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**NYC DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS LAUNCHES INITIATIVE TO EXAMINE DIVERSITY IN THE CITY'S ARTS AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATIONS**

*Process of gathering data on diversity and sharing best practices and community dialogue will be followed by policy recommendations.*

**New York** – The New York City Department of Cultural Affairs (DCLA) today announces the launch of a new initiative to examine and support diversity among staff and leadership teams in the cultural field. Fostering a better understanding of how cultural groups respond to shifting demographics will be central to DCLA's work of sustaining the vital role the arts play in the life of New York City.

"This is the first step in an effort to more fully understand how we can promote an arts community that reflects the incredible diversity of our city," said **Cultural Affairs Commissioner Tom Finkelpearl**. "Working with our partners at cultural organizations and in the funding community, we are confident that we will find strategies to foster a more equitable cultural landscape for the next generation of artists, administrators and audiences."

The diversity initiative will launch with a discussion among DCLA, heads of local foundations, and leaders of local cultural organizations at The Ford Foundation Headquarters this month. The initiative will then focus on collecting data on diversity of staffs, boards, and audiences to better understand the issue and inform policy discussions. More information on this event is provided below.

"As our population continues to become ever more multicultural, getting a frank discussion started about the issue of diversity at cultural organizations is absolutely critical to the future of the sector," said **Ford Foundation President Darren Walker**. "Together with our partners, The Ford Foundation has been committed to finding new ways to cultivate diversity for many years, and we look forward to continuing this work with our colleagues in the City of New York."

Following the launch, DCLA will continue to work with partners in the field to conduct more in depth research on the topic. A number of surveys from groups including BoardSource and Nonprofit Leadership Alliance and the Association of Art Museum Directors have found that that people of color and women make up a much smaller portion of nonprofit leadership and staff than their share of the population as a whole. New York City is incredibly culturally diverse: only 33% of residents identify as white non-Hispanic and nearly 40% are foreign-born and residents under the age of 18 are the most diverse age cohort, pointing to a long term trend. Understanding how New York's cultural sector reflects these shifting demographics will help the City's arts organizations position themselves to serve and engage an increasingly diverse city.

Data collection could take the form of surveys, research reports, and other formal analysis of the demographics of New York City arts and cultural organizations. The data will better indicate where cultural organizations succeed and where they struggle regarding the inclusion of underrepresented groups. Other major cities, including London, have launched programs to address the lack of diversity in their cultural sectors and DCLA will evaluate lessons learned from these efforts. Ultimately, New York will have to develop its own approach: its unparalleled diversity means that an effective program supporting diversity is even more critical to a thriving cultural sector into the 21st century.

“New York City is home to extraordinary art and cultural organizations that bring remarkable programming to city residents of all backgrounds,” said **Agnes Gund**. “I’ve been working with terrific partners throughout the city for many years to ensure that our cultural organizations remain vital and reflective of the communities they serve, and I look forward to continuing these efforts as the City embarks on a more rigorous examination of the issue of diversity.”

This initiative builds on the de Blasio Administration’s commitment to making New York City a more fair and equitable city for every New Yorker.

### **NYC Cultural Diversity Initiative Kick-off Conversation**

This initiative will kick-off with peer-to-peer dialogue. The event will include remarks by Ford Foundation President **Darren Walker** and NYC Commissioner of Cultural Affairs **Tom Finkelpearl**. Panel discussions will include **Arnold Lehman**, Chairman, Cultural Institutions Group and Shelby White and Leon Levy Director, Brooklyn Museum; **Julian Zugazagoitia**, Director, The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art; **Mariet Westermann**, Vice President, The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation; and **Roberta Uno**, Senior Program Officer, The Ford Foundation.

The discussion event will take place on Wednesday, January 28, 2015 at The Ford Foundation. .

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