

ZOOM WEBINAR  
Executive Summary | June 10, 2020

# Guidance for Arts Spaces About Recovery and Reopening

ArtsKC, along with KC Global Design and KC Rising, presented a webinar detailing best practices for arts spaces about reopening and recovery from COVID-19.

The webinar included a moderated discussion featuring panelists from KC Global Design firms BNIM and Dimensional Innovations; plus Slover Linett Audience Research; LaPlaca Cohen; Theatre Projects; and local theater and museum leadership. The industry has been searching for guidance about this critical issue, and this webinar answered many questions.

A Q&A session followed. Summary below:

## STATE OF THE INDUSTRY

- SURVEY -- Culture Track: Culture and Community in a Time of Crisis
  - This special COVID edition of **Culture Track: Culture and Community in a Time of Crisis** is a joint collaboration between [Slover Linett Audience Research](#) and [LaPlaca Cohen](#) as a national research and strategy initiative established to support the cultural sector and help strengthen communities around the U.S. during and after this COVID-19 crisis.
  - COVID-19 crisis has taken a deep personal toll on Americans (suffered income loss, fear, personal or family illness).
  - Audiences want cultural organizations to play an active role during the crisis. (laugh & relax, stay connected, educate kids, distraction, plan for recovery, hope, other than COVID, bring different backgrounds together).
    - Cultural organizations to serve as convening effort for hope, joy, connection.
    - Importance of arts and culture higher in KC region than national average.
  - Audiences are missing the connection, fun, and decompression that culture once provided.
    - Missing since shutdown (quality time with family/friends, fun, relaxing, learning, escaping stress of world, experience performances in person).
    - Audiences want more in their lives right now (outdoors, connections, fun, stay informed, humor).
  - Digital is primarily an audience building and retention tool, rather than a revenue driver for organizations.

- Only 2% have paid for one or more digital offering from arts or culture org during COVID-19.
- Live performances and on-demand content have the greatest awareness and use, while interactive offerings are not as widely adopted.
- Audiences are excited to gather, but they are not yet making concrete plans to attend arts and culture.
  - 5% planning to great extent to attend. Others holding off.
- Audiences are basing their decisions to resume attendance to in-person arts and culture experiences on five key factors:
  - Increased cleaning ... vaccine availability... reduced admission levels to limit crowding ... enforcement of masks for visitors ... announcement from government that it's safe to return.
- 72% of audiences demand change within cultural organizations to better serve their communities.
  - More fun, friendlier, support local artists, treat employees fairly, engage young people, more diverse, connect to my life.
  - 82% in KC (10% above national average) want to see change in the future.
- Audiences understand that arts and culture organizations are financially strained, yet may choose to donate to other causes.
  - Fewer people in KC worry that arts organizations are struggling than national average.
- If audiences are compelled to give to arts & culture right now, many donate to specific individual artists.
  - 24% donated to arts, culture, or humanities organizations in 2018-19, but only 7% during COVID-19.
- Goal of the survey was to quickly answer a range of urgent, complex questions about the place of the arts and culture in the hearts, minds, families, and social and emotional lives of Americans during these painful times — and, crucially, help make strategic sense of those answers via forward-looking, inclusive dialogue that leads to adaptation, resilience, and relevance.
- By conducting research among both arts audiences and the wider U.S. public, this study is designed to deepen our understanding of how arts and culture organizations can help their communities during these times...and how communities can support their arts and cultural organizations. Over 650 organizations of all sizes and disciplines across the country sent survey invitations to their audiences, resulting in over 125,000 survey responses from all 50 states, Washington D.C., Puerto Rico, and two Canadian Provinces.
- For more information on the study, visit <https://culturetrack.com/research/covidstudy/>.

## **OPERATIONAL IMPACT & ADAPTATIONS**

- Stabilization
  - Partners are asking consultants: what changes to make to space physically? What are strategic thoughts on revenue and expenses? How to implement new technology?
  - Don't make expensive or permanent changes in haste – primary message. If you want to make changes now, ask yourself if the changes right now are going to help us deliver on mission long-term?
    - Quick, inexpensive, reversible changes – more recommended.

- Can we make areas healthier, more accessible? How can you change your program to welcome immuno-compromised people? Now is the time to do it.
  - Consultants are encouraging companies to look at revenue and expense outside the arts and culture organization. Think about what is selling and to whom.
  - Consultants are hearing it's not economically feasible to put on performance at 25% capacity. You need to ask yourself if it is feasible for you NOT to put content into community?
  - We believe you have to put something out there to activate your donors. Remind them you're in the community.
  - Marketing is the primary vehicle for your organization now. How can you make programming a tool to increase involvement with your organization?
  - How can you generate revenue in a model other than ticket sales? Think more experientially. Draw from sports and experiential marketing. Build up your audience base and your revenue. Think of your building as revenue stream. Rent to smaller groups; rent out with streaming technology; rent costume shops to make cloth masks; leverage technology to engage new audience.
  - Lot of eyeballs on streaming services. This is an advertising opportunity for arts & culture organizations that are broadcasting.
- Scalable adaptations
    - Don't look at your building as a limitation. 500 seats can become an indefinite number with broadcasting.
    - Video streaming and broadcasting takes away limitations and offers long-term benefits. Expands the audience.
    - Organizations are concerned about technology cost. But, technology has huge scalability when it comes to budget. Your solution could be as simple as live-streaming from your phone for free. An organization can buy a little bit of equipment to put broadcasting into place. Then, they can build on it to higher levels when the time is right.
      - Simulcast performances to outdoor area is also an option.
    - People who watch a broadcast are more likely to buy a ticket in the future.
    - Technology allows you to engage sponsors. Examples on broadcasts: banner ads that pop up. This event brought to you by \_\_\_\_.
    - BYOD -- Asking your customers to bring their own devices will have an impact. Existing technologies can help solve problems today.
      - Offer ticketing on phone, assisted listening, other adaptations so you're not handing things back and forth.
    - Here is a link to a streaming and broadcast video Theatre Projects recently produced: <http://theatreprojects.com/en/news/view/415/online-broadcasting-explained>
- Implementing touchless technologies
    - Focus:
      - Opportunity – all bets are off, go for broke!
      - Experience is still the driver
      - Solutions – it's a temporary problem ... for the most part
    - How we measure solutions:
      - Dimensional Innovations Event Score = safety + peace of mind + experience.
        - Want to make total score positive.

- Make safety a good experience.
    - Thermal scanners bring peace of mind – visual demonstration of safety.
    - Clear-colored barriers, touchless experience, wayfinding signage – ease uneasiness from moment you enter the facility.
  - Ask for resources you wouldn't request in normal times. Technology is one example.
  - Today's scenario is temporary. View some things as temporary solutions.
  - As we look at technology, it can make for a touchless, seamless experience. Easier and simpler.
  - You also should look at physical spaces in your facility. This is where architecture comes into play.
  - Change the way you've done things. Lots of paths to success.
- Facility adaptations – Guidance for arts spaces about recovery and reopening
    - Talked to lot of clients about a) back of house and b) front of house/public spaces
      - Back of house -- How to load the show, how to rehearse, how to safely work in lighting booth – lot of issues.
      - For back of house – trade orgs and unions are helping clarify here.
    - Can you make it work by selling seating with social distancing? Could be done, but hasn't been the focus. Instead lots of discussion on:
      - Entry, escalator, retail/concessions, elevator.
    - Find ways for venues to promote general safety and instill confidence. Dispel fear.
    - Clients mostly focused on interaction with public, points of human convergence.
    - Venues have many places of convergence:
      - Entrance points at ticketing/entering.
      - Elevators are large challenge – uncertainty about numbers in car, loading/unloading/ how long is wait with lower capacity. How control access?
      - Stairs – people concerned with 2-way traffic
      - Escalators are easier to manage. Signage and mark the treads.
      - Doors are a challenge. May have to be touched. Alternative opening devices -- foot, wrist or forearm solutions -- or get rid of door.
    - Restrooms are causing the most trouble. Designers used to try to use as little space as possible for restrooms.
      - Getting more social distancing to work in existing restrooms is tough.
      - Remove the door as a solution?
      - How to manage space inside the restroom?
      - Minimize hand contact by using foot, wrist or forearm solutions.
    - An example we should follow is sports venues. They have controlled entry. Queuing space.
    - Universal design is making buildings more accessible for more people all of the time.
    - To prep for future instances like COVID-19, we need to lay out buildings so they are not so confining. This applies to all public spaces.
    - [BNIM.com](https://www.bnim.com) website offers signs for free downloadable signage.
      - <https://www.bnim.com/blog/future-flow-return-resilient-normal>
      - <https://www.bnim.com/blog/future-flow-signage-safety-and-wellness>

## **KC REGIONAL ADAPTATIONS**

- **Rich Baker – CEO, Starlight Theatre**
  - Tours and concerts are not yet happening. Starlight is considering self-producing the “Godspell” show.
  - Starlight is an outside venue which is an advantage.
  - Approval has been received from the city to move forward with the show. Actors Equity union has provided good feedback.
  - Survey showed 71% people would attend with masks and precautions. However, with specific timeline provided for potential August 2020 performance, the number of those interested in attending dropped dramatically; shows people are less comfortable within a specific timeframe for return.
  - Starlight is making decision in about three weeks for a go/no-go decision on the show.
- **Jeffrey Bentley -- executive director, KC Ballet**
  - Challenge for KC Ballet is social distancing. Ballet is contradictory to social distancing. No one has figured out how to solve this.
  - They are still preparing for bringing artists back together. Plan to get dancers back in the studio in July.
  - Studios are open by appointment and dancers stay within grid. Dancers will have health questionnaire prior to entry.
  - Goal is to have dancers, teacher, accompanist in one room, but stream in real time to other dancers in other rooms in the building.
  - Looking at performances with small cast and all new productions. 30% capacity in venue, one-hour programs with no intermission.
- **Rashida Phillips -- executive director, American Jazz Museum**
  - American Jazz Museum includes several different kinds of venues: Theatre, museum, nightclub, and a pavilion in back.
  - They are working with neighbor Negro Leagues Baseball Museum on planning for visitors’ return
  - Adaptations start with entry process. Building passport for visitors to experience both museums.
  - Monitor flow in spaces. Protect visitors with gloves, ear covers for headphones in interactive experiences.
  - Surveyed audience and they’re interested in coming back and getting jazz music going for the summer.
  - American Jazz Museum is conscious of health issues, but also knows that people need something to live for.
  - Starting by opening museum only. Assessing opening in July for live music.

### **Facilitators:**

- **Maria Maffry**, principal & chief business development officer, BNIM, mmaffry@bnim.com
- **Dana Knapp**, president & CEO, ArtsKC, knapp@artskc.org

### **Panel:**

- **Madeline Smith**, project director, Slover Linett Audience Research, madeline@sloverlinett.com
- **Jen Benoit-Bryan**, PhD, vice president & co-director of research, Slover Linett Audience Research, jen@sloverlinett.com
- **Diane Jean-Mary**, chief strategy officer, LaPlaca Cohen, diane@laplacacohen.com
- **Daniel Ordower**, general manager, Theatre Projects, dordower@theatreprojects.com
- **Chris Moore**, senior consultant, Theatre Projects, cmoore@theatreprojects.com

- **Drew Berst**, practice director - collegiate sports, Dimensional Innovations, dberst@dimin.com
- **J. Gregory Sheldon**, FAIA, principal, BNIM, GSheldon@bnim.com

**Sponsor:**

- **KC Global Design** -- A collaboration of leading architecture, engineering, construction, design, and technology companies located in the greater Kansas City region that impact communities both here and around the world. KC Global Design exists to elevate KC as the premier design community through our collective efforts and expertise.

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For more information about the session or to continue the discussion, contact Meryl Dillman, Project Manager, KC Rising, at [mdillman@kcciviccouncil.org](mailto:mdillman@kcciviccouncil.org). Or, visit [kcglobaldesign.com](http://kcglobaldesign.com).