

Going Further Together

Lisa Farber

Major paper submitted to the faculty of Goucher College in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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Abstract

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In this paper, the argument that nonprofit arts organizations will see impactful growth in audiences and participants by building relationships outside of their sector is supported with research that examines: past and present community arts programs, new funding strategies such as the Los Angeles County Arts Commission's Community Impact Arts Grant (CIAG), successful and unsuccessful examples of collaborations between arts and social service organizations, and new models for participatory arts engagement. The benefits and risks of integrating joint programming were also explored and evaluated.

This presented research validates that by working together to integrate arts programming with social service groups, many of which already incorporate an active arts practice into their work, nonprofit arts organizations can expand their community reach and provide new outlets to increase arts access and fulfill their mission.

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To my mom and Sean, whose endless love, support, and patience gave me the fuel to persist; and to my fellow MAAVericks, who also stood by my side and kept me smiling every step of the way.

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INTRODUCTION

A decline in engagement, an increase in competition, and a lack of adequate or reliable funding in the last twenty years has presented nonprofit arts organizations with difficult odds to face. The landscape is changing drastically and quickly.

Many U.S. arts organizations that serve the public through the visual and/or performing arts are grappling today with shifting demographics and a rapidly changing participatory culture. Some artists and organizations are more easily adapting to this new landscape; others are challenged to retain and attract new audiences while simultaneously upholding an artistic mission. (*When Going Gets Tough* 4)

Arts organizations are in dire need of reaching more members of their communities and they must pursue more engaging, participatory means in order to do so.

There is hope for arts organizations at a loss for what to do in this rapidly evolving landscape. Instances of collaborative, cross-sector work are on the rise, creating opportunities to involve more diverse constituencies in innovative ways. Nonprofit arts organizations can expand access and community by cultivating relationships with social service organizations through the integration of arts programming.

Social service organizations, including but not limited to “community centers, hospitals and religious organizations, park systems, mayor’s offices...and senior centers”

(Center for Cultural Innovation 9), is a term used to define community-based groups such as nonprofit or government organizations which typically serve a community need and whose mission does not directly prioritize the arts. This term can also represent youth development, educational, and human service organizations. Many of these groups across the nation offer arts programming to serve their communities.

The presence of an artistic practice in local social service organizations is a welcome mat for arts organizations; it is an invitation to approach groups outside of their field and share their artistry with interested parties. These non-arts groups usually serve demographics that are typically more difficult for arts organizations to access. Some examples of these groups are youth, senior, low-income, and immigrant populations. Both arts and social service organizations, as nonprofits, have a commitment to their communities and by working together, each of these groups can maximize funding, grow their constituency, more holistically address civic problems, and unite community members who would not typically interact with one another.

Diversity, equality, and inclusion are of utmost importance for the nonprofit arts sector, especially now, considering the potential elimination of multiple federal agencies such as the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) proposed by the current administration (“National Endowment for the Arts Update”). More than ever before, arts organizations throughout the nation must prove their relevance and value to the public. Forming relationships with other nonprofit organizations, such as those in social services, is an appropriate, promising approach to unite and strengthen communities. The surge of new funding sources for cross-sector work from foundations and arts councils nationwide demonstrates this notion.

In this challenging new landscape, the future is uncertain, access is an issue, and audiences crave more active participation in their arts experiences. In order to thrive, arts organizations must strive to increase civic reach; building relationships with social service groups helps them accomplish this. An expansion of access and community will allow arts organizations to more accurately reflect and engage the people they serve, which will ultimately strengthen the organization and, in turn, the entire community.

Chapter I

THE CURRENT ENVIRONMENT

It is evident that the health of the nonprofit arts sector is in a delicate state. "In 2013, a time of improved economic health, forty-two percent of arts nonprofits still failed to generate positive net income—a figure that raises concerns about the long-term sustainability of arts organizations [...]" (Kushner and Cohen, *2016 National Arts Index*). Additionally, according to the National Council of Nonprofits' article, "Nonprofit Sector Trends", "limited resources" and "increased demands on nonprofits, stemming from increased needs in communities" were two of the top trends affecting charitable nonprofits in recent years. These issues are now exacerbated with the possible elimination of the NEA. The future is uncertain—an arts organization's future relies upon its ability to address these barriers.

To demonstrate the need and urgency for this expansion of access and community, it is imperative to understand and assess the existing conditions in which nonprofit arts organizations are trying to prevail. In today's market, competition is intense, engagement is challenging, and funding is scarce. "Like many sectors of the economy, the arts recovered slowly and unevenly from the recession due to industry contraction and consolidation, the impact of technology, slow rebounds in philanthropy, and tepid consumer spending" (Kushner and Cohen, *2014 National Arts Index*). The need

for new methods and strategies is critical, as they are necessary to help these arts groups stand out amongst the rivalry, attract new forms of engagement, pool their resources, and entice different forms of support.

Challenges Facing Arts Organizations

Arts organizations constantly battle to reach new and diverse audiences. This has been a struggle for them for many years, long before the 2008 recession devastated the nation. “Over the past two decades, national surveys have documented declines in U.S. adults’ attendance across various types of visual and performing arts events” (*When Going Gets Tough* 10). This decline in attendance does not necessarily mean that the public has lost interest in the arts; rather, it can be attributed to several factors including growth in the number of nonprofit arts organizations, shifting demographics, changing preferences amongst new generations, and advances in technology.

In recent years, the number of arts organizations has been steadily increasing, which has made it even more difficult to attract audiences and visitors for individual organizations. Furthermore, it makes gaining traction and support difficult for newcomers. “From 2003 to 2013, the number of nonprofit organizations registered with the IRS rose from 1.38 million to 1.41 million, an increase of 2.8%” (McKeever 1); and within the nonprofit sector, the number of arts organizations in particular is growing at a particularly rapid rate. For every arts organization that existed in 1990 and survived throughout the next two decades, approximately 2.6 new organizations were established (Urban Institute 22). This growth is detrimental in a highly-saturated market, especially when the majority of existing organizations are finding it difficult to stay afloat as it is.

In addition to more competition making it difficult to attract people, the Center for Cultural Innovation reflects on another challenge. In the past decade, rapid advances in technology have drastically changed the way the public interacts with art.

The sustained economic downturn that began in 2008, rising ticket prices, the pervasiveness of social media, the proliferation of digital content and rising expectations for self-guided, on-demand, customized experiences have all contributed to a cultural environment primed for active arts practice.

(Brown et al. 4)

Now, arts organizations are not only competing with other organizations for audiences and attendees, they are competing with the wide array of entertainment options available to anyone with internet access. It is becoming more evident that more interactive or participatory experiences are desired by the public, especially by younger generations. “Arts and culture practitioners now face a special challenge: how to support individuals in their own art-making while maintaining excellence as providers of professional arts experiences” (Stallings and Mauldin 8). For today’s arts organizations, simply presenting content to the public is no longer an option for long-term viability.

Most arts organizations approach their work with a “build it and they will come” attitude, attempting to bring the community to their art, but this approach is proving to be unsustainable in a society saturated with entertainment options. To increase engagement, entice participation, and create a stronger foundation for support, arts organizations are going to have to shift their perspective, find new ways to bring art to their community through programming, and stand out amongst the growing competition.

Decreased Support for the Arts

Not only do arts organizations face intense competition for audiences within their industry-specific subsector, they also have to fight against the entire nonprofit sector for funding. Despite this fight for funding and audiences, the number of arts organizations continues to rise. In the same period that arts organizations were doubling at an alarming rate, “local government support for the arts fell eighteen percent between 2008 and 2012, while state funding fell twenty-seven percent in the same period” (Kaiser 31). Although growth is generally considered a good sign, an increasing number of arts organizations means that the already limited funding to support them must be spread even thinner. If the administration’s proposed budget cuts come to fruition in 2018, this will most certainly be the case.

Additionally, during this same time, individual contributions and overall revenue for arts organizations declined.

From IRS 990 data, in terms of total revenue and contributions, gifts and grants, health organizations (excluding hospitals), human services organizations, education, and higher education have seen increases in funding between 2008 and 2012. Only Arts, Culture, and Humanities has seen a decrease, with small and community-based arts organizations reporting the most difficulty raising funds. (Ong et al. 3)

As the need for their services grew after the recession, funding for more humanitarian causes took precedence. When there are arguably more pressing causes to support, it can be difficult for arts organizations to be considered a financial priority.

With more support now going towards health, education, and human service organizations, it is evident that funding priorities are shifting. Simultaneously, many of these need-based organizations already incorporate arts programming into their work. For arts organizations, discovering how their work can contribute to the efforts of social service groups could turn this challenging situation into an opportunity for evolution and expansion.

Chapter II RISING OPPORTUNITIES

A Brief History

Although new funding opportunities supporting cross-sector strategies are emerging, encouraging arts organizations to expand their sense of community and establish new outlets for the public to access to their work, collaborations between the arts and social causes are not contemporary concepts. There are early instances of the arts being infused with community work dating back to almost a century ago. In an article published by Grantmakers in the Arts, entitled “Artists in Community Settings: Supporting the Movement”, author Margaret Hasse shares that:

Many historical examples exist of artists’ civic involvement and use of the arts as a tool to improve society. Public roots that anchor today’s work grew from the Works Progress Administration (WPA) in the 1930s and the establishment of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) in 1965. ...The Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) of 1973 was another influence on the work of artists in communities today. Through CETA, many artists received training and support for artistic work in and with neighborhoods.

These are only a few early, influential incidences of the arts operating outside the traditional settings of presenting or producing programs in arts organizations, studios, galleries, and commercial locations. Since then, in the last couple of decades, artistic

endeavors have continued to develop and manifest in unique ways through community partnerships and other varying forms of arts integration. Now, in this current environment, this cross-work may be more necessary than ever.

Recent Growth in Cross-Sector Work

A range of factors are contributing to the escalation of cross-sector work in recent years. In their September 2016 report, entitled *Creativity Connects: Trends and Conditions Affecting U.S. Artists*, the Center for Cultural Innovation noted several early influences.

First, artists need to make a living; however, this can be difficult to accomplish given the lack of opportunities for sustainable employment in the field. The ability of nonprofit and commercial arts sectors to fully employ all professional-level artists is limited, propelling some artists to look elsewhere for work opportunities (Center for Cultural Innovation 10). Many artists, when faced with unemployment, look for work in different industries altogether; however, many also attempt to pursue a career where their talents will still be utilized, if even indirectly, such as a teaching artist.

Second, the Center for Cultural Innovation points out that socio-political issues have seen a rise in urgency throughout the past decade. Examples of these types of issues include “economic and other forms of inequality, a troubled criminal justice system, and climate change” (10). In response to these situations, artists are striving to find or create work in non-artistic environments. The Actors’ Gang in Los Angeles, for example, began responding to this urgency in 2006. The expansion of their outreach efforts allowed this group to drastically evolve from the traditional theatre company it once was. “Alarmed by California’s growing rate of incarceration, company member Sabra Williams

suggested that the Actors' Gang bring theater workshops to California prisons. Tim Robbins agreed, and the Actors' Gang Prison Project was born" (Reed). The Actors' Gang is only one example of this type of program and is discussed further in this paper.

As authors from the Stanford Social Innovation Review suggest in the article "The Changing Face of Collaboration", "changes in the broad economic, political, and policy environments may be creating a greater sense of urgency around social issues, motivating more local groups to work together" (Henig et al.). This difficult socio-political terrain is inspiring artists and arts organizations to use both their voices and talents to take action against these issues in a creative way.

The final reason described in *Creativity Connects* is that "leaders in a growing number of non-arts sectors—including community development, healthcare, transportation, technology, and public safety—are recognizing that artists' creative skills and processes can assist their work" (Center for Cultural Innovation 10). If the leaders of these social service organizations are identifying and employing the power of the arts in nontraditional settings, then arts organizations have an opportunity to share their expertise and employ their services and talents through increased outlets.

Each of these current trends reveal shifting attitudes amongst nonprofit leadership and an increase in artists and arts organizations "working across sectors and in non-arts contexts" (Center for Cultural Innovation 10). With this new territory to explore, there are infinite possibilities for arts organizations to use their creativity in untraditional ways.

Examples of Cross-Sector Work Today

Many arts organizations are beginning to collaborate with the corporate and government sectors to pursue this cross-sector work. For instance, arts groups are increasingly collaborating with small businesses and corporations to develop in-office arts workshops that encourage “employee engagement”. This business management concept, which is promoted by Americans for the Arts (AFTA) and many corporations across the nation, is designed to increase job satisfaction through the arts. “An ‘engaged employee’ is one who is fully involved in, and enthusiastic about their work, and thus will act in a way that furthers their organization’s interests” (“Employee Engagement Toolkit”).

There are numerous ways arts organizations can explore working with businesses of any size. An arts organization can work with a company to create team-building exercises, develop engaging new trainings, or design arts workshops for a motivating, social work event. One arts organization in Venice Beach, California, A Window Between Worlds (AWBW), works with companies like the regional restaurant chain In-N-Out Burger to provide in-office art workshops that ignite employee engagement for their corporate partners while bringing awareness to their cause, which is to transform trauma through art for survivors of domestic violence (“Corporate Partners”). Through cross-sector collaborations like this one, constituents from each organization are being exposed to artistic outlets and engaging with a larger portion of their community; ultimately, both arts and social service groups reap the benefits of this collaboration.

Additionally, as an example of a collaboration between a city and its artists, the City of Boston is in its second year of its artists-in-residence program, Boston AIR. In this program, artists collaborate to bring what the city’s Chief of Arts and Culture, Julie

Burros, describes as “creative thought to municipal problem solving and project implementation” (“Boston AIR”). Local artists and an array of municipal departments, such as the Police or Parks and Recreation departments, are working together to enhance civic dialogue through the production of stimulating artistic content. With elements resembling a modern-day WPA or CETA, the program’s selected artists “are supported as agents of reflection, collaboration, and activism, whether through process-oriented practice, direct community engagement, and/or as leaders of system-wide change projects” (“Boston AIR”).

These are only two of many ways artists and arts organizations are pursuing cross-sector work, but government agencies and businesses are not the only groups interested in building new relationships.

Social Service Organizations Using the Arts

A considerable number of social service groups either demonstrate a strong interest in producing or already do produce some form of arts programming. Between 1998 and 2003, the Wallace Foundation funded the Community Partnerships for Cultural Participation Initiative (CPCP) to investigate how joint ventures between arts and non-arts groups can be supported. A survey was completed by over five-hundred and fifty social service organizations, wherein fifty-three percent of respondents stated that they “‘present, support, or otherwise participate in’ arts and cultural activities” (Walker 4). Most local social service organizations, such as youth, domestic violence, or homeless shelters, continue to participate in the arts today, often providing arts programming as a tool to not only entice, but to assist, engage, and educate their constituencies as well.

A social service organization's involvement with the arts can take different forms, with the most common form being group participation in artistic programming. Involvement can also entail providing venues for events, helping to organize programs or supply volunteers, contributing to funding or sponsorship, and advocating for the arts. According to CPCP results, two-thirds of all non-arts organizations that participate in the arts are involved in more than one way and eighteen percent are involved in four or five ways (Walker 4).

The type and rates of participation differ between the variety of non-arts groups, but a substantial number of them share one thing in common: they all participate or express an interest in the arts, presumably because the arts possess powerful healing and transformative qualities that immensely benefit the need-based communities these groups generally serve. "Arts groups can take advantage of the already high involvement of non-arts organizations in the arts" (Walker 4). Initiating collaborative work with social services should not be difficult, given their evident interest.

New Funding Opportunities

Leaders of social service organizations are not the only ones taking note of the value of the arts in non-traditional environments, many funders are as well. Across the nation, foundations and arts councils are encouraging nonprofit organizations to explore more cross-sector strategies.

Many arts institutions are re-examining their missions and their roles in what has become an increasingly complex arts environment. Concurrently, arts

policy appears to be shifting its focus from influencing the supply and quality of the arts to increasing the public access to and experience with the art.

(McCarthy and Jinnnet xi)

Increasingly, there are new funding opportunities available to both arts and non-arts organizations that utilize the arts to create social impact.

As an example of national support for this work, in the spring of 2015, AFTA launched Transforming America's Communities Through the Arts, a \$10.5 million-dollar initiative to support the creation of arts programming within the public, private, and nonprofit sectors.

[This is a] comprehensive, three-year initiative to increase understanding of the value of the arts and investment in the arts. The initiative will help leaders and the general public better understand arts and culture as central to creating and sustaining healthier, more vibrant communities in the United States. ("Americans For The Arts Unveils")

In their press release for the project, AFTA emphasized "the number of opportunities for the arts to play or continue to play an important role in issues that communities will address over the next few years, including diversity, education, infrastructure, healing and military, the economy, and many others" ("Americans For The Arts Unveils"). With the nation's largest arts advocacy pursuing this work, it is apparent that the time is prime for arts organizations to start thinking about the possibilities of collaboration.

Additionally, the National Endowment for the Arts currently has a pilot grant opportunity, Art Works, with a specific initiative program to support partnerships between organizations from the arts and non-arts sectors. This grant program, called Creativity Connects, demonstrates:

how the arts contribute to the nation's creative ecosystem, investigates how support systems for the arts are changing, explores how the arts can connect with other sectors that want and utilize creativity, and invests in innovative projects to spark new, collaborative ideas. ("Grants")

With collaborators from agriculture, business and economic development, science, technology, healthcare, community, education, environment, military, and transportation sectors, this NEA grant is successfully bringing diverse groups together to create cross-sector work across the nation.

On a state level, California is playing a progressive role in steering this movement. For example, the James Irvine Foundation is pursuing goals of "promoting engagement in the arts for all Californians" with their New California Arts Fund (NCAF). This multi-year funding opportunity helps

arts nonprofits move arts engagement to the core of who they are and what they do. [They] provide a combination of support for organization capacity building and for arts engagement programming that encourages and expands participation in the arts among California's growing and diverse communities. ("Who We Fund")

After seeding over one hundred experiments in new research methods and arts participation models, the NCAF has helped fourteen grantee-partners give "voice and visibility to the

millions of Californians who are cut off from economic and political opportunity” (“Strengthening the Practice”).

Although many other national initiatives and sources of funding could be mentioned, this trending movement towards inclusion and the budding interest from funders is by no means exclusive to Los Angeles or California. However, with one of the stronger creative economies in the nation, (Los Angeles County Economic Development Corporation), the city is home to numerous, diverse arts organizations and funders -a distinction that helped establish the region as a focus for the research entailed in producing this paper. The many organizations transcending tradition and operating outside of the typical settings within Los Angeles are highlighted because they are strong examples of a broader trend that can be found elsewhere.

The Community Impact Arts Grant

More locally-focused, the Los Angeles County Arts Commission provides the Community Impact Arts Grant (CIAG). As an early adopter of this practice to support art in all aspects of the community, the Los Angeles County Arts Commission (LACAC) is a prime example of how funders are beginning to shift their focus. When LACAC began to recognize that a growing number of non-arts organizations were applying for arts funding through their Organizational Grant Program and being turned away due to having a mission outside the arts, they realized the immense need and opportunity to nurture arts experiences with a more organic approach. Laura Zucker, LACAC’s Executive Director, states that the new Community Impact Arts Grant “addresses a key need in our region to recognize and support the more complex arts ecology of LA County by increasing access

and strengthening the quality of arts programming wherever it happens” (“Arts Commission Announces New Funding Opportunity”).

In the Fall of 2015, LACAC launched the Community Impact Arts Grant after being approved for funding from the National Endowment for the Arts. Over the course of three years, the Commission will award \$1.5 million dollars of arts-specific funding to arts programming provided by local social service and community organizations. While arts organizations are not eligible for this grant on their own, they can benefit from this new grant opportunity by collaborating with a social service organization that is applying for it. To ensure that these partnerships are genuine and conducted for the community, rather than for funding incentives, LACAC only awards this grant to organizations with a minimum of two consistent years of experience producing arts programming (Gaspar-Milunovic, Interview).

This grant is an example of a new opportunity for the arts to validate their worth, although if nonprofit arts organizations do not take notice of the shifting priorities of funders like LACAC, it could be a missed opportunity for them. “Most funding for the field comes from both public and private sources earmarked for the arts. Some funding comes from sources with non-arts objectives that can be achieved through the arts, such as youth development or city livability” (Hasse). Increasingly, already scarce funding that was previously designated for the arts is now being spent outside the field; and with a growing number of grant programs like LACAC’s, arts organizations must acknowledge these trends, pursue new models, and initiate collaborative community work with other local groups in order to increase access to new funding sources and demonstrate their value to funders.

Chapter III

INTEGRATING ARTS PROGRAMMING

The nature of every organization is unique and every relationship and program is going to be as well; because of this, there is no single, celebrated model for pursuing the integration of arts programming.

Arts groups around the world are responding to the changing landscape of arts participation with innovative programs that actively engage the public in a myriad of ways. ...Extraordinarily diverse in nature, scale and scope, these practices defy clear categorization. Yet, their underlying purposes and structures provide clues to an emerging conceptual model for participatory arts practice. (Brown et al. 14)

To illustrate what this might look like in practice, Figure 1 on the next page displays several types of partnerships and projects to demonstrate the vast possibilities that exist for arts organizations working outside their realm. This chart depicts the inclusive group of collaborators that were studied in the Community Partnerships for Cultural Participation Initiative mentioned in Chapter 2—many similar projects were uncovered during this research. While it is an extensive list, it is not an exhaustive one. There are no limitations to the types of projects and partners that can participate in this work.

<u>TYPES OF GROUPS AND PROJECTS INCLUDED IN FIELD RESEARCH</u>		
Types of Non-Arts Projects	Types of Arts Partners	Types of Projects
Schools and Libraries (5 projects)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural council • Musical theatre/ dance company • Arts incubator or Artist colony • Visual arts gallery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arts in curriculum • Artists' residency programs • Summer dance camp • Theatrical performance series
Housing and Community Development Organizations (5 projects)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Art and performance gallery • Art college • Immigrant museum • Theatre company • Latino arts and cultural center • Large art museum • City cultural affairs department 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth development and cultural tourism • Community oral histories • Youth-focused art gallery • Business and cultural promotion • Community mural project
YMCA's and Boys and Girls Clubs (4 projects)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large theatre company • Oral history center • Photography training studio • Dance company • Large performing arts center 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cross-neighborhood and oral history program • Mural and banner project • After-school dance program • Summer Shakespeare camp • Musical concert by developmentally disabled adults and teens
Religious Congregations (4 projects)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local art commission • Rural heritage association • History museums • Art promoters • Large orchestra 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preservation of religious artifacts • Musician residencies • Arts activities for children in public housing • Community-based play drawn from resident interviews

Figure 1: Types of Groups and Projects Included in Field Research (Walker 7)

Many of these types of projects can be considered examples of “Participatory Arts Practice” or “Active Arts Practice”, which are interchangeable terms used in the 2014 report *Getting In On The Act* to help define the “emerging conceptual model” previously mentioned (Brown et. al. 6). Other examples exist with different interpretations of arts programming, but this paper defines it based on the following definition from *Getting In On The Act*:

These terms refer to arts programs and activities in which the participant is involved in artistic production by making, doing or creating something, or contributing ideas to a work of art, regardless of skill level. The degree of creative control varies from minimal (e.g., learning a dance step) to maximal (e.g., choreographing an original dance step). The expressive nature of the activity is what makes it participatory, whether or not original work is created. (Brown et.al.6)

This type of programming provides increased participation craved by new audiences, engaging programming to serve the constituents of social service groups, and a means to increase access and expand community for arts organizations.

Getting In On The Act further breaks down this definition into two types of arts programming: audience- and participant-based. Audience-based programs contain “arts programs and projects that seek audiences beyond those who participate in the art-making”, while participant-based programs encompass “arts programs and projects whose primary purpose is to provide a fulfilling creative experience for those who participate” (Brown et al. 14). For arts organizations seeking to integrate this participatory or integrated arts programming with social service organizations, using this term secures the possibility to present and produce content while still preserving artistic integrity.

The Music Center in Los Angeles, a recipient of the previously mentioned NCAF fund, is a prominent example of an organization that is maintaining its artistic reputation while collaborating with a range of social service organizations to create interactive music-making, story-telling, and multimedia sessions with participants from diverse demographics. Since 2004, the Music Center has been “enlivening and activating individuals and spaces with arts activity –achieved as a result of working together” with community partners as part of their highly successful program, Active Arts.

Active Arts has held 450 public events for 77,300 participants with the support of over 5,700 volunteer hours. With a goal of establishing cross-sector partnerships in up to 18 Los Angeles neighborhoods, Active Arts has also “gone mobile,” according to staff, collaborating with like-minded organizations [throughout Los Angeles County]. Partners include a wide range of YMCAs, housing corporations, cultural service centers, senior centers, and others. With the development of a new website and the success of 24/7, the Music Center has also increased its virtual audience, including audiences outside Los Angeles. (“Active Arts”)

For thirteen years, Active Arts has been pursuing the integration of arts programming with community partners. It is recognized in *Getting In On The Act* as “a breakthrough in participatory arts programming” because of the enriching events and activities it produces for constituents.

The Music Center's Active Arts program is one example offered as a means of demonstrating an existing collaborative endeavor where an arts organization successfully expanded access and community through the integrated arts programming, but there are many options to discover.

Every arts group must find its own way through this new terrain. ...Some arts groups will make minor adjustments to time-tested programming formulas, while others will rewrite their mission statements and launch entirely new initiatives.

Time has shown that the art forms themselves are robust enough to accommodate new approaches to presentation and audience involvement. But art evolves in the hands of artists, curators and the institutions that fund their work. Will they see participatory practice as the dumbing down of the legacy of professional artistic production, or will they see it as a necessary complement? Arts groups who wish to expand their impact and garner additional community support will need to reconsider their role in the larger ecology of cultural literacy, participatory arts practice and professional production. Signs of a vibrant culture of active participation are all around us. (Brown et al. 13)

Essentially, when it comes to pursuing this cross-sector work, it is the wild west. The method, processes, and products of each venture or collaboration will vary, based on the missions and goals of each participating organization, but there is limitless potential for these groups to experiment and discover a model that works for them.

Chapter IV

CULTIVATING NEW RELATIONSHIPS

Working together, arts and other nonprofit social service groups have the potential to produce far more approachable, pertinent, and sustainable work for their community than they can do alone. By cultivating new relationships and integrating original programming, arts organizations welcome additional opportunities for arts engagement as well as root themselves in their community. By not only expanding how the public accesses art, but who can access it as well, both arts organizations and communities benefit. Certain precautions and risks, however, must be considered.

What is at Stake

Before initiating any new relationship, and in addition to considering the potential benefits, it is important that organizations consider what is at stake when it comes to any new venture. “Partnerships can be a powerful tool for strengthening cultural participation and expanding audiences. But partnerships are tools; they are not ends in themselves. Partnerships are not appropriate for every task, and they will not work if used incorrectly” (Ostrower, “The Reality Underneath the Buzz of Partnerships” 40). Often, leveraging networks and working with other organizations will yield positive results for each participating organization. However, despite the best of intentions, pursuing a new collaboration or venture can also produce unsuccessful results. Figure 2 below thoroughly

illustrates how the characteristics of arts and non-arts groups can potentially be perceived as an asset or liability, providing a helpful chart for organizations to review before pursuing this work as well as throughout the process.

<u>ATTRIBUTES OF ARTS AND NON-ARTS ORGANIZATIONS, PHRASED AS PERCEIVED POTENTIAL ASSETS AND LIABILITIES</u>		
Perceived Potential Assets		Perceived Potential Liabilities
Arts Organizations		
Reputation	Creativity; insight; cultural conservation and innovation.	Elitism; insularity; narrow self-interest.
Constituency	Elite patrons and donors. Strong attachments formed by subscribers and other patrons.	Only focused on arts; appeal only to elite or <i>avant garde</i> , lack of community support.
Capability	Staff artistry; cultural awareness; performance or gallery space; connections to arts and cultural funders.	Limited to specific types of performance or exhibition space; reliance on individuals with rare skills or talent.
Mission	Arts and cultural creation or preservation. Emphasis on quality of art.	Inflexibility in pursuit of creative excellence and artistic control.
Non-Arts Organizations		
Reputation	Dedicated and hardworking staff; advocated for the least fortunate.	Self-righteous; suspicion of creative ideas and approaches.
Constituency	Minority and low-income communities and adherents to social causes; diverse support from foundations, government, and individuals.	Demands for social programming; resistance to departures from customary activities; hamstrung by community process and pull of multiple interests.
Capability	Knowledge of program services and education models and practices; ownership of facilities	Overworked and underfunded.
Mission	Mission of social and community improvement. Emphasis on efforts to help least advantaged.	Sense of entitlement to public and community support.

Figure 2: Attributes of Arts and Non-Arts Organizations, Phrased as Perceived Potential Assets and Liabilities (Walker 8)

The report *Arts and Non-Arts Partnerships* breaks down potential risks involved with new relationships into three main categories: capacity risk, commitment risk, and culture risk. “Capacity risk refers to the inability of partners to carry out assigned tasks in a given partnership” (Walker 10). If one organization does not have the resources or means to accommodate the programming or its constituents, then a successful partnership will be difficult to accomplish.

Commitment Risk refers to “insufficient motivation by one or more partners to carry out an obligation” (Walker 10). This most commonly occurs when organizations have different priorities for partnering. The wrong partner in a collaborative venture has the potential to compromise the integrity of programming.

Arts organizations need to recognize that non-arts organizations often have processes developed specifically to promote community engagement and client participation. Artists accustomed to having full artistic control may view these processes as compromising their artistic integrity. But if the legitimate requirements of non-arts organizations are not accommodated, the anticipated increases in community visibility and involvement cannot be expected to occur. (Walker 9)

If organizations do not make their goals and intentions clear from the beginning, it is likely that the partnership will result in miscommunication and disappointment.

Finally, “Culture Risk refers to differences across organizations that can disrupt smooth working relationships between arts and non-arts partners” (Walker 10).

For example,

A community social services agency sought to nurture professional artistic talent within the immigrant community it served by sponsoring photographic documentation of Latino foodways, rituals, customs, and aspects of everyday life. Its historical society partner eagerly agreed to curate and present the resulting work as a way to diversify participation in its own offerings and to improve the quality of its programs. However, the non-arts partner did not know that a professional exhibit can take a year or more to produce and was initially confused by what seemed to be indifference on the part of its larger partner. Tension around the delay had to be defused, which required the non-arts partner to learn about the curatorial process, understand why it was important for the project, and explain it to an expectant community. (Walker 11)

This last risk can be more difficult to avoid, as the culture of each organization and industry are more imbedded and not always easy to initially recognize.

Although these challenges may not always be avoidable, they are all able to be overcome. “Each new relationship demands its own careful calibration of how it should be structured based on the objectives, rules, expectations, and intentions of the partners” (Ferris and Williams 1). As with any program, time, money, and reputation are on the line. Organizations should always take these three risks and challenges into consideration to best prepare for and assess the potential for success when pursuing a new endeavor.

A Mission-First Mindset

To avoid these risks and challenges, arts organizations should assess their mission to assure that community work aligns with their goals. Arts administrators and leaders of arts organizations can evaluate their level of readiness by considering the following steps.

The first step is to determine whether collaboration will help achieve the organization's mission and if the practice reflects its core values. At this stage (sic) you must consider why your organization exists. If it is simply to present or preserve works of art but not to expand the ways in which audiences participate or benefit, full scale collaboration is probably not the best approach. In this case (sic) targeted alliances with others that can help attract new audiences may be of use. If, however, the stated mission includes words such as community, outreach, expand, or educate, collaborating probably should be part of your organizational culture and practice. (Flood and Vogel 9)

When pursuing new programming in collaboration with other groups, it is essential that these relationships stem from a shared or relatable mission, otherwise a reevaluation or broadening of mission is necessary. As a nonprofit organization with an obligation to serve the public, collaborative community work should not fall outside of the mission. However, an evaluation of the mission should always be conducted prior to the addition of any new programming.

The Actors' Gang, previously mentioned for their expanded outreach efforts, demonstrates how morphing a mission can clarify and express a more accurate reflection of an organization's revised goals. When the Gang decided to launch the Prison Project,

their mission changed from creating “bold, original works for the stage and daring reinterpretations of the classics” to incorporate their desire to expand access and community. Their current mission reads:

Our mission is to present new, unconventional and uncompromising plays and dynamic reinterpretations of the classics, to restore the ancient sense of the stage as a shared sacred space, to introduce theatre to children and help them find their own creative voices, and to bring the freedom of self-expression to the incarcerated. (“About Us”)

In order to expand in a new direction, it was necessary for this company’s mission to reflect its new goals. Organizations hoping to pursue new programming can do as the Actors’ Gang did to avoid mission creep.

Although nonprofit arts organizations can also benefit from corporate or for-profit partnerships for very similar reasons, social service organizations were the focus for this research because, as fellow nonprofits, these groups share similar needs and structures as well as the equivalent responsibilities. Collaboration amongst them should be considered crucial to create inclusive, dynamic programming.

Benefits

New relationships provide an opportunity to share an organization’s mission, enrich current programming, inspire new work, and immerse more people in creative activities. Research on arts engagement from the James Irvine Foundation discovered “a wide range of motivations at work” in their examination of over seventy examples of active arts programs (Brown et al. 11).

When arts organizations begin to operate outside their sector, they can benefit from diversifying their reach and means of access. Some arts groups see active arts programs as a means of gaining a more favorable profile in the community or as a long-term investment in audience development. Others use active arts programming to cultivate donors. While any number of secondary benefits may accrue to the institution, participatory arts programs are intrinsically worthwhile, and essential to a healthy arts ecosystem (Brown et al. 11). Although the association between participatory arts practice and increased attendance is positive, it is a byproduct of an expressive, fulfilling experience rather than a direct result.

Cornerstone Theatre Company, another one of the fourteen NCAF grantees, is a strong example of an arts organization that is utilizing community-driven networking to involve an array of social service groups in its work and increase engagement. With its mission to “make new plays with and about communities” (“About”), this Los Angeles-based company works throughout the country on various projects with a large and diverse constituency: from religious and homeless organizations to local schools and senior centers. Through their current program, the Hunger Cycle, this organization is partnering with at least forty-three diverse community groups in the next six years, including:

low-income families with little or no access to healthy food options; migrant workers; urban and rural farmers; food distributors; supermarket workers; consumers; food justice activists; and cafeteria and food service industry workers to present plays addressing food equity and addiction, farming and gardening. (“The Hunger Cycle”)

Cornerstone Theatre strives to benefit and serve communities that are typically limited in terms of arts access, such as the homeless, but the organization prides itself on attracting patrons, participants, and donors from every aspect of the community. Through their work, this company appeals to and engages a dynamic range of community members, allowing them to get involved with a civic issue in a hands-on theatre experience.

The James Irvine Foundation's report, *Investing in Cultural Participation and Financial Sustainability*, states that the "organizations that were most successful in diversifying their audiences did so through partnering with other community groups" (Harder + Company 2). Arts and non-arts organizations tend to attract differing constituencies, with social service organizations often serving populations that are typically considered difficult to reach for arts groups. Therefore, working with social service groups allows arts organizations to widen community reach and expand to populations that can benefit from arts programming. "For arts agencies, the primary benefits from non-arts partnerships were increased community awareness of their mission and services and improved outreach and involvement" (Walker 9). Exposure to new constituents will increase networks since new relationships generate new populations for arts organizations, including: volunteers, audiences, donors, funders, and participants.

The Heid Duckler Dance Theatre (HDDT) in Los Angeles is an example of how an organization improved outreach and involvement through partnerships. For their *Expulsion* series, this performing group has created dynamic offerings for and with very different communities. As described on the company's website, *Expulsion* "uses performance as a means of community organizing and public engagement. [It is] a

collaborative performance that partners with local companies to tell stories of home, origins, and immigration, using vacant lots across the city as its stage”.

As part of another program, Duck Tales, the Heidi Duckler Dance Theatre produces an “intergenerational program between seniors and teens. The seniors share, with their younger collaborators, stories about their past. The teenagers then create choreography inspired by the stories and based on objects and imagery from those stories” (“Education”). The organization has developed relationships with at least twelve community organizations to collaborate on this one program alone, including but not limited to the local school district, a few retirement communities, two Boys and Girls Clubs, and Sony Pictures Entertainment.

The Expulsion and Duck Tales series are two examples within one organization that portray how arts programming can be integrated with other local organizations to establish new entry points for arts access. Through these programs, HDDT has created new opportunities for the community to access the company’s work. Other performing and visual arts organizations can use this company as an example of how to create work in their own community.

In addition to expanding access and community, there are other benefits tied to building these cross-sector relationships that both arts and social service organizations can experience and profit from.

For non-arts agencies, the fundamental benefit of partnership was the creation of quality programming. This, in turn, led to increased community and client involvement, improved public reputations, and more active constituent support.

Schools and human service agencies, for example, used arts partners to help engage students or clients and get them to participate more actively in their services. (Walker 9)

More quality programming is likely to improve participation rates and result in the opportunity for increased exposure; more visibility within the community can enhance public perception for these organizations. This increased participation, public perception, and support for improved programming benefits the arts sector because it is evidence that the arts play a vital role in community life.

The primary benefit shared between arts and non-arts groups is the creation of stronger, more quality programming with professional guidance from their respective partner. Artists offer their professional expertise while social service professionals educate and inform artists on working with their various clientele. Through the exchange of professional expertise, both the arts and social service organizations are better equipped to create quality programming on par with each industry's standards. Since each group is part of a different sector, they bring fresh, individual qualities to the relationship with less fear of competition.

Another perk of partnerships is access to a wider pool of funding opportunities; however, pursuing partnerships should never be solely based on the incentive of funding alone. "When a grantee seeks to secure funds rather than partner to build participation, the results are unlikely to be greater participation" (Ostrower, *Cultural Collaborations* 18).

These endeavors require the investment of time and money, so when the motivation for them is purely for monetary gain, organizations are usually disappointed with the outcome. Ostrower shares the following example in *Cultural Collaborations*.

An organization partnered to obtain a cultural participation-building grant. The organization really wanted money to pay a staff member, but felt partnership funds would be easier to obtain (and indeed the foundation requires partnership). Not surprisingly, the organization had little information about the value their project provided to the target audience, since participation building was not really the goal. (18)

To experience the full scope of benefits from these partnerships, arts organizations must be genuinely motivated by the desire to expand access and community, rather than the desire to generate additional income and support from funders. The benefit of shared resources increases efficiency and improves sustainability efforts over time, but it is important to note that "organizations that are successfully diversifying their participants have committed fully for mission-related reasons, not expedient financial ones" (Sidford et al. 11). It is imperative to remember that this work is about mission, not money.

Conclusion

The current challenge is to simultaneously maintain our artistic and cultural integrity while being of service to individuals and communities in tangible and meaningful ways. Economic crisis and greater awareness of the principles of sustainability are pushing all sectors to re-think how to deploy critical resources, the most vital being human creativity and knowledge, to meet their goals. Nonprofit organizations, by their very nature, must evolve according to the needs and resources in their communities. ...The reality is that more can be accomplished by collective work. (Flood and Vogel 5)

For the past two decades, it has been difficult for arts nonprofits to attract new and diverse audiences as well as secure substantial support. Today, new funds are becoming increasingly available for collaborative work and both arts and social service groups are finding value and demonstrating an interest in one another's work. In response to the current, fragile state of the nonprofit arts sector and the rising opportunities for both funding and collaboration, artists and arts organizations can pursue more cross-sector work with social service organizations. The future of the arts relies upon increased access and deeper community ties.

The evident interest from non-arts organizations to incorporate artistic programming welcomes the opportunity for artists and arts administrators to initiate and pursue cross-sector collaborations. Collaborations of this nature will strengthen the ecosystem of support, better enabling artists and creative workers to generate artistic work, live sustainable lives, and contribute to their communities (Center for Cultural Innovation 5).

By working with nonprofit social service groups, who often reach certain populations that arts organizations are not always able to, the latter can expand access and community by cultivating relationships with social service organizations through the integration of arts programming.

Non-arts agencies can gain fresh, high quality programming that stimulates new thought, activity, and involvement among their constituencies. Arts and cultural organizations can broaden community awareness of their missions and services, thus increasing the public value of their activities and offerings. (Walker 13)

With respect to their mission and a comprehensive plan in place, both types of organizations can use cross-sector strategies to build relationships and create more relevant work that is truly for and by all the people in their community. Additionally, with a long history of this collaborative work to set a precedent, arts organizations do not necessarily have to invent something new. Inspiration for this work is plentiful.

In *Community Cultural Planning: A Guidebook for Community Leaders*, Craig Dreeszen wrote a poignant passage that still holds true today, despite having been written nearly twenty years ago, in 1998. It is as follows:

The arts must be integrated into our lives and the fabric of our communities if they are to continue thriving in our rapidly changing world. New models, structures, partnerships, and paradigms can emerge from our communities. Our history teaches us that by tapping our energy, creativity, inspiration and tenacity, we are up to these challenges.” (6)

Today, the arts must still be imbedded into our lives to secure a sustainable future in this even more rapidly changing world; new models, structures, partnerships, and paradigms

have emerged. Perhaps what has changed is that now, arts organizations and administrators must be up to these challenges. It is vital. Increasing access to an arts organization and expanding community by integrating arts programming can help these groups weave the arts into the fabric of their communities and produce sustainable work for generations to come.

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