

Cultural Oasis:
Providing Arts Workshops for Puerto Rican Youth

Our programs and services strive to create **social mobility** for all participants. We offer youth and low-income communities in Puerto Rico a safe space where they can:

- Learn through the arts
- Express themselves in a conscious and empathetic way
- Acquire leadership skills and self-knowledge
- Through our workshops, artistic performances, talks and stage presentations, participants can find in the arts specific tools they can use for their social and personal development

Over the past few years, we have managed to develop theatrical presentations and artistic workshops aimed at Puerto Rican youth, which have provided very positive results for the participants. Some of these results include:

- Achieving a greater ability to express thoughts and emotions
- Greater integration and cooperation with other students
- Better mood and greater concentration/focus on tasks

At the same time, we always seek to offer a safe space where families and the surrounding community can benefit from the arts and can understand the process that children are going through in our programs. We know that the more adults can understand the benefit of the arts in the comprehensive development of children, the more they will be able to support the process, generating greater results and benefits. Our organization provides **free services** to the community in our physical facilities, in Santurce, but one of the most important components to achieve social mobility is being able to directly reach schools and communities that do not have the resources or access to leave their spaces and reach our facilities. This is why more than 80% of our services are carried out directly in communities, in various towns throughout Puerto Rico.

The Mission:

Expand access to arts education for underserved children in our communities. By recognizing the fundamental role that arts education plays in fostering creativity, critical thinking, and socio-emotional development, we are committed to ensuring that every child we serve has the opportunity to benefit from high-quality arts programs.

In Puerto Rican communities, access to enriching cultural and educational opportunities remains a challenge, particularly for children and families facing socioeconomic vulnerabilities. Cultural resources and use of the creative arts are limited and often restrict people's ability to explore avenues of creative expression and personal growth. The absence of affordable outlets for artistic engagement exacerbates this disparity, hindering the development of vital skills and

curbing aspirations. As such, there is a pressing need to close this gap by offering free theater and art workshops directly within these communities. We created a program that provides two parallel avenues of access to the arts for youth, and serves as a catalyst for social mobility, fostering creativity, self-confidence, and critical thinking skills essential to meeting life's challenges. By providing accessible avenues for cultural enrichment, these initiatives empower people to break the cycle of limited opportunities, ultimately fostering a more inclusive and vibrant society for all.

Despite the proven benefits of arts education, many children in our community lack access to comprehensive arts programs. Budget constraints, shortages of qualified teachers, lack of opportunities, and systemic inequalities have contributed to the marginalization of arts education in schools serving low-income and minority communities. As a result, many children are denied the opportunity to explore their creative potential and develop skills essential for their social development, through arts education. Through the arts, children can develop skills that allow them to improve their social situation and communication skills, aid them in identifying and managing their emotions better, and above all, feel empowered to reach their maximum potential.

The Goal:

Our goal is to address barriers to access and expand arts education opportunities among underserved children in our community. Through targeted interventions in our space in Santurce and by creating partnerships via visits to schools and community organizations, we aim to increase the availability of high-quality arts programs and ensure that youth have the opportunity to participate in arts education activities.

Proposed Activities

1. Curriculum Development: We will work with educators and arts experts to develop a comprehensive arts curriculum that aligns with state standards and incorporates diverse art forms, including visual arts, theater, and dance.
2. Professional Development: We will provide professional development opportunities for parents to improve their skills and knowledge in arts education pedagogy.
3. Workshops and Art Residencies in Santurce: We will organize workshops and art residencies led by professional artists and art educators. These hands-on experiences will expose children to different forms of art, cultivate their creativity, and inspire artistic expression.
4. Community Partnerships: We will collaborate with local arts organizations, cultural institutions, and community centers to expand access to arts programming beyond the school environment. The associations will facilitate access to performances, exhibitions, and artistic enrichment activities for children and families.
5. Evaluation: We will evaluate the impact of our program through quantitative and qualitative measures, including student surveys, teacher evaluations, and academic

performance data. Evaluation results will inform program improvements and guide decision-making to ensure our efforts effectively address the needs of underserved children.

The Project

The project consists of two pillars. The first pillar, “Cultural Oasis in Santurce,” is dedicated to providing youth with an environment in which they can immerse themselves in theater and art workshops. This approach not only gives them the opportunity to participate in creative activities, but also reinforces their emotional, physical, cognitive, and social skills through teamwork, respect for their peers, and the development of leadership skills. In addition, we will create a welcoming space for parents where they can wait for their children while immersing themselves in an inspiring environment full of opportunities. Here, they have the option of participating in crafts, joining artistic activities, or simply resting while waiting for their children. The program is offered throughout the year, from 4pm to 6pm, in our workshop/theater located on Ave. Ponce de León. The second pillar, “Mobile Cultural Oasis,” reaches directly to schools and communities that lack transportation and resources to access our space. In these schools and communities, we will implement activities fusing theater, music, and the visual arts. The purpose is to stimulate creativity in youth and promote both the physical and mental development of the participants. By bringing these experiences directly to participants, we seek to overcome logistical barriers and guarantee that access to the arts and its benefits can be for everyone.

Expected Project Impact

We will evaluate the impact of our program through quantitative and qualitative measures, including student and family surveys, teacher evaluations, and academic performance data. Evaluation results will inform program improvements and guide decision making to ensure our efforts effectively address the needs of underserved children. Our expected results are:

1. Increase the communication capacity of the participants, increase their levels of empathy, and improve their leadership and teamwork skills. To measure these results, we will carry out pre-tests before the start of the program, during the program, and at the end.
2. 80% of the participants in the first year (2024) of our program will continue to attend in 2025.
3. Serve a minimum of 200 youth and their families during the first year of the project.
4. Carry out a total of 30 direct impact activities that benefit children from various regions, mainly from the north and center of Puerto Rico.
5. Contribute to the cultural ecosystem by providing employment to 4 artists/educators and additional personnel, for the successful execution of the project.
6. Contribute to the maintenance, use, and life of a physical art and workshop space, in which free activities can continue to be carried out in the long term.

7. Share our joy, enthusiasm and love for the arts to all those children who have so much to express and create in this world. Inspire them to disconnect a little from electronics and go back to playing, imagining, and trusting that most dreams can be achieved with effort and dedication. This last point is difficult to measure with data, but it is what we experience every time we come to a community, share our art, and leave with a heart full of all the life that the children gave back to us during the encounter.

The project will generate educational and cultural opportunities in areas that may otherwise lack them, promoting social mobility through equal access to enriching experiences. By creating inclusive spaces for artistic expression and collaboration, we will:

1. Promote social cohesion and positive social relationships. We will provide a safe space where children can develop their abilities to the fullest without being limited by their environment, an environment in which each one can be inspired and learn from others, regardless of where they come from and what their previous situation was. Through skill-building workshops and community engagement initiatives, the project will equip participants with valuable artistic and interpersonal skills that are transferable to diverse professional contexts. This improves their employability and economic prospects, ultimately contributing to long-term economic mobility.
2. Generate long-term, positive change. It is a challenge to generate long-term change if we only work with children, but with the support that we propose to also offer to families, we can create greater awareness and a more favorable environment for the development of children. By involving families and community members in program development and implementation, we will strengthen community ties and promote active civic participation. Participants will be encouraged to become agents of change within their communities, advocating for social justice and contributing to collective efforts to address systemic barriers to mobility.
3. Improve the educational and cultural situation, as well as the social well-being of youth. By offering diverse artistic disciplines and hands-on learning experiences, the project will improve participants' academic skills, critical thinking, and self-confidence. This equips them with the tools necessary to succeed academically and pursue further educational opportunities.
4. Improve the social and economic condition of children, especially those who live in vulnerable situations. By creating inclusive spaces for artistic expression and collaboration, we will promote social cohesion and positive social relationships. Participants will develop a sense of belonging and agency within their communities, which is essential for navigating social media and accessing advancement opportunities.

Oasis Cultural Santurce



Taller-Teatro

Ave. Ponce de León Edificio 1416



Escenario









EL ARTE ES
NUESTRA
HERRAMIENTA

