

New Pathways for the Arts | Houston

The **Houston Arts Alliance and EmcArts** are pleased to launch a new program for Houston-based arts organizations, **New Pathways for the Arts | Houston**.

This packet includes information about the program, the approach and rationale for this work, and a description of the program's structure. While the program is provided at no financial cost to selected participants, it does require time and commitment from the leadership of your organization.

An informational meeting was held on October 20, 2016. A video recording of that event is available. To receive the link to the video, or if you have any questions about New Pathways for the Arts | Houston, please do not hesitate to contact Amy Gibbs, HAA Capacity Building Manager, at amy@haatx.com.

Please access the application form online:

<https://artsfwd.wufoo.com/forms/new-pathways-for-the-arts-houston-application>

The deadline for applications is November 17, 2016 at 5:00 pm. Early applications are encouraged.

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Our Team:

<http://emcartx.org/approach/about-us>

Past Participants:

<http://emcartx.org/programs/NPP-past-participants>

Greetings from EmcArts!

A not-for-profit provider of transformative programs for breakthrough change in the arts and culture field

EmcArts is a social enterprise for adaptive learning and innovation across the arts and culture field. We exist to strengthen the capacities and effectiveness of nonprofit arts and cultural organizations, serving their needs in the design and management of innovative change, and assisting them in building their adaptive capacity. Through ArtsFwd.org, we are a center for practitioners in the sector to share and learn about the power of effective innovation and "next practices" in the field.

We're excited to work with the new leaders in the arts sector, arts organizations that are building their adaptive muscles and learning ways to systematize innovation.

Innovation and Adaptive Change in the Arts: Why is this Work so Important?

For the first 60 years or more of the modern professional arts sector, the field focused on growth and longevity – on building sizeable audiences and sustainable organizations that were in it for the long haul. The primary emphasis was on maintaining “organizational stability” as arts companies grew, on defining and pursuing what became “business-as-usual.” To keep on track with core businesses and better enable organizations to realize their goals with limited resources, arts organizations developed a wide range of technical competencies in specialist areas (production, marketing, development, operations, governance). Many organizations received “technical assistance” to strengthen their efforts. These organizational dynamics were reinforced through widespread strategic planning – a relatively reliable method of rationally projecting futures that were intended to look like the past, only more so.

In the past 15 years, all this has changed. Dramatic shifts in the operating environment have placed radical new demands on arts organizations. To remain healthy and resilient, and to maximize the delivery of public impact and value, they now need very different approaches. Changes in patterns of public participation and in technological access to the arts, generational and demographic shifts, new forms of resource development, and many more factors have revealed that there is a different set of organizational capacities that is critical for the future. The “muscles” organizations exercise to promote **stability** now need to be balanced by equally strong muscles promoting **adaptability**.

Organizations have not in the past focused on strengthening adaptive capacities such as distributed leadership, nor have they equipped themselves to continuously invest in incubating innovation. In structuring their staff, organizations now need to make strategic use of cross-functional, multi-constituent teams; and they need to develop organizational cultures that are intrinsically flexible and proactive in seizing fleeting opportunities and responding to changing community dynamics. Notably absent to date in the field – and urgently needed to foster innovation – is available innovation capital to underwrite well-designed new initiatives and enable them to reach new markets. For the public impact and value of professional arts organizations to be sustained and increased, each organization in the field must find its own right new balance between stability and adaptability.

To respond to these urgent needs, and reinforce the remarkable adaptive work underway in some organizations, the New Pathways for the Arts | Houston initiative provides support for organizational innovation. Instead of the “technical assistance” of the past, the program offers “adaptive assistance” that builds the adaptive muscles of arts organizations, provides underwriting for experimentation and scaling, and helps ensure a vital, engaged field that is ready to seize the future as a leading contributor to the vibrancy of our communities.

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Program Structure

New Pathways will develop a learning community of up to 20 arts organizations aimed at strengthening and advancing organizational innovation and adaptive capacity. Based on EmcArts' successful work with not-for-profit arts organizations around the United States, New Pathways is a carefully crafted local response to the specific and urgent needs of Houston's arts community.

Starting in December 2016, the two-year program led by EmcArts will include:

- A series of six hands-on **Workshops** exploring the real-life challenges of the cohort of participating organizations and building the capacity to adapt
- Three **Innovation Forums** led by participants around topics of their choosing, offering a parallel forum for peer-to-peer learning and exchange
- **Onsite Coaching** for individual organizations to facilitate the adoption of new knowledge and practices, supported by micro-grants to encourage experimentation
- **Incubating Innovation**, an opportunity to engage in a year-long, in-depth exploration of a significant complex challenge, involving the design and testing of an innovative response, guided by an EmcArts Lead Facilitator, and including prototyping grants to each organization
- The opportunity to apply for **Innovation Capital grants** to support the further development and scaling of innovation projects which show the possibility of having long-term, transformative impacts.

Phase 1: Hands-on Workshops and Innovation Forums (December 2016-June 2017)

The series of six, four-hour Workshops will be for leadership teams from all the organizations taking part in the program. Each organization is asked to participate with a consistent team of board and staff leaders (artistic and executive), with at least 3 individuals taking part in all the Workshops. The Workshops, led by EmcArts staff and guest faculty, together constitute a curriculum in innovation and adaptive change, grounded in the situations and real issues of each organization. Participants will learn to identify complex challenges that they are facing, investigate long-held assumptions about how they do business, and individually assess their capacity to adapt. Additional topics include: team composition and team dynamics for adaptive work, strategy development, resourcing innovation, and making innovations part of your core business. Each workshop is built on the research findings of authorities in the disciplines of organizational learning and change; the work in each session fuses those insights with the practical real-life challenges the participants are facing.

To complement and run in parallel with the Workshops, the program will include three in-person Innovation Forums as opportunities for shared learning, peer-to-peer exchange and the development of collaborative initiatives. The first Forum will provide an opportunity for participants to familiarize themselves with each others' work and to give input on topics for future Forums.

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Program Structure, continued

Phase 2: Individualized On-Site Coaching OR Individualized Project Facilitation (Incubating Innovation)

Upon conclusion of the Workshop series, New Pathways participants will have the option to apply to one of two tracks in the second phase of the program: On-site Coaching or Incubating Innovation.

On-Site Coaching (September 2017-February 2018):

To leverage the learning from the series of Workshops, On-site Coaching visits will allow participating organizations to further explore the ideas, approaches and topics introduced in the Workshops and Forums, to enroll other organizational stakeholders to the work of adaptive change, and to respond specifically to their situation in pursuing new approaches.

Over the course of three, half-day Coaching visits, organizations will engage a Working Group of stakeholders to further investigate one of their complex challenges. This Working Group will begin to develop an adaptive response, and will test their emerging strategy by designing and carrying out “small experiments with radical intent.” The intention is to guide each organization in significant self-reflection as a valuable exercise in itself, as well as preparing them to plunge into an innovation project.

Up to five organizations can take part in On-site Coaching, and microgrants of \$2,000 per organization will be provided to support small experiments.

Incubating Innovation (September 2017-September 2018):

Recognizing that some participants will be ready, after the Workshops, for a deep dive into a major adaptive response to a complex challenge, Incubating Innovation offers a full immersion in an innovation project, with the larger aim of leveraging significant increases in capacity and, potentially, organizational transformation. Participating Incubating Innovation teams will receive multiple visits from an EmcArts facilitator over the course of one year, they will participate together in a week-long, intensive retreat, and will test and refine their innovations through public prototypes.

Up to three organizations can take part in Incubating Innovation, and participants will be eligible for grants of \$20,000 to support prototyping efforts.

Phase 3: Innovation Capital grants (from October 2018)

New Pathways participants that take part in the second phase of the program will be eligible to apply for larger capital grants to support the further development and scaling up of tested innovation initiatives. The idea behind these grants is to provide more extended flexible underwriting for new approaches to take hold in the marketplace. The grants offer “breathing space” for participants to expand promising initiatives and develop sustainable revenues and contributions for them.

Grants will be drawn competitively from a pool of \$150,000, and individual awards will vary in size.

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Program Schedule and Applicant Selection

Phase 1:

- December 15, 2016 (9am-12pm) – Innovation Forum #1
- January 19, 2017 (9am-1pm) – Workshop #1
- February 16, 2017 – Workshop #2
- March 16, 2017 – Workshop #3
- April 13, 2017 – Workshop #4
- May 11, 2017 – Workshop #5
- June 8, 2017 – Workshop #6
- June 29, 2017 – Innovation Forum #2

Phase 2:

- September 2017 – Onsite Coaching and Incubating Innovation begin
- April 2018 – Innovation Forum #3

Phase 3:

- October 2018 – application process opens for Innovation Capital grants

The New Pathways | Houston online application will help us understand more about your organization's readiness and suitability for the program, including:

1. Staff Capacity: successful applicants will have paid staff capacity equivalent to at least 1 FTE
2. Ability to identify complex challenges and possible adaptive responses
3. Institutional capacity for innovation and adaptive change, notably:
 - Leadership with demonstrated ability to adapt in response to changing conditions
 - A clear understanding of organizational assets and barriers in supporting adaptive work
4. Ability to learn from previous attempts at innovation
 - Organizational self-awareness, including the ability to reflect on past experiences (failures as well as successes), learn from them, and apply this learning
 - Searching questions being asked in the early stages of adaptive work
5. Fit to the New Pathways program
 - Alignment between organizational priorities and the purpose and construction of the program
 - Preparedness to have artistic, executive and board leaders (or more) involved throughout
6. The likelihood of benefits accruing to the organization from participation
 - Alignment between expected organizational benefits and the purpose and construction of the program



HOUSTON ENDOWMENT
A Philanthropy Endowed by Jesse H. and Mary Gibbs Jones



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