

Volume 8

It's Showtime:

A 25-Point Plan to Revive Arts and Culture in New York City
and Build a More Equitable Future

MAY 6, 2021





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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There's no place like New York City when it comes to arts and culture. From our world-class museums, to the bright lights of Broadway, to local DIY venues, to trailblazing artists and companies, the five boroughs represent the artistic center of the country and perhaps the world. It is where Abstract Expressionism and minimalist art, bebop, hip hop, and salsa, modern dance, modern ballet, break dancing, and voguing were born — and where every corner of every neighborhood is bustling with creativity and culture.

New York City's ecosystem of artists, educators, craftsmen, media, philanthropy -- and yes, audience members -- are unmatched anywhere in the world. And yet it is precisely this interconnected network that has been so existentially threatened by COVID-19 and the profound job losses the pandemic wrought after cultural venues were forced to shutter more than a year ago.

Scott Stringer understands that New York City is all but defined by its arts and culture, and as mayor he will lead the charge to bring back the creative sector.

Today, more than one year after the first Broadway stages closed their doors, the city's cultural workers and cultural sector are still struggling and need a robust plan to not only recover, but to build a more vibrant, enriching, inclusive, diverse,

populist, and daring cultural sector than ever before. There is also opportunity in this crisis -- to reimagine how City government interacts with the broader arts community, with an eye toward creating greater equity and opportunity for artists of all ages and levels of development.

As mayor, Scott will use every lever of City government to deliver for the arts -- providing grants of up to \$100,000 for small businesses and nonprofits dedicated to the arts; directing the Department of Cultural Affairs to open up grants to individual artists; providing general operating support to help cultural organizations cover day-to-day expenses; driving equity by tripling the number of summer jobs in the cultural sector and improving industry wage standards; by launching a major public arts initiative across the five boroughs; by doubling down on arts education in city schools; and by taking steps to reduce healthcare, housing, retirement, and other costs that often pose serious challenges for individual artists and cultural workers.

Scott's agenda includes four main parts:

Part I: Getting the creative economy back on its feet. The next year will be critical for reviving our arts and cultural sector, bringing back audiences, and getting dollars into the hands of struggling nonprofits, businesses, and arts workers. For smaller private and nonprofit businesses that make up the creative sector, Scott has already proposed a \$1 billion [New York City Recovery Now Fund](#), which will offer direct grants of up to \$100,000 to help employers rehire staff, cover operating costs, pay off debt, and re-open safely. He has also announced that, as mayor, he would direct the City to purchase 250,000 tickets to cultural venues to be given away to frontline workers as a way to say thank you, and to jumpstart attendance at arts organizations. But he would also take a number of other specific steps aimed at shoring up the cultural sector including: relaunching the WPA-style Artists Project to employ local artists and support public art across the five boroughs; baselining the Cultural Development Fund at \$50 million and providing general operating

support to cultural nonprofits; permanently opening up streets outside of cultural venues to reduce crowding and provide better audience experiences; launching the “We Support NYC Culture” pledge to encourage large businesses to match and double all employee donations to cultural organizations; and dramatically improving our off-peak and five borough transportation network to support cultural workers, customers, and audience members.

PART II: Driving Equity In the Arts. For the recovery of the arts and cultural sector to be truly meaningful, we can’t be satisfied with simply restoring what we had. We have to acknowledge and address the barriers that have prevented too many New Yorkers from entering and thriving in the art world. High rents for living and work space, unpaid labor, meager healthcare and benefits, ballooning operating expenses -- these are all costs that increasingly make New York City an all but impossible place for artists of diverse backgrounds to survive. To create new on-ramps into the arts and broader supports for those already in the workplace, Scott will triple the number of city-backed summer jobs in the arts, require City grant recipients to pay decent wages, double down on arts education in city schools, designate an Artist Laureate and Youth Artist Laureate in every Community District, and bring museums to the people.

Part III: Increasing City Support for Individual Artists. There can be no art without artists. But for too long the city has provided only meager support to help individual artists with the myriad costs they need to live, work, or practice their craft. As mayor, Scott will advance specific strategies to help individual artists by setting aside 15 percent of DCLA grants for individual applicants; opening up city schools at night to provide free rehearsal spaces; making it easier for artist to qualify for affordable housing lotteries; supporting independent contractors and gig workers; and providing low cost materials to qualified artists by opening up the popular Materials for the Arts to more people.

Part IV: Supporting Cultural Nonprofits and Businesses. Operating a business or nonprofit in New York City is no easy task. This is particularly true for cultural and nightlife businesses, who often confront extra layers of rules, regulations, fines, fees, enforcement, and operating expenses. As Mayor, Scott will cut through this thicket and help businesses thrive. He will dramatically streamline and reduce fines, fees, permitting, and inspections for those launching a new venture, renovating their space, or putting on a show; bring down healthcare costs for small and medium-sized organizations; provide small and medium-size cultural nonprofits with the property tax exemptions that are already enjoyed by more established institutions; shift the focus of the cultural capital program to equipment, building systems, accessibility, and sustainability; work with ConEd to provide subsidized electricity rates for cultural organizations; and help arts organizations share and manage costs.

PART I

Getting the Creative Economy Back on Its Feet

The pandemic has upended every facet of city life and activity. This has been particularly true in arts and culture, where social distancing requirements have severely curtailed our ability to gather in public and partake in collective experiences. Venues have limited visitors or shut down entirely, tourism has plummeted, thousands upon thousands of cultural workers and artists have been left without wages and benefits, and arts-related businesses have either shut down completely or are working at extremely reduced capacity.

Since last January, more than 27,000 jobs have been lost in the performing arts and related industries, 18,000 in the film and music industries, and 3,000 at museums and other venues. Thousands more independent musicians, actors, dancers, comedians, painters, sculptors, puppeteers, poets, designers, and other artists have seen opportunities diminish or dry up altogether. Now more than ever, these cultural workers need support.

To help lead this revival, as mayor Scott will:

1. Launch the WPA-style, 21st Century Artists Project to support artists and bring public art to all the five boroughs, including an historic mural project to celebrate our city and honor frontline workers

In the late 1970s, New York City launched the Artists Project, which employed nearly 500 visual, performance, and literary artists to coordinate and create hundreds of public artworks and provide scores of musical, dance, theatrical, and film performances free to the public. Modelled after the WPA's Federal Arts Project and funded by the federal government CETA program, the City employed artists for 12-24 months and paired them with community groups, cultural organizations, schools, and City agencies to help develop public artwork and provide free workshops. Today, with the American Rescue Plan allocating \$470 million to the National Endowment for the Arts and affiliated agencies, we must seize the opportunity once again to mobilize federal dollars.

As Mayor, Scott will relaunch the New York City Artists Project to help support local artists, expand the benefits and reach of the arts, and help to fortify, fund, and expand successful programs like SU-CASA and PAIR, which partner artists with senior centers and city agencies.

As a centerpiece of the Artists Project, and to celebrate our city and honor the frontline workers who have helped to sustain us through the pandemic, Scott will launch a municipal mural project of unprecedented scale. With hundreds of murals throughout the five boroughs, this project will honor our history, our neighborhoods, our landmarks, and the workers who stepped up in our time of need to see the city through the pandemic. The project will serve as both a mirror and a map, reflecting on who we are and guiding us to a greater future ahead.

2. Purchase 250,000 tickets at cultural venues, as it did after 9/11, and distribute them to frontline workers and students.

As the pandemic subsides, reopening will be a challenge for many cultural venues. Lower patronage due to social distancing requirements, plummeting tourism, and post-pandemic anxiety will make it practically impossible to cover upfront costs. City support will be paramount.

To support these venues, artists, and the cultural economy, the City's Economic Development Corporation and its tourism board, NYC & Co, can look to an important post-9/11 program in which they purchased 50,000 Broadway tickets and distributed them to tourists as evidence that New York was back in business. This time, the City should leverage the large federal bailout to purchase 250,000 tickets from a broader range of venues and distribute them to frontline workers, students, and their families as a show of appreciation. There should also be a batch devoted to tourists, to help bring out-of-towners back to the city and support the thousands of jobs that rely on the tourism industry.

As part of this program, Scott will follow the lead of initiatives like Play Tulsa Music and ensure that a portion of all ticket purchases goes to artists and that fee and wage standards are honored.

Moreover, this approach to arts funding should be more prominent moving forward – with a greater focus on the “demand-side,” purchasing tickets for New Yorkers who struggle to afford or are atypical cultural consumers. Towards this end, the Broadway Bridges Program, which strives to get every high school student to a Broadway show before they graduate, should be accelerated and also extended to a broader range of cultural organizations.

3. Allow Department of Cultural Affairs grants to cover general operating expenses and baseline the Cultural Development Fund at \$50 million

With thousands of cultural venues closed and tens of thousands of employees out of work, cultural organizations do not need funding for a performance or exhibition, they need dollars in hand to pay rent, utilities, and employees. It makes zero sense for the City to narrowly prescribe how, where, and when cultural organizations spend their funding amidst this pandemic and makes just as little sense to do so in normal times.

Moving forward, the Department of Cultural Affairs will follow the lead of the New York State Council on the Arts and the Massachusetts Cultural Council, providing more flexible grants for operating expenses. Our arts organizations are the soul of our city and they should be trusted to run their organizations without excessive guidance. Saddling them with hundreds of pages of grant applications, cumbersome online portals, endless peer-review processes, and annual renewals is insulting and a waste of time for our cherished cultural organizations and for the City.

In Massachusetts, the Cultural Investment Portfolio is among the largest pools of cultural funding in the nation for unrestricted general operating support. Annual reporting requirements are streamlined to compliance statements, audited financials, and a site visit every four years. This program should serve as a model for the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs Cultural Development Fund. Moreover, the City must provide more predictability to the granting process. For several years, the DCLA grants budget has been “baselined” at an amount far lower than is ultimately disbursed in budget negotiations. This baseline should be definitively raised to \$50 million, taking some guesswork out of the process within the cultural community and helping organizations plan around more generous grants.

4. Create a Relief Fund for struggling arts-related businesses, nonprofits, and independent contractors from Scott's \$1 billion NYC Recovery Now Fund

New York City maintains a diverse and rich cultural ecosystem of small, medium, and large venues, individual artists, independent contractors, for-profit arts-related businesses and suppliers, and many more critical nodes. Unfortunately, while nearly everyone within the sector is struggling right now, not everyone fits into the appropriate category in order to qualify for support and relief. Costume makers, suppliers, promoters, make-up artists, and many other individuals and for-profit businesses, for instance, are not eligible for either federal Save Our Stages/ Shuttered Venue Operator Grant funding or Department of Cultural Affairs grants. They are stuck in the middle and left adrift.

In order to preserve this critical agglomeration of arts businesses and maintain this delicate ecosystem, Scott will leverage his proposed \$1 billion NYC Recovery Now Fund to support cultural businesses. Unlike the Payroll Protection Plan and other programs that came wrapped in red tape, support from the NYC Recovery Now Fund will deliver targeted grants of \$20,000 to \$100,000 to small and medium-sized businesses and nonprofits with minimal paperwork to help cover a range of costs, from back rent and insurance, to inventory, payroll, and any structural improvements intended to make places of business safer.

5. Create the “We Support NYC Culture” pledge, encouraging large employers to match all employee donations to arts groups

In order to support the cultural and nonprofit sector, the Department of Cultural Affairs and the Fund for the City of New York should work with private employers to develop an “We Support NYC Culture” pledge. Participating employers will promise to double all donations made by their employees to New York City cultural nonprofits and work with venues to provide discounted tickets. Not only will this improve employee morale and help them get into higher tiers of membership, it will also be a major boon to local cultural organizations.

6. Launch the “New York, New Day” advertising campaign to kickstart the economy and build back tourism

The world needs to know that New York City is back and open for business. To kickstart New York City’s revival, Scott will launch the “New York, New Day” advertising campaign, a major post-pandemic outreach and marketing effort to attract business, drive tourism, and encourage patronage at our retailers, restaurants, and nightlife industries. The City will partner with cultural organizations in every neighborhood in every borough to organize a year long festival of art and performances throughout the City, supporting artists as well as reinvigorating our street life.

7. Pedestrianize blocks outside of cultural venues throughout the City

Many lobbies of Broadway theaters, concert venues, and other cultural spaces in New York City are quite small, forcing audiences and visitors to huddle onto a narrow sidewalk before and after the exhibition. It shouldn’t have to be this way.

Moving forward, the DOT should pedestrianize dozens of blocks in the theater district and in neighborhoods throughout the city where cultural spaces cluster. This will reduce crowding, improve the audience experience, and allow cultural venues to have space for outdoor events.

8. Build a transportation system that better serves artists, audiences, and other off-peak workers

The New York City subway system was designed to get millions of people into midtown and downtown each day and it continues to provide the bulk of its service and attention to the traditional 9-to-5 commuter coming in and out of Manhattan -- even while the geography and composition of our economy has changed dramatically in recent years. This system has never been particularly good at getting people where they need to go in the evening and weekends -- a time when many artists, cultural workers, customers, and audience members need decent transit

service, to say nothing of nurses, restaurant workers, and many other so-called “off-peak” commuters.

To support these workers and businesses, we need to realize true around-the-clock service and cut wait times at night and on weekends. As Mayor, Scott will work with the MTA to implement his “NYC in 6” plan, ensuring that New Yorkers never wait more than 6 minutes for the next ride, even if they’re traveling outside of rush hour. He will also add hundreds of miles of *truly protected* bus lanes and bike lanes in his first term, massively increase secure bike parking throughout the five boroughs, integrate Citi Bike and MTA fare payment, and work with the MTA to reduce in-city LIRR and MetroNorth fares to the price of a MetroCard swipe.

PART II

Driving Equity in the Arts

For recovery of the arts and cultural sectors to be truly meaningful, we can’t be satisfied with simply restoring what we had. We have to acknowledge and address the many barriers that for decades have kept many New Yorkers, especially in communities of color, from entering and thriving in the art world.

High rents for living and work space, low wages, meager healthcare and benefits, college debt, ballooning operating expenses -- these are all costs that increasingly make New York City an all but impossible place for the once common “struggling artist” to even struggle. To create new on-ramps into the arts and broader supports for those already in the sector, Scott will:

9. Triple the number of Summer Youth Employment Program and CUNY Cultural Corps slots linked to cultural organizations

Summer Youth Employment is one of the premier programs in New York City, offering a steady paycheck, a chance to work in your community, and an opportunity to build connections, experience, and financial literacy. The dividends that SYEP pays in educational, career, safety, and even mental health outcomes is extraordinary.

As Mayor, Scott will work with arts organizations to *triple* the number of SYEP slots in cultural nonprofits and for-profit companies -- with half of these slots going to CUNY students and half for high school students. He will also triple the number of slots in the CUNY Cultural Corp -- a year-long internship that places students in community-based organizations and government agencies. Along with increased apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs, this expansion of SYEP and the Cultural Corp will increase exposure and career pathways within the cultural sector and help diversify these fields.

10. Improve wage standards and ban unpaid internships in the cultural sector for groups receiving city funds

As Mayor, Scott will mandate that any cultural organization receiving funding from the Department of Cultural Affairs provide a living wage to all staff, pay all interns, and pay independent artists a baseline fee for their services. One should not have to sacrifice pay and benefits in order to enter and build relationships within the cultural sector. In order to expand and diversify the field, these entry barriers must be removed and fair wages must be guaranteed.

Moreover, to help small- and medium-sized cultural organizations fulfill this mandate, Scott will increase and baseline CDF funding, provide operating grants to organizations, increase SYEP slots, dramatically reduce fines, fees, and permitting costs, reorient the capital program, bring down utility and healthcare costs, and other measures--as detailed in Section V of this agenda.

11. Double down on arts education in our schools, ensure that every school has at least one full-time, certified arts teacher, and open up our branch libraries seven days per week.

Among the best ways to increase diversity and equity in the arts, expand cultural audiences long-term, and fortify our cultural sector is to build talent and instill an appreciation for the arts at a young age. As Comptroller, Scott fought for

expanded arts education city schools, ultimately winning \$24 million a year in baselined funding to help improve arts education. As Mayor, Scott will build on that foundation, particularly in low-income elementary and middle schools, as well as those with a high number of limited-English-proficiency students. This will not only foster creative thinking and dexterity among New York City children, it will also give more jobs to local working artists who double as art teachers.

While New York State mandates that all students in grades 7-12 are taught by a certified arts teacher, in the 2017-18 school year, 16 percent of relevant schools did not have even one full-time, certified arts teacher and 10 percent did not have a full-time or a part-time arts teacher. As Mayor, Scott will ensure there is at least one full-time certified teacher in every school by the end of 2022. He will also expand the number of artists residencies and the number of cultural organizations that maintain partnerships with public schools.

Meanwhile, we must continue to invest in our libraries, a critical source of after-school programming in the arts and beyond. Speciality libraries like the Performing Arts Library at Lincoln Center provide excellent classes, exhibits, and archives. This type of creative instruction and programming should be readily available to all New Yorkers *seven days a week* at every branch.

12. Designate an Artist Laureate and Youth Artist Laureate in every Community District and hold an annual exhibition of their work

To elevate and celebrate the richness and diversity of our city, Scott will create an expansive artist laureate and youth laureate program. Each year, community districts will designate local artist laureates who will be commissioned to immerse themselves in the neighborhood and create a piece -- in any medium -- that aims to capture the local, collective experience.

At the end of each year, the City will hold a city-wide exhibition to present the work of all the community laureates and designate two exceptional artists as the city-

wide Artist Laureate and Youth Artist Laureate. The program will be run by Percent for the Art, which received a significant boost in funding in 2017, has increased investment in its community outreach process, and can select and host local juries to designate each community district's Artist Laureate.

In addition to the annual exhibition, the work of neighborhood Artist Laureates will be displayed, performed, or read multiple times throughout the year and, where appropriate, displayed at local LinkNYC kiosks and on digital advertising boards in subway stations and on bus shelters.

13. Launch “Museums to the People”

Broadway in the Boros. Philharmonic in Central and Prospect Park. The performing arts have a knack for moving beyond their venues, traveling around the city, and bringing their work to communities. Our museums should take inspiration, opening up some of their permanent collection that's been locked deep in storage and displaying it in schools, recreation centers, traveling trailers, and other community venues for short periods of time.

This is hardly without precedent, of course. The Whitney Museum opened several “branch museums” in the 1980s in the plazas of the downtown Federal Reserve, Equitable Tower, and the I.B.M. building. With insurance support from the NEA's Arts & Artifacts Indemnity Program and the DCLA, institutions throughout the city should bring some of their work outside of the museum walls and to New Yorkers in their communities.

Part III

Increasing City Support for Individual Artists

While Robert Rauschenberg is now widely praised as a New York City legend, in the 1980s and 1990s he -- as well as the “NEA Five” and artists like Chris Ofili -- were subject to countless attacks by the Religious Right. As a consequence, public and

private arts funders around the country upended their grant programs and diverted dollars away from individual artists, collectives, and community organizations that were not registered as nonprofits.

It is time to put this ugly history behind us and celebrate the diversity and daring of New York City artists, and direct much-needed funding to a community that has been rocked by the pandemic. That includes direct grants, but also help for housing and other basic needs. Moving forward, as Mayor Scott will:

14. Set aside 15 percent of city grant funds for individual artists

As Mayor, Scott will dedicate 15 percent of the Department of Cultural Affairs' Cultural Development Fund to individual artists, performers, arts collectives, and arts organizations that are “fiscally sponsored” rather than registered nonprofits. This is already common practice at the New York State Council on the Arts and should be adopted in New York City -- the arts capital of the world.

The City is currently able to filter some funding to artists through the Borough Arts Councils, but this decentralized process is an administrative burden for these organizations, the grants are small and not always well known to practicing artists, and they are not well suited for a city where artists live and work across multiple boroughs. As mayor, Scott will significantly increase funding for artists, create a unified and simplified application process, and provide grants directly from the City. In total, the Cultural Development Fund will be baselined at \$50 million -- up from \$28.5 million in FY2020 -- with \$7.5 million dedicated to practicing artists and non-501c3 arts organizations.

15. Help artists in every neighborhood access affordable work and rehearsal space

In a city as expensive as New York, it is a challenge to succeed in the arts. Affording space to live, to work, to rehearse, to perform, to exhibit -- this is no easy task. Given these extensive space needs, it is critical that the City get creative in assisting artists in every corner of the five boroughs.

The most expansive and impactful way to address this issue is to open up city-owned buildings to local artists. New York City public schools, for instance, have over 3,000 theaters, music rooms, dance studios, and auditoriums -- most of which sit empty during the nights, weekends, and summer. These spaces, which generally have separate entrances cut off from the rest of the school building, are located in every neighborhood of every borough and should be opened up to local musicians, dancers, and other performing artists at a nominal cost with maintenance, security, and utility expenses covered by the Department of Cultural Affairs.

Meanwhile, for visual artists, writers, designers, and others, the Department of Cultural Affairs and Spaceworks will rent 50 storefronts in high-vacancy corridors. These spaces should be designated for studios, arts education, and community events.

Finally, Scott will direct the City's Economic Development Corporation to act as a liaison between artists and religious institutions, many of which have spare capacity. The EDC can serve as a matchmaker between cultural institutions that are looking to secure rehearsal spaces and churches, synagogues, and mosques that have available room in their basements and recreation rooms during the week.

16. A New Deal for Independent Contractors

Most New York City artists operate as independent contractors, moving from project to project and gig to gig. In this way, they very much resemble a growing share of the New York workforce, hustling to get by and often lacking the wage protections and benefits of the traditional employee. That must change.

First, benefits that were offered to independent contractors during the pandemic must be extended permanently. To this end, the New York State DOL should allow all independent contractors to qualify for Unemployment Insurance when they are in between jobs.

Second, while the Freelance Isn't Free Act provides freelancers with important protections against late and nonpayment, it does not require that hiring parties adhere to any payment standard or minimum payment rates. As mayor, Scott would ensure that freelancers are not paid less than the legal minimum wage, requiring contracts between hiring parties and freelancers to include an estimate of hours worked. Scott would also make sure that the Department of Consumer and Worker Protection has the resources needed to enforce the law and empower them to provide reports of employers who are found to be repeat violators of the law in order to inform education and outreach initiatives.

Third, Scott would expand NYC Care, a program that guarantees low-cost and no-cost healthcare services to New Yorkers who do not qualify for or cannot afford health insurance. He will also work with State legislators to increase the thresholds for the New York State Essential Plan, so that more artists and their families can qualify for affordable healthcare. And he will work with Freelancers Union to help fast-track enrollment and get more independent artists, designers, and performers the healthcare benefits they need.

And finally, Scott will implement his Nest Egg Plan, allowing independent contractors and New York City businesses to vest in either the new Empire City 401(k), a City-run 401k marketplace, or a NYC Roth IRA. While this plan was stalled by the Republican rollback of important Obama-era regulatory reforms, Scott anticipates that Congress will revisit this issue and enable his innovative and crucial retirement program to go forward.

17. Improve Access to Affordable Housing

Many artists have more volatile incomes than the average worker, which can make applying for affordable housing difficult. Their income could look much higher or lower on any given month since they do not have a regular salary. Both higher and lower incomes could disqualify an individual for affordable housing. The challenge of volatile income not only affects artists, but also many self-employed

and seasonally employed individuals. As Mayor, Scott will address this issue head on, revamping the lottery process to ensure those with more volatile incomes are not disqualified from applying for affordable housing. Moreover, in order to continue to attract artists to New York, the City must address its affordability issues. For many artists, their homes are their work spaces and the city must develop an affordable housing typology that can accommodate these live/work spaces. Live/work spaces for artists can differ from traditional spaces by their needs, which may include additional ventilation, sound proofing, and open layouts. As Mayor, Scott will develop an affordable live-work space program to create affordable housing for artists and others with specific live-work needs.

18. Help New York City musicians by supporting more live music in bars and restaurants throughout the day

In order to obtain a liquor license in New York City, bars and restaurants must go through an extensive application process and answer a battery of questions. One unfortunate and counterproductive question is whether they will allow live music. This distinction between live and recorded music is fairly superficial, it has a chilling effect on restaurants and bars, and it leads to less opportunities and jobs for New York City musicians.

Moving forward, this question should be scrapped from all SLA applications. Additionally, in order to make sure that blocks and neighborhoods dense with nightlife are not “dead” during daytime hours, the SLA should provide a reduced rate on liquor licenses for any bars, restaurants, and venues that maintain hours during the daytime on the weekday and weekends.

19. Open up Materials for the Arts to individual artists

Materials for the Arts is a beloved New York City program where donated and recycled art supplies are made available to cultural organizations and public schools. In 2017 alone, \$11.2 million worth of art supplies totalling 1.6 million pounds in weight were donated and repurposed.

Moving forward, this incredible resource should be made available to more individual artists and performers. While MFTA and the Department of Cultural Affairs have opened it up to those doing residencies in senior centers, schools, and select city agencies, any artist who receives a grant from a borough arts council should have the same access.

Moreover, at the end of each year, there should be a giant Materials for the Arts exhibition featuring works by students and working artists who utilized MFTA supplies. This will help celebrate New York City's creativity, raise awareness and money for MFTA, and help them expand their stock of supplies and beneficiaries.

Part IV:

Strengthening the Foundations of Arts Organizations and Venues

Cultural workers, nonprofits, and businesses dedicated to the arts operate in the same challenging environment as many other small businesses in New York City. Soaring costs, never-ending fines and fees, pricey permits, and miles of red tape are all facts of life for these enterprises -- just like any business in the city. As we exit the pandemic, these hurdles and encumbrances must be eliminated and we must unlearn the overly prescriptive, rigid approach that has defined government support for the arts for decades. As Mayor, Scott will:

20. Cut red tape, streamline permitting and inspections, legalize DIY venues, and expand the MEND program

Whether a concert venue, gallery, or performing arts nonprofit, cultural organizations face the same challenges of doing business in New York City as any other establishment. Obtaining and renewing permits and licenses, keeping up with the ever-growing thicket of regulations, and bearing the burdens of endless fines and fees is a constant part of the job. Starting and maintaining a cultural nonprofit or business in New York City is far too difficult.

To address these difficulties, Scott will:

- ➔ **Launch “Small Business and Nonprofit Express” within the Mayor’s Office, a single point-of-contact for starting a nonprofit or business, scheduling inspections, and obtaining and renewing a permit.** Every nonprofit or business looking to launch a new venture or make substantial alterations to their space will be assigned a Business Advocate to serve all their needs. As part of this team of Business Advocates, there should be designated liaisons to the cultural sector to help serve their unique needs..
- ➔ **Cut the time it takes to launch a nonprofit or business in half by 2023.** Establish a multi-agency, weekly review of all nonprofits and businesses that are looking to launch or rehab their spaces, coordinate inspections and reviews among agencies and utility companies, and closely track results and metrics in order to cut permitting time in half.
- ➔ **Waive fees at all City agencies for cultural nonprofits.** The City currently waives fees for FDNY inspections for nonprofits, but not for Department of Building filing fees and inspections. Moving forward, there should be a uniform fee forgiveness for cultural nonprofits.
- ➔ **Launch DIY NYC.** The City will legalize and accelerate permitting for do-it-yourself (DIY) venues across the five boroughs. From Bronx to Brooklyn, far too many local performance venues operate in the shadows. These businesses offer essential opportunities for early career artists and are staples of their neighborhoods and the cultural community. They must be preserved and supported.
- ➔ **Expand MEND NYC to help mediate conflicts rather than punish cultural venues for quality-of-life complaints.** In August, the City of New York launched MEND NYC, a program to provide mediation to New Yorkers and hospitality businesses across the city who are in disputes over quality-of-life issues. The program offers an opportunity to resolve disputes and 311 complaints and develop long-term solutions rather than endless fines and summonses. Moving forward, the program should be expanded, with more resources devoted to

concert, theater, and DIY venues throughout the five boroughs. Rather than weaponizing 311 to undermine these businesses, MEND offers an opportunity to resolve conflict and sustain the cultural community.

- ➔ **Eliminate the Last Vestiges of the Cabaret Law.** In 2017, the City Council repealed the Cabaret Law, a Prohibition Era restriction on dancing in certain nightlife businesses and neighborhoods -- particularly communities of color. Unfortunately, the underlying zoning and fire department requirements remain, leaving businesses vulnerable to fines and hassle. It is far past time for them to be scrapped.

21. Drive down healthcare costs and improve healthcare access at small arts organizations

Healthcare premiums at small nonprofits and businesses can run 20 to 30 percent higher than larger companies. This an undue burden to smaller organizations and often leads to worse healthcare coverage for cultural workers.

To address these disparities, Scott will work with State lawmakers to ease restrictions on Association Health Plans and enable more small arts organizations and businesses to band together to access the existing and less-expensive large company health insurance market.

He will also work with the State Department of Financial Services to expand COBRA coverage for entertainment workers. This program is essential for the cultural industry, where employees are often moving between jobs and healthcare plans. Helping them afford healthcare in-between gigs and jobs is vital.

22. Create a property tax exemption for small and medium-size cultural nonprofits who rent their spaces

Property taxes mark a sharp divide in the nonprofit world. Those that own their own space are given a nonprofit exemption while those who rent often have to cover a share of their landlord's obligations.

And while the City does make some property owners “eligible if all or a portion of the property is rented to a nonprofit that qualifies in its own right,” this carveout is cumbersome to access, rarely utilized, and not always passed along to nonprofit tenants.

Instead, any cultural organization with revenues of less than \$3 million should be eligible to apply directly for a tax rebate from the Department of Finance, rather than having to rely on the landlord to apply and pass along any savings.

23. Shift the focus of the cultural capital program to invest in equipment, building systems, accessibility, and sustainability.

In the last two decades, New York City has devoted hundreds of millions of dollars to helping cultural organizations build or expand permanent venues. And while this has helped some gain a permanent home, the City’s expensive and slow capital process has been a burden for many smaller cultural venues and the operating costs associated with an extensive new venue have been more than some can handle.

In order to target these dollars more quickly and usefully, the Department of Cultural Affairs should instead shift a large portion of its capital outlays to building systems upgrades and equipment. Helping venues upgrade their sound and lighting systems, increase ADA accessibility, and invest in more modern and energy-efficient HVAC systems would be a boon for the cultural sector and the City writ-large.

24. Work with ConEd to provide subsidized electricity rates for cultural organizations

Con Edison offers subsidized electricity rates for many nonprofit religious organizations, veterans groups, and supportive housing -- but cultural organizations are generally excluded. The utility has been a keen supporter of the arts in the past and can make a powerful contribution by extending its preferential rates to nonprofit cultural venues. The City, State, and Public Service Commission should work with ConEd to make this happen.

25. Help arts organizations share and manage costs.

Many small and midsize cultural organizations would gladly hire more back office and development support, but lack the resources and do not need these services full time. To help them overcome these funding and coordination problems, the Department of Cultural Affairs should work with providers like ArtsPool, a shared services platform for cultural nonprofits created by the Alliance of Resident Theatres. The City can help ArtsPool build additional capacity and provide support to nonprofits who could use their services.

Moreover, the City's Economic Development Corporation should follow the lead of Atlanta and Pittsburgh, purchasing a joint-subscription to high-powered customer relations management software for non-Manhattan and BIPOC cultural organizations so that they can cultivate new donors and audiences.