

### **6. Work towards a shared open data agenda for the culture and arts sector:**

Co-create a sector-wide open-data agenda with cultural institutions, grassroots groups, researchers, policymakers, and funders to build infrastructure, align priorities, and streamline advocacy—focusing on the right, need-driven datasets—and adopt common standards (machine-readable formats, consistent identifiers) to ensure interoperability, stronger partnerships, and a healthier ecosystem.

## PHILANTHROPY

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### **1. Co-create shared open-data infrastructure and standards:**

Philanthropic and public funders should jointly develop interoperable platforms and adopt common open-data standards that reduce reporting friction, incorporate community-generated/intermediary data, and ensure reciprocal data sharing, strengthening NYC's open-data ecosystem and allowing organizations to focus on their missions.

### **2. Build sector-wide data literacy and capacity:**

Invest in targeted training and technical assistance – especially for smaller, under-resourced groups – to collect, analyze, and leverage open data for advocacy, planning, and accountability.

### **3. Close the feedback loop with actionable insights:**

Establish mechanisms for funders and agencies to return aggregated, standardized, privacy-preserving insights to the field, promoting transparency, collaboration, and equitable decision-making.

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# ANNEX 1: GLOSSARY

**Data:** The concept of data varies across disciplines, reflecting its diverse applications and interpretations. In this study, data refers to facts, statistics, or information collected for analysis, reference, or decision-making.<sup>5</sup>

**Data commons:** Communities that collectively and sustainably govern data and their relationships. This definition emphasizes the relationships and interdependencies between groups, the data that are in some way related to the group, and the various types of activities involved. This implies that sustainability relates not only to the data but also to the community involved in its governance.

**Data ecosystem:** a network of autonomous actors who consume, produce, or provide data and related resources such as software, services, and infrastructure.<sup>6</sup> The key elements of a data ecosystem are actors, roles, relationships, and resources.

**Data privatization:** Data collection practices where information generated by citizens or organizations is centralized and controlled by third-party intermediaries.

**Digital public goods:** Resources like open-source software, open data sets, AI models, open standards, or open content that are freely accessible and contribute to sustainable digital development. They are characterized by their non-rivalrous and non-excludable nature, meaning their use by one individual does not diminish availability to others, and no one is excluded from using them.<sup>7</sup>

**Open data:** Open data refers to information that is freely available, accessible, usable, and shareable without restrictions, thereby fostering an environment where information serves the public interest. Open Data can be understood as a digital public good.

**Open data ecosystem:** An open data ecosystem is a networked community of actors—organizations and individuals—connected by a shared interest and supported by a technological platform.

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5 In computing and information science, data is “a reinterpretable representation of information in a formalized manner suitable for communication, interpretation, or processing” (ISO/IEC 2382:2015). Social and humanities scholars argue that data is never truly “raw,” as it is always shaped by the methods, tools, and contexts in which it is collected and analyzed (Gitelman, 2013). From a legal and policy perspective, the OECD (2021) defines data as “a digital representation of acts, facts, or information, used for reasoning, analysis, or control,” highlighting its regulatory and governance implications.

6 These are cultural, technological, and social phenomena based on the interplay of technology, actors, and businesses. (Oliveira & Lóscio, 2018).

7 The United Nations defines digital public goods as “open-source software, open data, open AI models, open standards, and open content that adhere to privacy and other applicable laws and best practices, do no harm, and help attain the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).”

**Open government data:** A subset of open data that can be defined as public sector information published online and available for anyone to use.

**Open government data ecosystem:** The interconnected network of actors, stakeholders, and their respective functions that collectively enable the transformation of published government data into tangible value and societal impact.

