

# **ORGANIZATION Board Prospectus**

## **ORGANIZATION NYC**

Founded in 2003, ORGANIZATION NYC (ONYC) is at the forefront of the youth spoken word, poetry and hip-hop movements in New York City. As a leading non-profit presenter of literary arts education and youth development programs in the country, ORGANIZATION NYC offers a comprehensive roster of programs during the school day and after-school hours and conducts diverse programmatic offerings in the areas of creative writing, journalism, college prep, literature and hip-hop. ONYC presents local and national youth poetry slams, festivals, reading series, open mics and more. All told, ORGANIZATION NYC works directly with over 15,000 teens per year in New York City alone, and has partner programs in 42 cities across the United States.

### **Mission**

ORGANIZATION NYC exists to ensure that New York City youth have a safe, supportive, dynamic and challenging community in which to discover their powerful voices - through written and spoken word - and use them to express their views, strengthen self-esteem and engage them in opportunities that address the sociopolitical issues that affect them.

ONYC provides free and uncensored writing and performance opportunities to youth in all five boroughs of New York City. Our workshops are designed to develop critical thinking skills, leadership, and to ignite a personal commitment to growth and learning which leads to heightened in-school performance, and a greater interest in pursuing higher education.

### **Vision**

ORGANIZATION NYC's artistic vision is to build a community of young leaders, writers, spoken word and hip-hop artists who, through self-awareness and enhanced critical thought, help alter the socio-economic pathway constructed for inner-city youth, from marginalization toward one of empowerment, tolerance and social responsibility. We promote student-centered learning through active literacy and positive social dialogue across boundaries of age, race, gender, culture and sexuality.

### **Recent Accomplishments**

#### **Services**

- **Worked with over 15,000 youth in 112 public schools, community centers & cultural institutions; and conducted over 2,000 hours of free writing workshops.**
- **Offered long-term (at least 24-weeks) workshops in 27 NYC public high schools, middle schools and community centers.**

- Produced 56 events with over 2,500 youth performing from our stages, for 20,000 audience members

#### Outcomes

- Had 95% of core students (in the program for at least 2 years) graduate high school and go on to college.
- Participants awarded over \$100,000 in college scholarships

#### Recognition

- Partnered with the NY Knicks to produce a documentary of the program that won a 2007 New York Emmy Award
- Recipient of the 2008 Union Square Award for Arts & Culture

[Additional detail is provided in Appendix I.]

## **Board Development**

Founded in 2004, ORGANIZATION has operated under the fiscal sponsorship of Bowery Arts & Sciences. It is in the process of transformation to an independent 501©(3) corporation and is seeking to engage a Board or Directors that will share its vision and enable it to achieve even greater accomplishments for young people in NYC and throughout the country.

Through a grant from the Partnership for After School Education, we have engaged a board development consultant to support us in this process.

## **Board Responsibilities**

We are seeking board members who will share our deep commitment to young people. Our board will need to meet the basic responsibilities of a not-for-profit board as outlined in Appendix II and board members will be asked to agree to the Board Expectations outlined in Appendix III. This prospectus will describe some of the current priorities of ORGANIZATION and the board skills and resources that will be needed.

## **Financial oversight and legal compliance**

A Board Treasurer and members of a Finance Committee will be needed to work closely with the administration to:

- Develop the annual budget for board approval
- Provide regular financial reporting to the board
- Approve financial controls
- Select and work with the auditor
- Oversee regulatory compliance and provide guidance on legal matters

## **Board needs**

- Board members will be needed with skills in financial management (accounting industry, investment, banking, etc.).
- The board will also need an attorney to identify legal issues and coordinate with outside counsel.

## **Program planning, development and evaluation**

The Board will work closely with staff to determine the programs and systems for outcome measurement and evaluation that will best enable ORGANIZATION to achieve its mission.

## **Board needs**

- Familiarity with City and State educational policy
- Familiarity with evolving youth demographics and needs
- Knowledge of the youth development field

- Alumni of ORGANIZATION
- Academics with an interest in the social role of language and the process of language change
- Knowledge of teacher training and evaluation

Examples of the kinds of strategic questions important to ORGANIZATION, include:

- How can the ORGANIZATION experience be refined to strengthen its impact on the lives of young people?
- How can ORGANIZATION create an ongoing community?
- What are the essential strengths of the ORGANIZATION approach?
- What other modalities can be used to enable students to develop their ability for critical engagement?
- Should programs and services be differentiated to meet the needs of students with different academic strengths and aspirations?
- What can be learned from other programs using similar modalities?

### **Communication and Resource Development**

ORGANIZATION needs to continually improve its communication systems to reach students and audiences as well as to project its brand and reputation among potential supporters, stakeholders and policy makers. The board will play an important role in crafting its message and in the development and implementation of communication strategies.

Communication will also be important in the identification, cultivation and solicitation of supporters who can provide financial and other resources.

#### **Recruitment needs**

- Skills in Marketing, Public Relations, Advertising, Fund Raising, Event planning.
- Access to potentially supportive business communities, including: Music, Hip Hop, Entertainment, Theatre, Apparel, Financial Services, Real Estate, Publishing, etc.

## Appendix I

### Additional 2007 – 2008 Accomplishments

- 56 events produced by ORGANIZATION NYC, including sold-out performances at the Hammerstein Ballroom, Grand Ballroom, Madison Square Garden, Washington Irving Auditorium, BAMcafé, Nuyorican Poets Café, and Dance Theater Workshop.
- ONYC PSAs featured on MTV, VH-1, BET, ESPN and other networks, sponsored by Time Warner Cable.
- ONYC selected to be the feature of an HBO documentary chronicling the youth spoken word movement, airing in January 2009.
- 20 teen leaders from ONYC committed to the *Word Wide* youth leadership board.
- ONYC's Healing Arts Program for teens continued to thrive at Bellevue Hospital, ACS and Montefiore Children's Hospital.
- ONYC continued Deaf Poetry program at Lexington School for the Deaf, with a documentary to follow.
- ONYC's summer program, the Summer Institute for Social Justice and Applied Poetics featured award-winning poets Amiri Baraka, Sapphire, and Beau Sia, among others.

### Creatively College Bound Program

- As part of ONYC's efforts to engage youth in their efforts to go to college, ONYC's Creatively College Bound, had full enrollment on-site in Manhattan and Brooklyn.
- CCB was also offered at 3 off-site locations, including a pilot program at Eagle Academy for Young Men in the Bronx, supported by the Robin Hood Foundation.
- Co-presented the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual ORGANIZATION and NY Knicks College Fair and Poetry Expo at the Hammerstein Ballroom attracting 3,500 teens, 25 colleges, and 350 youth poets/performers
- ORGANIZATION NYC awards over \$100,000 in scholarships, including 2 full rides to University of Wisconsin's First Wave program.
- ORGANIZATION NYC conducted workshops and performances at 18 CUNY College Now sites utilizing the popularity of spoken word and hip-hop to engage the next generation of college bound students.
- ORGANIZATION NYC core students receive scholarships to Brown, Cornell, Princeton and Howard Universities, the University of Pennsylvania, Barnard College, and NYU.

### Services for Educators

- ONYC's annual Mentor Training, Preemptive Education: Language & Liberation, sponsored and hosted by NYU's Steinhardt School of Education, attracted over 150 educators, teachers & mentors participating in workshops, panels and performances.

- ONYC presented the Spoken Word and Hip-Hop Teacher & Community Leader Training Institute at the University of Wisconsin, winner of the 2007 North American Association of Summer Sessions “Creative and Innovative Program Award.”

ORGANIZATION NYC Additional Information

- ORGANIZATION NYC spends 81% of all revenue on programs
- ORGANIZATION NYC generates 65% of all revenue from grants and individual donors, and 35% from fee-for-service projects.
- Through the National Brave New Voices Network, ORGANIZATION NYC works with over 250,000 youth across the country each year.

## Appendix II

### TEN BASIC RESPONSIBILITIES OF NONPROFIT BOARDS

1. **Determine The Organization's Mission and Purpose** – It is the board's responsibility to create and review a statement of mission and purpose that articulates the organization's goals, means and primary constituents served.
2. **Select the Chief Executive** – Boards must reach consensus on the chief exec's responsibilities and undertake a careful search to find the most qualified individual for the position.
3. **Provide Proper Financial Oversight** – The board must assist in developing the annual budget and ensuring that proper financial controls are in place.
4. **Ensure Adequate Resources** – One of the board's foremost responsibilities is to provide adequate resources for the organization to fulfill its mission.
5. **Ensure Legal and Ethical Integrity and Maintain Accountability** – The board is ultimately responsible for ensuring adherence to legal standards and ethical norms.
6. **Ensure Effective Organizational Planning** – Boards must actively participate in an overall planning process and assist in implementing and monitoring the plan's goals.
7. **Recruit and Orient New Board Members and Assess Board Performance** – All boards have a responsibility to articulate prerequisites for candidates, orient new members, and periodically and comprehensively evaluate its own performance.
8. **Enhance the Organization's Public Standing** – The board should clearly articulate the organization's mission, accomplishments, and goals to the public and garner support from the community.
9. **Determine, Monitor, and Strengthen the Organization's Programs and Services** – The board's responsibility is to determine which programs are consistent with the organization's mission and to monitor their effectiveness.
10. **Support the Chief Executive and Assess His or Her Performance** - The board should ensure that the chief exec has the moral and professional support he or she needs to further the goals of the organization.

## Appendix III

### BOARD MEMBER EXPECTATIONS

I understand that as a member of the Board of directors of ORGANIZATION, I have a responsibility to ensure that the organization does the best work possible in pursuit of its mission and goals. I believe in the mission of the organization, and I will act as a responsible and prudent steward. In furtherance of this commitment, I will make by best efforts to fulfill the following responsibilities.

#### **Learning and outreach**

- Be knowledgeable about the organization, its mission, strengths and needs
- Commit to learning about the organization and developments in the field
- Attend at least 4 organizational events each year
- Represent the organization to the community and supporters

#### **Participation**

- Attend and prepare for 6 Board meetings each year
- Be prepared to help formulate policy for the organization
- Be willing to lead the Board or a committee
- Be an active member of at least one committee or task force
- In addition to committee work, be willing to accept at least one individual initiative to be determined in collaboration with the Chair and the Executive Director
- Share professional expertise

#### **Policies**

- Act at in the best interests of the organization and abide by conflicts of interest and confidentiality policies
- Publicly support the decisions of the board, including those with which you had been in disagreement

#### **Financial commitment**

- Make a personally meaningful personal donation each year.
- Solicit donations from individuals, corporations and philanthropies

#### **Board Development**

- Be willing to honestly assess my own performance and the performance of the board as a whole
- Suggest candidates for board nomination
- Be available to research potential candidates and to interview prospects
- Be available to mentor a new board member

#### **Board and Committee meetings**

- Make sound informed decisions, acting in good faith and in the best interest of the organization

- Engage in discussion and decision-making and respect the opinions of other board members
- Encourage and enable the participation of my fellow board members
- Only add points that have not already been covered
- Show respect for committee recommendations
- Have (or value) a sense of humor

**Board/staff relations**

- Respect and support the Executive Director's authority
- Communicate ideas or observations about program or administrative activities to the Executive Director, rather than to line staff
- Refrain from making special requests of the staff
- Avoid discussion of personnel matters with staff

**Board and organization responsibilities to board members**

- Provide regular financial statements and board and committee minutes
- Reasonable availability of board officers and senior staff to provide information about programs, finances and policies
- Structure board meetings to be efficient and productive
- Recognize the accomplishments of board members
- Provide an orientation to the board and the organization