

# One Nation/One Project, a New National Arts and Wellness Initiative, Granted \$5 Million from the Doris Duke Foundation

*The gift supports One Nation/One Project as it launches an awe-inspiring artistic experience in cities and towns across the United States and conducts rigorous research about the impact of arts participation on health.*

*In cities and towns across the country, One Nation/One Project is working to support local leaders from the arts, health, and public sectors as they tell stories about place, resilience, and belonging with participatory art projects debuting on the same day in July 2024.*

**NEW YORK, NY – March 23, 2023** – One Nation/One Project (ONOP) today announced that it is the recipient of a lead major gift of up to \$5 million from Doris Duke Foundation (DDF). ONOP is an arts and wellness initiative that brings together artists, local governments, and community health partners to leverage the power of the arts to strengthen the social fabric of the nation and heal communities across the U.S. Expansive and ambitious, ONOP seeks to improve community health and health equity through artmaking, with clear objectives and measurable outcomes that can support a new model for innovative partnerships across the arts, health, and municipal sectors.

To this end, ONOP is supporting a geographically diverse cohort of nine—soon to be more—cities and towns across the U.S. that is working over two years to create large-scale participatory art projects responding to the theme of “no place like home.” Each community will debut its unique presentation of *No Place Like...* on the same day in July 2024, nationally amplifying hyperlocal stories of place.

“This visionary gift from the Doris Duke Foundation will allow One Nation/One Project to birth a new model of cross-sector collaboration between local artists, municipal leaders, and health workers. With this gift, DDF has made a bold, profound investment towards a future in which all American cities and towns benefit from the tremendous healing power of the arts,” stated **Lear deBessonnet**, Co-Artistic Director of ONOP.

“Though national in scope, One Nation/One maintains its focus squarely on individual communities, building toward unique artistic productions that invite cities and towns to align their strengths and elevate their stories to a national platform established on creativity, collaboration, and the collective desire for a healthier and more equitable future for all,” stated **Clyde Valentín**, Co-Artistic Director of ONOP.

“We believe that a thriving and sustainable arts and culture sector is a critical part of flourishing communities and embrace cross-sector approaches grounded in this idea,” said **Brandi Stewart**, senior program officer and interim director for the arts at Doris Duke Foundation. “We’re proud to support

One Nation/One Project as they seek to determine how participation in the arts improves outcomes and impacts the health and wellbeing of regions across the country.”

In each community within ONOP’s first cohort, selected and led in partnership with the municipal advocacy organization the National League of Cities, on-the-ground work has already begun to build cross-sector relationships, invite residents to explore artmaking as a wellness practice, and establish sustainable collaborations that will benefit cities and towns through 2024 and beyond. Local teams comprised of artists, local government, and health organizations are supported in the cohort by ONOP’s national team of producers, community artmaking experts, a research team, and key partners from the National League of Cities. Ongoing initiatives are designed to normalize cross-sector partnership and collaboration around the arts on the way toward the launch of *No Place Like...* in July 2024, with the aim of building arts-infused civic infrastructures that will continue to help communities tackle complex challenges and achieve health equity. Current initiatives in the initial cohort include:

- **Chicago, IL** — The Chicago Department Cultural Affairs and Special Events and the Chicago Department of Public Health’s Mental Health Commission are partnering to expand successful arts programming at five city-run mental health clinics.
- **Edinburg, TX** — Through projects that emphasize local cultural traditions such as festival and *folklórico* dance, a collaboration between the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, the Edinburg Department of Library and Cultural Affairs, and community artists and activists is partnering to reshape prevailing narratives about the Rio Grande Valley.
- **Gainesville, FL** — Initiatives to improve mental health for Gainesville’s youth and bolster community investment in the city’s efforts to curb gun violence are being developed by the City of Gainesville’s Parks and Recreation department, fire department, and police department; county public-school leaders; and researchers from the University of Florida, College of the Arts and the University of Florida, Center for Arts in Medicine.
- **Harlan County, KY** — Higher Ground, a community arts initiative with a mission of centering community voice through interview-based theater projects co-created and performed by local Harlan County residents, is creating cross-sector partnerships focused on strengthening community care and healthcare access across the rural and geographically isolated county.
- **Phillips County, AR** — Local civil rights leaders and artists are working to address the county’s urgent water-injustice crisis, which has resulted in a lack of clean water for many of its residents. Lack of access to clean water is one community-wide legacy of the devastating Elaine Massacre of 1919. Project partners are the Elaine Legacy Center, University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences East, and the County Judge’s Office of Phillips County.
- **Providence, RI** — Local artists will be trained as certified Community Health Workers through the city’s progressive Creative Community Health Worker initiative to collaborate with residents of three public housing units to heal from pandemic losses and strengthen their communities through theater and storytelling.
- **Rhineland, WI** — In response to a local crisis of social isolation amongst youth and seniors in this rural Wisconsin city, local art, health, and city partners are working to build public assets and community programming to bring the community together. Partners ArtStart, the City of Rhineland, and the Marshfield Health Clinic are responding to an initial call by youth activists to create an arts skate park to serve as an arts hub and gathering place and are developing new programs focusing on seniors.

- **Utica, MS** — The Mississippi Center for Cultural Production (Sipp Culture), the Town of Utica, and the Jackson Hinds Health Center are creating community-wide programming that deepens Sipp Culture's rich legacy of developing rural self-determination and artistic voices through food and cultural production.
- **Winston-Salem, NC** — United Health Centers, the Arts Council of Winston-Salem, the Thomas S. Kenan Institute for the Arts, the City of Winston-Salem, and Forsyth County Department of Public Health are partnering to address community health priorities in Winston-Salem and rebuild community trust through the arts.

“NLC is proud to be partnering with One Nation/One Project in bringing this innovative opportunity to communities across the country. Local leaders are excited to use a variety of tools and form artistic partnerships to bring their residents together and improve their community’s overall health, wellbeing and resilience,” stated **Clarence Anthony**, CEO and executive director of the National League of Cities.

Working in collaboration with each site as well as a team of researchers led by Dr. Jill Sonke of the University of Florida, Center for Arts in Medicine, ONOP has created a framework for assessing the health impacts of arts participation and will conduct rigorous studies exploring how arts participation can impact social cohesion and wellbeing in American cities and towns. The studies will seek to address questions ranging from individual outcomes (will participants report a greater sense of wellbeing?) to broader community outcomes (can regular art practice enhance social cohesion?) of arts participation.

“Our research approach values the co-creation of knowledge and change by community members and researchers working together in equitable partnership. We aim to not only document the value of arts participation for enhancing social cohesion and wellbeing, but to build the capacity for communities to ask and answer their own questions about health in the future,” stated **Dr. Jill Sonke**, Lead Researcher, University of Florida, Center for Arts and Medicine.

The historic inspiration for ONOP is the WPA Federal Theatre Project, a groundbreaking New Deal initiative that from 1935-1939 employed thousands of theater professionals in twenty-two states. Designed to provide economic relief for actors, playwrights, designers, technicians, and other artists left unemployed by the Great Depression, the WPA Federal Theatre Project led to the production of hundreds of classic and new plays across the nation. Among those productions was *It Can't Happen Here*—a thought-provoking dramatization of Sinclair Lewis’s novel of the same name—which opened in 18 cities and towns on the same night in 1936, simultaneously actualizing director Hallie Flanagan’s vision for a national theater and amplifying local communities’ distinct interpretations of the drama.

Just as the WPA Federal Theatre Project was created in response to the economic crisis of the Great Depression, ONOP organized in response to the profound crises of 2020 and their impacts on mental, emotional, physical, and community health – particularly within historically underserved, low-income, and BIPOC communities, both rural and urban. The first cohort of cities and towns seeks to center these populations and their communities. ONOP is based on the idea that the power of the arts can be harnessed to strengthen communities to unlock their own existing cultural power to accelerate meaningful change.

### **About One Nation/One Project**

One Nation/One Project (ONOP) is a national arts and wellness initiative that is helping cities and towns across the U.S. imagine, plan, and create large-scale participatory art projects that build community,

redefine a more equitable nation, and increase wellbeing for all. ONOP is spearheaded by co-artistic directors Clyde Valentín and Lear deBessonet, with associate artistic director Tyler Thomas, working in partnership with the National League of Cities and the Center for Arts in Medicine at the University of Florida, and supported by additional partners across the arts and health sectors.

ONOP is a sponsored partner of the Tides Center and is currently funded by Anne Clarke Wolff and Ted Wolff, Barbara and Amos Hostetter, Bloomberg Philanthropies, Doris Duke Foundation, Katie McGrath & J.J. Abrams Family Foundation, The Tow Foundation, Sozosei Foundation, and The Robert and Mercedes Eichholz Foundation. Its advisory board includes prominent supporters Sara Fenske Bahat, David Berlin, Andi Bernstein, Megan Beyer, Anurima Bhargava, Renee Chatelain, Jason Cooper, Deborah Cullinan, Diana DiMenna, Kamilah Forbes, Katie McGrath and J.J. Abrams, Stacey Mindich, Liza Montesano, Eva Price, Fiona Howe Rudin, Mara Burros Sandler, Jeffrey Seller, Jean Tom, and Anne Clarke Wolff.

Follow @ONOP2024 on Instagram for updates, behind the scenes content, and more.

### **About the Doris Duke Foundation**

The Doris Duke Foundation supports the well-being of people and the planet for a more creative, equitable and sustainable future. We operate five national grantmaking programs—in the performing arts, the environment, medical research, child and family well-being, and mutual understanding between communities—as well as Duke Farms and Shangri la, two centers that directly serve the public. Visit [www.dorisduke.org](http://www.dorisduke.org) to learn more.

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