

SIAP

Social Impact of
the Arts Project

University of Pennsylvania
School of Social Work

Culture Builds Community Evaluation

Summary Report

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 1997 the William Penn Foundation undertook the *Culture Builds Community* initiative as a way to link its commitments to urban communities and to the arts and culture in the Philadelphia region. The initiative eventually funded twenty-nine programs involving 38 organizations to test a variety of strategies to expand cultural participation and strengthen community-based cultural organizations. Some organizations received core operating support while others were funded to undertake programs focused on expanding cultural opportunities, enhancing artistic quality, or fostering community-based collaborations with a focus on young people.

At *Culture Builds Community*'s inception, the Foundation made a decision to evaluate the overall effectiveness of the initiative. In October 1997 the University of Pennsylvania's Social Impact of the Arts Project (SIAP) was awarded a grant to undertake the *Culture Builds Community* assessment. The assessment had two objectives: one, to provide a better understanding of the dynamics of the community cultural sector and, two, to determine whether *Culture Builds Community* achieved its objectives with respect to strengthening organizations, expanding cultural opportunities, and improving the role of cultural organizations in building community. This report presents the results of the assessment of *Culture Builds Community*.

The grant-making cycle spanned from June of 1997 through February of 2001. Overall, at the end of the initiative, the region's community cultural sector was much stronger than it had been three years earlier.

Community cultural organizations were fiscally and organizationally stronger.

Culture Builds Community grantees expanded their fiscal base over the course of the initiative, outperforming comparable (non-grantee) programs over the same period. Between 1996 and 2000, organizations that received support for core operations saw their revenues increase by an average of 42 percent. The performance of core-support grantees was attributable largely to their continued success in raising contributed income while diversifying the sources of these contributions.

Community cultural organizations expanded cultural participation.

Between 1998 and 2000, the overall level of participation among the core-support grantees increased by more than 30 percent, while registration in classes and workshops rose by 58 percent. Organizations expanded existing programs and started-up new ones, both on-site and off-site. Although grantees did not greatly increase participation in underserved sections of their neighborhoods, they continued to do a reasonably good job of serving historically excluded populations—especially, low-income residents and ethnic minorities—within their communities.

The community-building capacity of Culture Builds Community grantees improved significantly.

Between 1997 and 2000, the network of institutional relationships of core-support grantees greatly expanded. Not only did grantees develop more numerous relationships with community, regional, and cultural organizations; but also the variety of links became denser, and the quality of those relationships became deeper.

At the same time that *Culture Builds Community* grantees were achieving many of the outcomes anticipated by the Foundation, SIAP documented a range of key actors that are often overlooked in evaluating the potential of the community cultural sector for building community capacity. In addition to the nonprofit cultural organizations that were the primary focus of *Culture Builds Community*, these actors include:

- community-based artists, who serve a set of critical roles including teaching and administering but are often invisible in the organizational life of nonprofit cultural organizations;
- for-profit cultural firms, which are major providers of community cultural services and employers of artists;
- informal cultural programs that provide classes, mount exhibitions, and perform without having become chartered nonprofits; and
- non-arts organizations, including faith-based groups, which provide a range of cultural opportunities to community residents.

In addition, thanks to the diligence and cooperation of the grantees, the evaluation team was able to provide the first empirical documentation of the role of networks of relationships in sustaining the community cultural sector. Relationships among cultural providers, between cultural providers and other community-based organizations, and between artists and cultural providers—all play important roles in the existing cultural system.

Not surprisingly, there are a number of potential links that have not been realized. Most notable is the finding that *cultural participants* through the variety of their community engagement often are the only connections between institutions. In a similar vein, although artists and other cultural workers move frequently between for-profit and nonprofit cultural organizations, there are *few institutional links* between these sectors. These unrealized links represent a set of *structural holes* in the existing community cultural system.

Two important implications flow from the documentation of these networks of relationships. First, for the community cultural sector, the strength of these networks of relationships is often more important than the organizational strength of individual cultural providers. This suggests that an *ecological model* of community culture may be a better guide to policymaking than an orthodox focus on organizations. Second, the unrealized links that have been identified—the structural holes in the community cultural sector—are a potential domain of policy intervention that was largely outside of the *Culture Builds Community* framework.

In short, the *Culture Builds Community* assessment has documented that the Foundation's investment was successful in producing the set of clear, measurable outcomes that were anticipated at the initiative's inception. At the same time, the assessment suggests that *Culture Builds Community* focused its energy and resources on a small number of the potential *points of intervention* within the community cultural sector. As the Foundation and other cultural policymakers look to the future, the assessment suggests that a broader policy intervention framework would provide an even greater return on investments in community arts and culture.

Organization of the Report

The report on the Culture Builds Community assessment consists of five chapters.

Chapter One provides an overview of the *Culture Builds Community* initiative and the approach used for evaluation. It examines how the initiative grew out of the mission of the Foundation—in particular, the mission statement as modified in 1995—as well as the needs of the cultural sector. In addition, this chapter describes the structure of the initiative and provides a profile of the organizations that received grants. Chapter One concludes with a description of the methods used in the assessment and a description of the various types of data gathered and analyzed as part of that process.

Chapter Two uses *an ecological model* to describe the community cultural sector and the role it plays in Philadelphia area neighborhoods and the larger regional cultural system. It finds that the dominant *organizational* paradigm is often inappropriate to the community cultural sector and argues that focusing on the relationship between different *agents*. It finds, as well, that cultural policy has been unnecessarily narrow in its definition of the sector. Of course, official nonprofits play a central role, but it is shortsighted to equate the health of the community cultural sector with the organizational and fiscal health of official nonprofit organizations. This chapter concludes with a look at current challenges and opportunities of the community cultural sector and possible points of intervention that would allow the sector to function more effectively.

Chapter Three narrows its focus to the goals of *Culture Builds Community* and estimates of how well the initiative achieved the outcomes anticipated by the Foundation. The outcome assessment is based on three broad categories:

- organizational goals—the fiscal and organizational strength of grantees;
- artistic goals—the success of grantees in expanding opportunities for cultural participation and enhancing artistic quality; and
- community goals—improving community cultural providers’ role in building community capacity.

The chapter finds that the initiative had some success in all three areas. By the end of the initiative, the grantees as a group were better off fiscally than they had been in 1997. Levels of participation expanded substantially. The evaluation data support the case that the integration of grantees into neighborhood community-building grew considerably. The initiative’s grantees and managers can point to substantial successes.

It is important to note, however, that *Culture Builds Community* cannot take credit for all of the changes in the grantees’ organizational, artistic, and community roles. The design of the initiative made it impossible to differentiate what share of the changes observed was attributable to the intervention. The evaluation found that the improved fiscal health of grantees was shared by similar organizations that were not part of the initiative. The robust economy of the late 1990s probably accounts for a share of the expanded program participation among grantees. Although the evaluation demonstrated that the grantees became more “networked” during the initiative, no comparable data for other organizations are available that would allow an estimate of the initiative’s role in this process.

In addition, there is considerable ambiguity about the *mechanisms* through which the initiative contributed to these outcomes. The initiative managers, through technical assistance and workshops, spent considerable time on the organizational well being of the grantees but devoted relatively little time to the artistic and community goals. It appears that the major instrumentality for achieving success in these areas was “consciousness-raising.” By consistently putting forward a vision of community cultural providers as key players in building community capacity, *Culture Builds Community* succeeded in encouraging grantees to pursue this goal.

Chapter Four explores some of the lessons learned in the design and implementation of *Culture Builds Community*. Based on interviews with grantees, the management team, and Foundation staff, this chapter examines some of the strengths and weaknesses of the initiative. This chapter pays particular attention to a number of strengths identified—long-term funding, linking organizational outcomes to community impacts, and encouraging partnerships with “non-traditional” cultural providers—as well as some of the challenges faced by the initiative. Finally, the chapter explores the impact of the Foundation decision to hire external managers for the initiative.

Chapter Five uses a wide-angle lens to put the accomplishments and the lessons learned from *Culture Builds Community* into the broader ecological policy framework explicated in Chapter Two. Recent social changes—including the shift from bureaucratic to “enterprise” models of organizations and the increased importance of computer-mediated communication—have increased the sustainability of smaller, more flexible agents. The success of the community cultural sector lies in fostering a set of strong relationships rather than assuring the “immortality” of specific organizations. This chapter explores the need to move to policies that redefine the balance of *stability* and *innovation* in the *sustainability* of the community cultural sector.

SUMMARY REPORT

Introduction

In 1996 the William Penn Foundation decided to invest in a multi-year, interdisciplinary grantmaking program with a focus on community based cultural programs. The initiative, called *Culture Builds Community*, represented an innovation in its formulation of grant making in the arts and culture as a community capacity building initiative. The Foundation articulated two broad goals for the initiative: one, to build future audiences for the arts and culture and, two, to foster the community-building potential of community arts programs, especially in poor and disadvantaged areas of the Philadelphia region.

Between 1997 and 2001, the Foundation invested three million dollars in *Culture Builds Community*. Two- or three-year grants were awarded in five grant categories to twenty-nine programs involving 38 organizations. Other features of the initiative included external management by Partners for Livable Communities, a nonprofit organization based in Washington D.C. and its local Philadelphia representative; a technical assistance and workshop program for grantees coordinated by Partners; and an external evaluation undertaken by the University of Pennsylvania's Social Impact of the Arts Project (SIAP).

In its design for the evaluation, SIAP proposed two major strategies. First, the evaluation would include extensive research on the nature of the community cultural system and its connection with other institutional and demographic features of neighborhoods in metropolitan Philadelphia. Second, the evaluation would be based on a set of measurable outcomes related to program goals. In other words, rather than focusing on how well individual grantees achieved their stated objectives, the purpose of the evaluation was to determine how well the initiative as a whole impacted the community cultural sector and what lessons could be drawn for future efforts at community cultural policy making.

Chapter One. Overview of the Initiative

The William Penn Foundation implemented *Culture Builds Community* after extensive staff and board discussion during 1996. In 1995 the Foundation had adopted a revised mission statement that placed added emphasis on the Foundation's responsibility for addressing issues of children, youth, and families and community revitalization. *Culture Builds Community* addressed the concerns in two ways: a large share of the cultural programs funded were focused on young people, and the initiative explicitly linked funding of cultural programs to building community capacity in Philadelphia area neighborhoods.

Foundation staff translated *Culture Builds Community's* two overarching goals—building audiences and building communities—into a variety of specific objectives. For purposes of the assessment, these have been grouped into three broad categories:

- organizational goals—the fiscal and organizational strength of grantees;
- artistic goals—the success of grantees in expanding opportunities for cultural participation and enhancing artistic quality; and
- community goals—improving the role of community cultural providers in building community capacity.

Structure of *Culture Builds Community*

Culture Builds Community awarded grants under the following five categories:

- *Core Operating Support* was awarded to ten “exemplary” community cultural organizations in the Philadelphia region. These three-year grants represented a set percent of the organization's operating budget for fiscal year 1996 (ten percent of budget for Year 1, eight percent for Year 2, and six percent for Year 3). Although grantees identified key issues that they planned to address during the cycle, the thrust of these awards was to provide a stable source of funding that would enable the organizations to move forward organizationally and as leaders in their neighborhoods.
- The *Earned Income Demonstration* category resulted in planning grants awarded to two of the Core Support grantees and an implementation grant awarded to one organization only.
- *Artistic Enhancement* awards were granted to nine community-based organizations with the goal of improving the artistic quality of existing cultural programs. Awards were a total of \$22,000 over two years. Grantees included both cultural organizations and social service agencies that offered cultural programs as part of their broader program. Virtually all grantees in this category focused on programming for youth.
- *Youth Access* awards were granted to six community-based organizations with the goal of broadening cultural opportunities for young people. Awards were a total of \$33,000 over three years. As with the *Artistic Enhancement* awards, grants were made to both cultural and social service organizations.

- *Youth Collaboration* awards were granted to four partnerships with the goal of linking community-based cultural and youth-serving organizations. The smallest collaboration consisted of two organizations; the largest included four partners. Each award was a total of \$132,000, to be split among all partners, over the three years.

A total of \$2,234,576 was awarded in grants under these five categories. Core operating support and earned income awards represented 59 percent of the total; youth collaboration awards represented 24 percent; and the program grants (artistic enhancement and youth access) represented 17 percent of total funding.

Profiles of grantees

Culture Builds Community grantees were largely small or mid-sized nonprofit organizations. The annual income of the twenty community cultural programs funded by the initiative ranged from \$47,000 to \$700,000. Nine grantees were large social service agencies that offer arts and cultural programs as part of their broader social services programming.

The vast majority of grantees were located within the city of Philadelphia, although several were based in Montgomery County, Delaware County, and Camden, New Jersey. As Figure 1.1 shows, most were located in poor neighborhoods with a relatively large minority population. There were a few exceptions: Abington Art Center, located in a well-off section of Montgomery County, focused on outreach to predominantly African American neighborhoods in its service area. Darlington Art Center in Delaware County received project funding to collaborate with a community-based group in Chester City.

Of the ten core support grantees, six define their primary service area to include a higher percentage of African Americans than Philadelphia as a whole (Figure 1.2). Two of the grantees are located in the city's major Latino neighborhood. The three South Philadelphia grantees represent neighborhoods that include a sizable and growing Asian American population. Perhaps the most striking feature, given that African Americans represent 45 percent of the city's population and 22 percent of the metropolitan area's population, was the lack of grantee organizations that were directed by African Americans, located in an African American neighborhood, and serving a predominantly African American constituency. Only one of the core-support grantees and a handful of the program grantees conformed to this description.

Data and methods

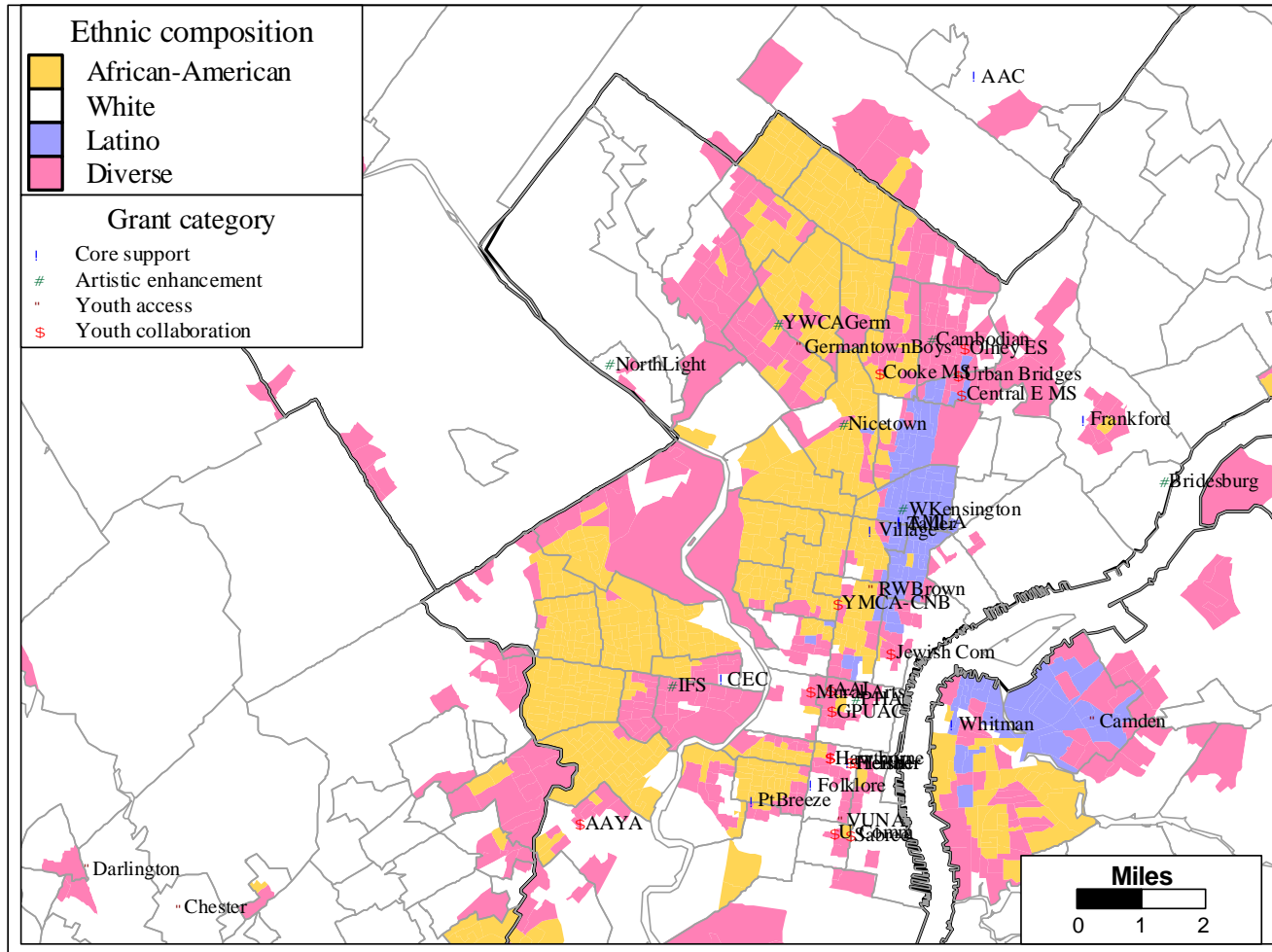
The *Culture Builds Community* assessment used a multiple methods strategy to document the life history of the initiative. Much of the evidence cited in this report comes from extensive interviews and surveys involving grantees, participants, artists, and critical actors in the grantees' neighborhoods. In addition, the assessment team interviewed initiative management, both at the Foundation and Partners for Livable Communities, and convened focus groups that allowed grantees to discuss what worked and what did not work based on their participation in the initiative. Finally, the assessment team used observations at community arts centers, exhibits, performances, and classes to gain a deeper understanding of the dynamics of the community cultural sector and the effects of *Culture Builds Community*.

1.1 Demographic characteristics of *Culture Builds Community* grantees

Organization name	Pct African-American	Pct Asian-American	Pct Latino	Percent Non-family households	Median family income	Poverty rate	Percent without HS degree	Percent managers/Professionals	Percent vacant structures
Core support/earned income									
Abington Art Center	7	2	1	26	57,018	3	14	38	3
AMLA	24	5	35	24	21,963	35	50	15	11
CEC	80	2	2	38	18,997	38	44	25	20
Fleisher Art Memorial	13	5	3	35	27,424	20	46	24	12
FrankfordStyle	12	1	4	34	29,355	16	42	16	9
Phila. Folklore Project	53	5	2	38	22,237	30	46	25	14
Point Breeze PAC	77	7	1	32	20,452	34	50	18	15
Taller Puertorriqueno	35	1	53	21	13,172	54	65	10	15
Village of Arts & Humanities	69	0	26	22	13,714	59	60	14	21
Walt Whitman CAC	56	2	29	24	19,687	37	50	14	12
Artistic enhancement									
Bridesburg B&G	0	0	0	28	33,243	10	49	17	4
Nicetown B&G	93	1	1	33	21,621	29	44	19	17
W Kensington B&G	25	1	62	20	13,184	51	66	7	13
Cambodian Assoc.	15	16	17	26	30,823	16	37	19	6
Chester Springs Studio	0	0	1	12	78,200	2	6	51	6
Intercultural Family Services	20	15	4	70	26,964	42	12	39	11
North Light Com. Center	6	2	1	38	36,987	8	31	25	10
Phila. Housing Authority	9	9	2	66	64,552	19	13	56	13
Germantown YWCA	73	1	1	44	31,235	21	27	36	15
Youth access									
Germantown B&G	73	1	1	44	31,235	21	27	36	15
Camden Scl of Musical Arts	56	2	29	24	19,687	37	50	14	12
Chester-Swarthmore	4	3	4	30	74,852	3	4	56	4
RW Brown CC	81	3	7	30	14,883	52	54	23	23
Darlington Fine Art Center	6	2	1	20	59,191	3	12	49	5
Vietnamese United	15	6	4	40	26,347	22	44	29	12
Youth collaboration									
Urban Bridges	15	16	17	26	30,823	16	37	19	6
Central E MS	5	5	15	28	28,554	17	42	15	8
Cooke MS	78	7	5	23	25,513	24	37	16	15
Olney ES	15	16	17	26	30,823	16	37	19	6
Gr. Phila. Urban Affairs	9	9	2	66	64,552	19	13	56	13
Asian Art Initiative	9	9	2	66	64,552	19	13	56	13
Asian Am. Youth Assoc	21	4	1	30	28,149	20	40	15	8
YMCA-Columbia North	96	0	1	36	13,343	50	54	14	27
American Jewish Com.	13	2	14	38	29,249	24	46	24	13
Mural Arts Program	7	3	2	74	67,359	13	10	59	13
United Communities	8	5	2	31	25,062	20	52	17	8
Traci Hall	15	6	4	40	26,347	22	44	29	12
Sabree Youth	8	5	2	31	25,062	20	52	17	8
Hawthorne CC	15	6	4	40	26,347	22	44	29	12

Source: 1990 U.S. Census

1.2. Location of *Culture Builds Community* grantees, by ethnic composition of neighborhood



The assessment team also used a set of innovative quantitative methods to estimate the outcome measures incorporated into this report. Among the most important were:

- *Participation databases.* With the aid of the grantees, the assessment team secured data on individual participants in *Culture Builds Community*-associated activities. These data typically consisted of computer-readable listings of registrants and attendees as well as organizational mailing lists. Using geographical information systems (GIS) to identify place of residence, the assessment team determined whether the participants lived in the grantees' neighborhoods as well as the neighborhood characteristics of all participants.
- *Fiscal data.* The assessment team was able to secure financial and organizational data from the Center for Charitable Statistics at the Urban Institute. These data, covering the years 1996-2000, allowed comparison of the fiscal and organizational performance of grantees with similar organizations in the Delaware Valley. These data were supplemented with fiscal profile reports submitted annually by the grantees.
- *Community participation surveys.* During 1998 to 1999, the assessment team administered a mail survey to representative samples of *Culture Builds Community* participants to gather information on the range and level of participation in community activities by members of their household. The evaluation team used these surveys to assess levels of cross-participation, that is, the extent to which cultural participants engage in other community activities.
- *Artist data bases and surveys.* The grantees provided annually a listing of the artists involved in their program as teachers, performers, exhibitors, or supporters. The evaluation team used GIS methods to examine the location and neighborhood characteristics of individual artists and to estimate the extent to which individual artists were involved with more than one grantee. In addition, the team selected a systematic sample of these artists for a mail survey concerning their artistic goals, career, financial situation, and range of contacts with arts organizations.
- *Institutional networks.* Based on annual reports submitted to the Foundation and interviews with core-support grantees, the evaluation team was able to document the networks of relationships maintained by grantees to further their organizational and community goals. The team used *Pajek* software to analyze and to represent these networks graphically.

These specific *Culture Builds Community* databases were integrated into SIAP's broader database, which includes for the five-county metropolitan area:

- neighborhood census information from the 1980, 1990, and (eventually) 2000 enumerations;
- inventory of non-profit cultural providers;
- inventory of other types of non-profit social organizations;
- inventory of for-profit cultural firms; and
- estimates of regional and community participation from a cross-section of cultural providers.

Chapter Two. Dynamics of the Community Cultural Sector

The general thrust of arts policy in the United States has been toward what is referred to in policy circles as institutionalization: nurturing arts organizations, preventing existing organizations from failing, encouraging small organizations to become larger and large organizations to seek immortality . . . Policies of institutionalization and expansion encourage arts organizations to become larger, more bureaucratic, and more dependent on both institutional subsidy and earned income . . .

An alternative policy which would probably be more effective in stimulating innovation . . . would be to lower barriers to entry rather than attempting to ensure institutional immortality. To an extent, this would involve doing the opposite of what public agencies now do: focusing grants on new, unproven enterprises, discouraging expansion, investing in organizations with the expectation that many of them would expire.

Paul DiMaggio (from “Social Structure, Institutions, and Cultural Goods: The Case of the United States,” 1991)

The *Culture Builds Community* assessment affords a broad view of the dynamics of culture and communities in the Philadelphia region. It employed both qualitative and quantitative methods, used region-wide data as well as case studies, and tracked current thinking within cultural and community policy. The purpose of the study was to assess the success and shortcomings of *Culture Builds Community* as well as advance our understanding of the community cultural sector and highlight new opportunities for effective intervention.

As a result of these efforts, the evaluation team concluded the assessment with a much broader understanding of the character of the community cultural sector and the individual “agents” of which it is composed. It became apparent at an early stage that the whole of this sector is greater than the sum of the parts, both in terms of its capacities and its impacts on neighborhoods and the region. As a result, the team shifted the focus of the study from individual organizations to the ecology of the sector. With a view of community culture as an *ecosystem*, the relationships and networks become as important as the individual agents.

An ecological perspective allows one to reach a more balanced assessment of the sector’s strengths and weaknesses. For years much urban research has been preoccupied with the problems and deficits of urban communities; however, recent research has stressed that to understand community dynamics, one must start with a look at strengths and assets. This perspective is particularly important when studying the arts because of the strong relationship between level of cultural engagement and other measures of the quality of life in urban neighborhoods.

An ecological perspective also provides a better framework with which to judge the *sustainability* of the community cultural sector. Imagine if one judged the health of a forest by picking out ten trees and studying them over time. Eventually, researchers would reach the shocking conclusion that the forest is dying because the handful of trees

cannot last forever! Although *stability* is an important goal for many cultural organizations, organizational “immortality” is not the right starting point for community cultural policy. A healthy cultural sector must maintain a balance of stability and innovation. *Sustainability* of the community cultural sector must be defined as reaching this balance.

Neighborhood diversity and cultural engagement

Diverse neighborhoods are the soil within which the arts flourish. SIAP has identified three distinct, but interconnected, types of diversity:

- economic diversity—“pov-prof” neighborhoods with above average *poverty* and above average *professionals* in their labor force;
- ethnic diversity—neighborhoods in which no single ethnic group makes up more than 80 percent of the population; and
- household diversity—neighborhoods with above average numbers of *non-family* households.

Research on Philadelphia and other metropolitan areas—Atlanta, Chicago, and San Francisco—confirms that there are significant sections of these cities that are diverse on at least one of these dimensions. In fact, preliminary findings from the 2000 census confirm that diversity expanded significantly during the 1990s. For example, the proportion of Philadelphia residents who lived in an ethnically diverse neighborhood grew from 22 to 37 percent during the decade (Figure 2.1).

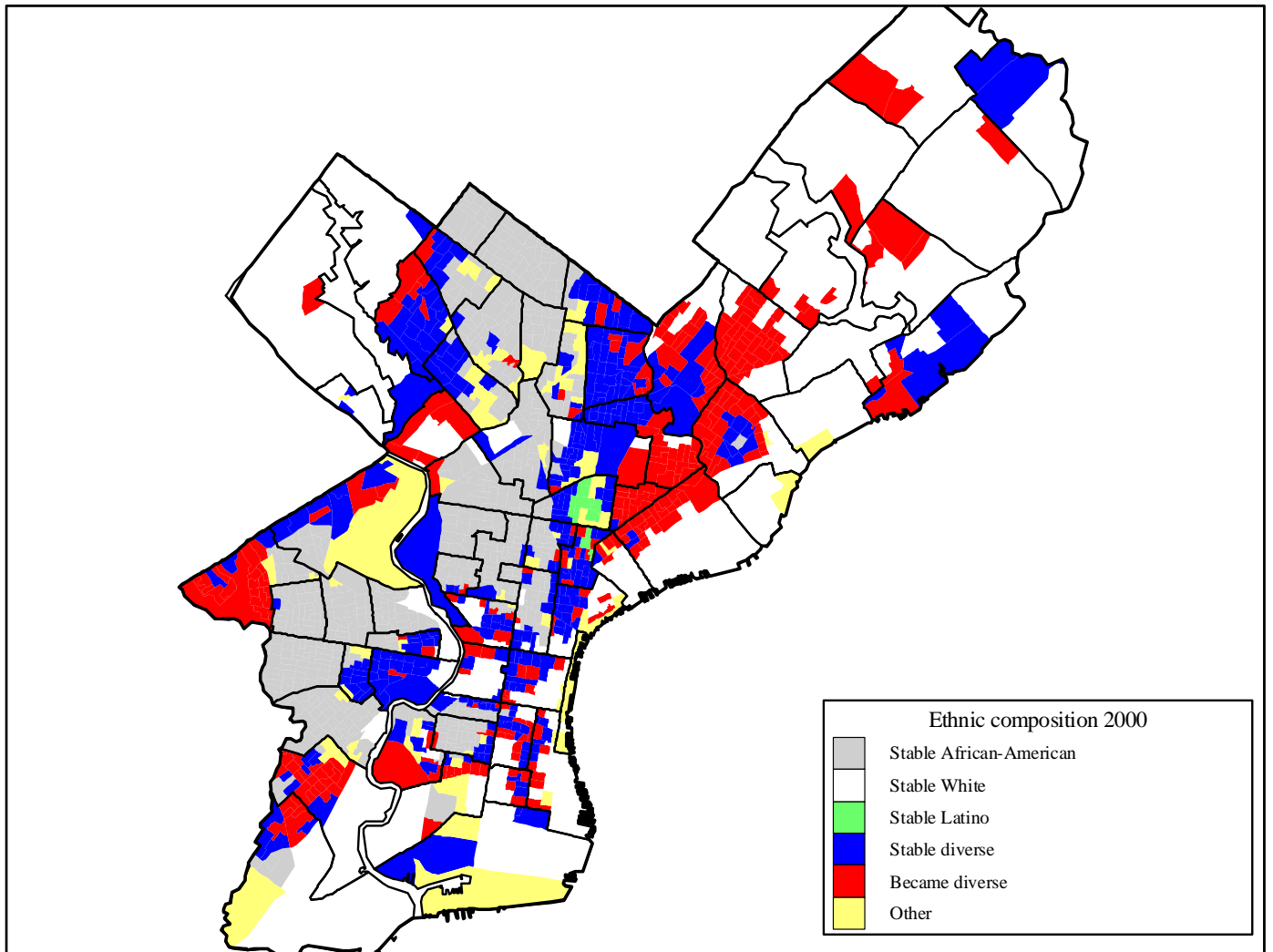
Diversity and cultural expression are mutually reinforcing. Diverse neighborhoods create a *milieu* in which experimentation and innovation can flourish. This is why heterogeneous neighborhoods are home to more cultural institutions than other areas, and why cultural participation rates are higher in these neighborhoods (Figure 2.2). At the same time, cultural participation provides a means through which diverse neighborhoods are strengthened. Diverse neighborhoods with many cultural organizations and high rates of participation are more likely to remain diverse.

While diversity is the context within which the community cultural sector operates, its strength derives from the extent to which the various agents that compose it form a cohesive cultural system. This network, represented in Figure 2.3, is composed of nonprofit cultural organizations, for profit cultural agents, artists and cultural workers, and cultural participants—as follows.

- *Nonprofit cultural organizations.*
 - “*Official*” *tax-exempt nonprofits* were the primary target of *Culture Builds Community*’s intervention strategies. Approximately 300 cultural organizations in metropolitan Philadelphia filed IRS-990 forms for all five years between 1996 and 2000.
 - *Informal cultural groups.* Many cultural groups operate without official status. They represent either new, emerging entities or long-standing associations that do not seek the benefits of a charter. Many of the other eight hundred nonprofit cultural providers in metropolitan Philadelphia are either

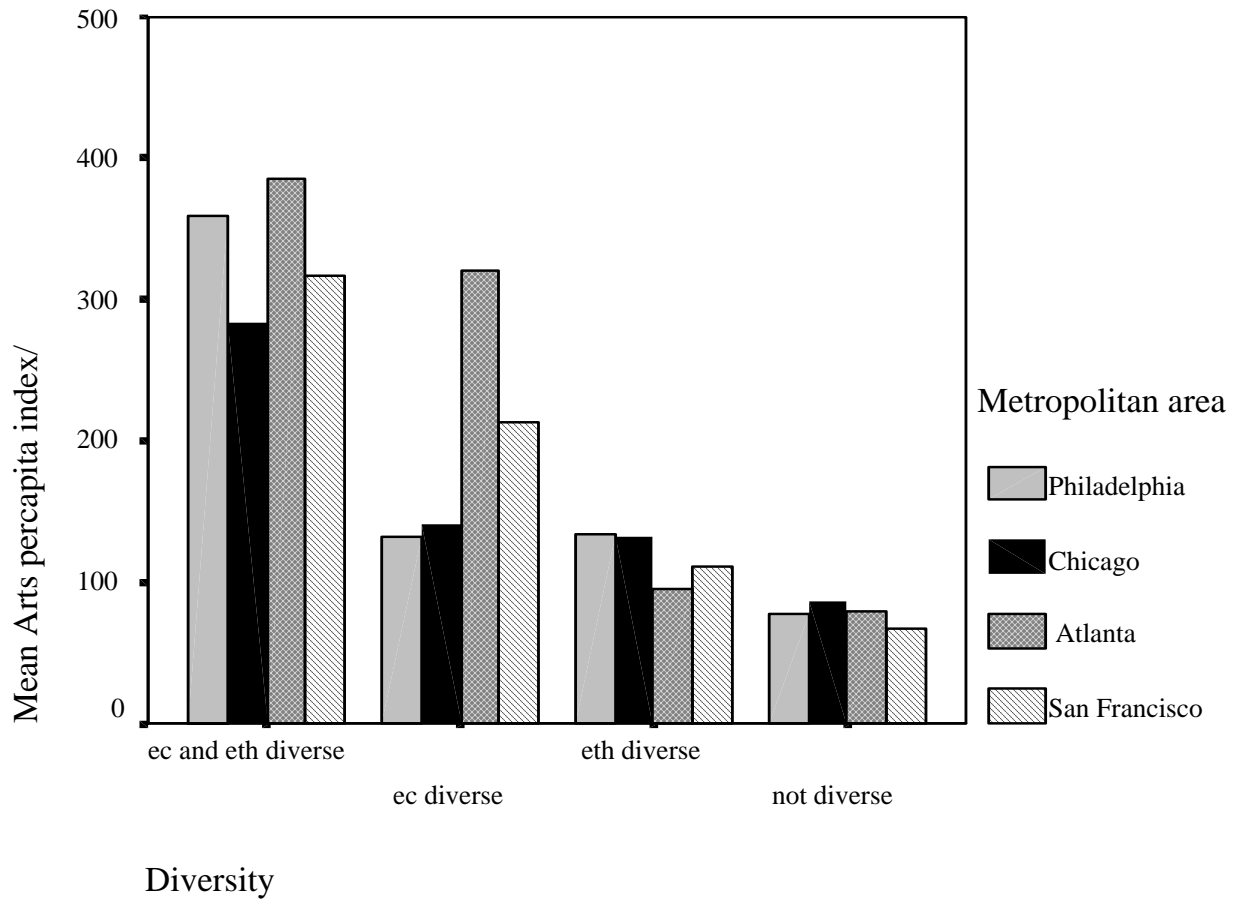
2.1. Ethnic composition of Philadelphia block groups, 1990-2000

The proportion of Philadelphians living in an ethnically diverse neighborhood increased from 22 to 37 percent during the 1990s



Source: 2000 U.S. Census

2.2. Cultural providers per capita, by diversity status, selected metropolitan areas, 1999

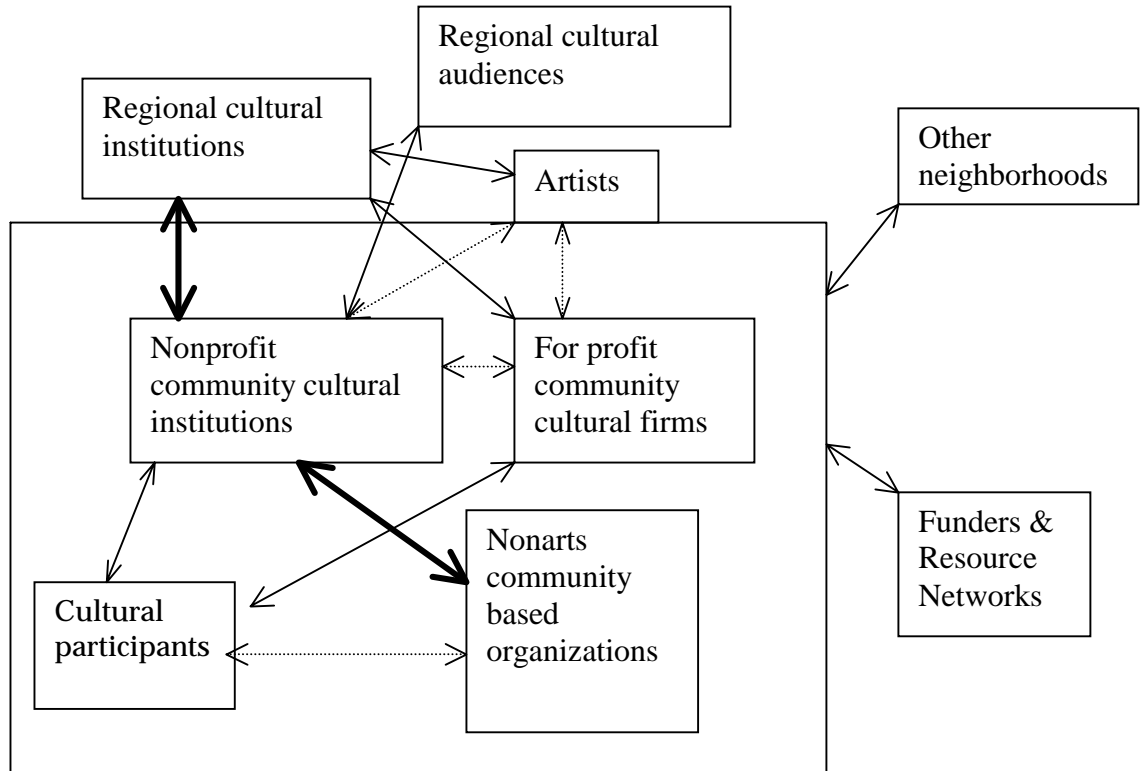


Note: metropolitan regional average=100, ec. diverse: above average poverty and above average proportion of professionals and managers in the block group's labor force; eth diverse: no ethnic group includes more than 80 percent of a block group's residents.

Source: Source: U.S. Treasury, Internal Revenue Service, master file of exempt-organization, March 1999; U.S. Census, Standard Tape Files, block group counts, 1990

2.3. Structure of the community cultural sector

The community cultural “ecosystem” includes a variety of “agents,” many of which operate “under the radar.”



informal cultural groups or tax-exempt organizations that are so small that they are not required to file IRS-990.

- *For profit cultural agents.* For-profit cultural firms are poorly connected to the rest of the cultural sector. SIAP's research suggests that for-profits fall into two groups:
 - an *established* sector of graphic designers, galleries, supports services, and the like that is well-connected to the regional nonprofit sector; and
 - a *populist* sector of small “dance academies” and music and art supply stores that give lessons, that is poorly connected to the community nonprofit sector, even when they occupy the same neighborhoods.
- *Artists and cultural workers.* Artists and other cultural workers, although central to organizational functioning, do not cast a long shadow. Most artists employed by community cultural providers are not staff workers, but consultants and contractors. Because they stitch together a livelihood from multiple jobs, artists are typically are not invested in a single organization. Yet, their organizational weakness is complemented by their network strength; because they work with so many cultural providers, they provide a potential avenue for reducing isolation and encouraging collaboration.
- *Cultural participants.* Often overlooked, cultural participants are critical to the functioning of the community cultural sector because they are often co-producers of cultural goods and because they serve as the audience. Regional cultural participants can be subdivided into two groups:
 - *mainstream participants* who are involved in major cultural organizations like the Philadelphia Orchestra and the Philadelphia Museum of Art; and
 - *alternative participants* who are involved with smaller, more innovative organizations like the Painted Bride Art Center or the Philadelphia Folksong Society.

Social networks and the arts

The community cultural sector is more than the sum of these different cultural “agents.” Networks of institutional relationships connect these agents, allow them to function more effectively, and provide means of communication and collaboration. Some of these networks are internal to the cultural system, including horizontal relationships that link similar types of agents (e.g., community arts centers) and vertical relationships that link community cultural agents to the regional cultural network. Other networks link cultural agents to non-arts institutions in the neighborhood and the region.

In addition to these institutional networks, participants and artists provide links between organizations of which organizational leaders are often unaware. For example, an extraordinarily high level of *cross-participation* exists between cultural and religious institutions but is not matched by institutional links. Similarly, many organizations are only vaguely aware of the role that “their” artists play in other nonprofit and for-profit cultural organizations.

There is substantial evidence that these various cultural networks are more durable than the organizations of which they are partially composed. Repeatedly, SIAP has discovered individual agents—artists, informal groups—that appear to “die” and then “resurrect” themselves in a new form. This ability of the networks to sustain the balance between *stability* and the imperative for *innovation* in the arts is one of the critical roles played by cultural networks and one of the reasons why they should serve as a major point of intervention for cultural policy.

How community arts and culture influence neighborhoods and the region

Few dispute the notion that the arts and culture do have a social impact. A detailed investigation of these impacts shows that many facets of the community cultural system build social fabric and community capacity in Philadelphia’s neighborhoods and across the region. For example:

- Cultural participants are more likely to see the quality of life in their community as “excellent.”
- Cultural participation may promote “collective efficacy”—the perception that community members can control their environment. This may explain why positive indexes of child welfare—including low truancy and juvenile delinquency—are strongly related to high levels of cultural participation in Philadelphia’s low-income neighborhoods (Figure 2.4).
- Cultural participation tends to reach across neighborhood boundaries by providing “bridges” across barriers of social class and ethnicity. This explains why 80 percent of community arts participants do not live in the neighborhood in which the organization they frequent is located.

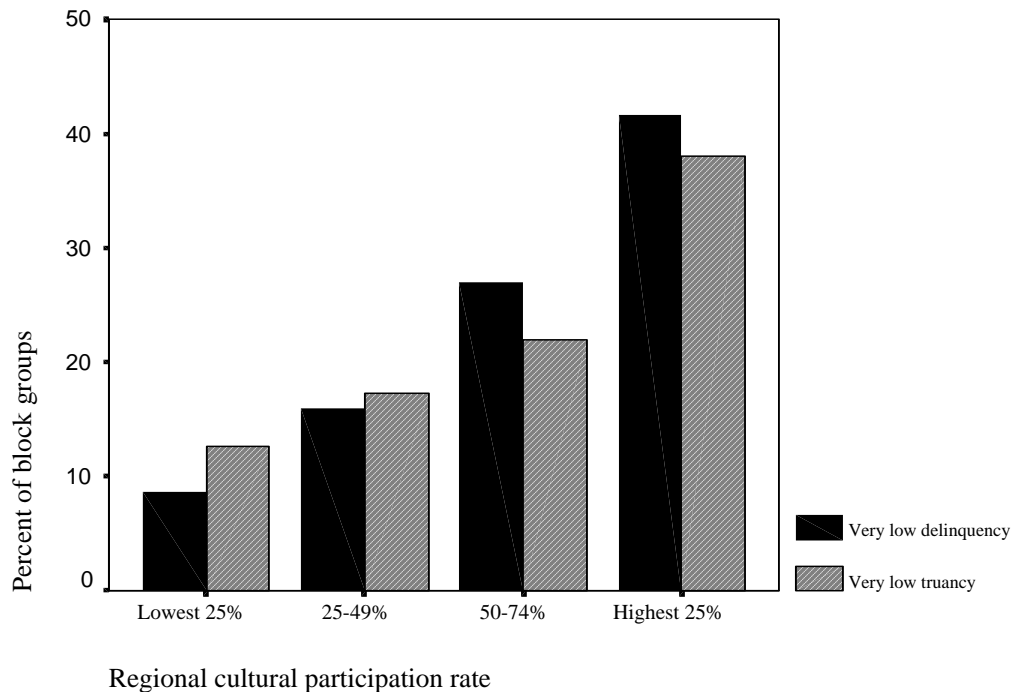
At the same time, there is substantial evidence that culture contributes to neighborhood revitalization. For example:

- During the 1980s, neighborhoods with a history of cultural engagement were significantly more likely to experience declines in poverty and increases in population than other neighborhoods. Philadelphia shared this relationship with a number of other cities (Figure 2.5).
- During the 1990s, neighborhoods that had high levels of cultural participation were more than three times as likely to experience population growth as areas with low participation (Figure 2.6).
- The presence of cultural organizations had a significant impact on the likelihood that a diverse neighborhood would remain diverse ten years later. The arts serve as one means of moving a neighborhood from accidental to intentional diversity.

The outward ripple effects of community cultural activity improve the lives of residents even if they have never taken an arts class or attended a performance. These effects are evident in the improved economic circumstances of their neighborhoods. They appear in the sense of community engagement and efficacy that cultural participation stimulates. They are redefining the meaning of community in Philadelphia and other cities through the stability of diverse neighborhoods. The value of the community cultural sector is

2.4. Prevalence of very low rates of delinquency and truancy, by regional cultural participation rate, highly disadvantaged block groups, Philadelphia 1995-1999

Among disadvantaged neighborhoods, those with high levels of cultural participation were more likely to have low rates of juvenile delinquency and truancy.



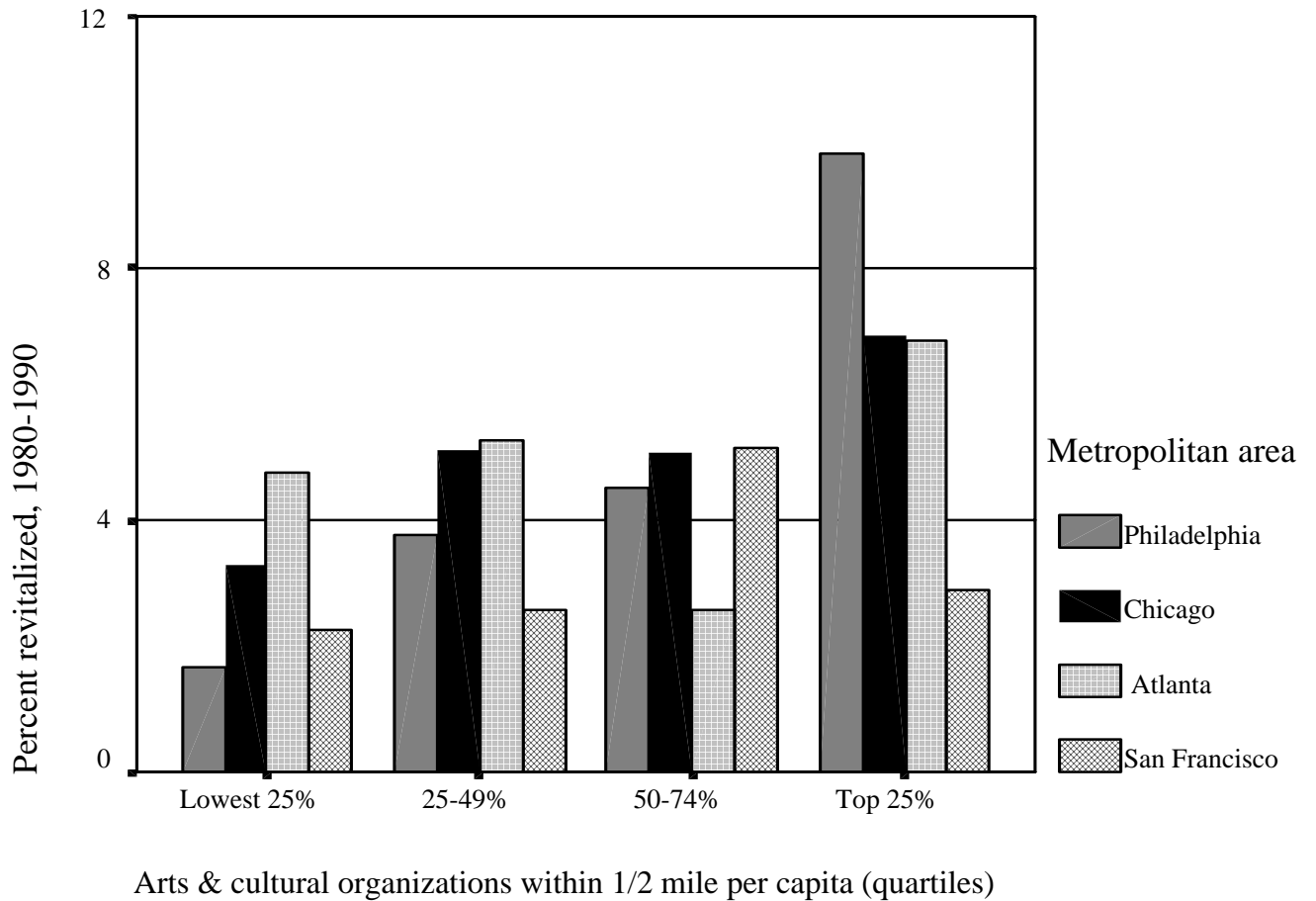
Notes.

1. "Highly disadvantaged block groups"—based on a factor analysis of 1990 census data that included: per capita income, poverty rate, unemployment rate, percent African-American, median rent, and female headed households as a percent of all households. Highly disadvantaged block groups were in the top quartile on this measure.

2. Delinquency and truancy rates. Based on average delinquent out-of-home placements (1995-1999) and truancy rates (1998) per 1,000 children ages 10-17. "Very low" rate placed the block group in the bottom quartile citywide.

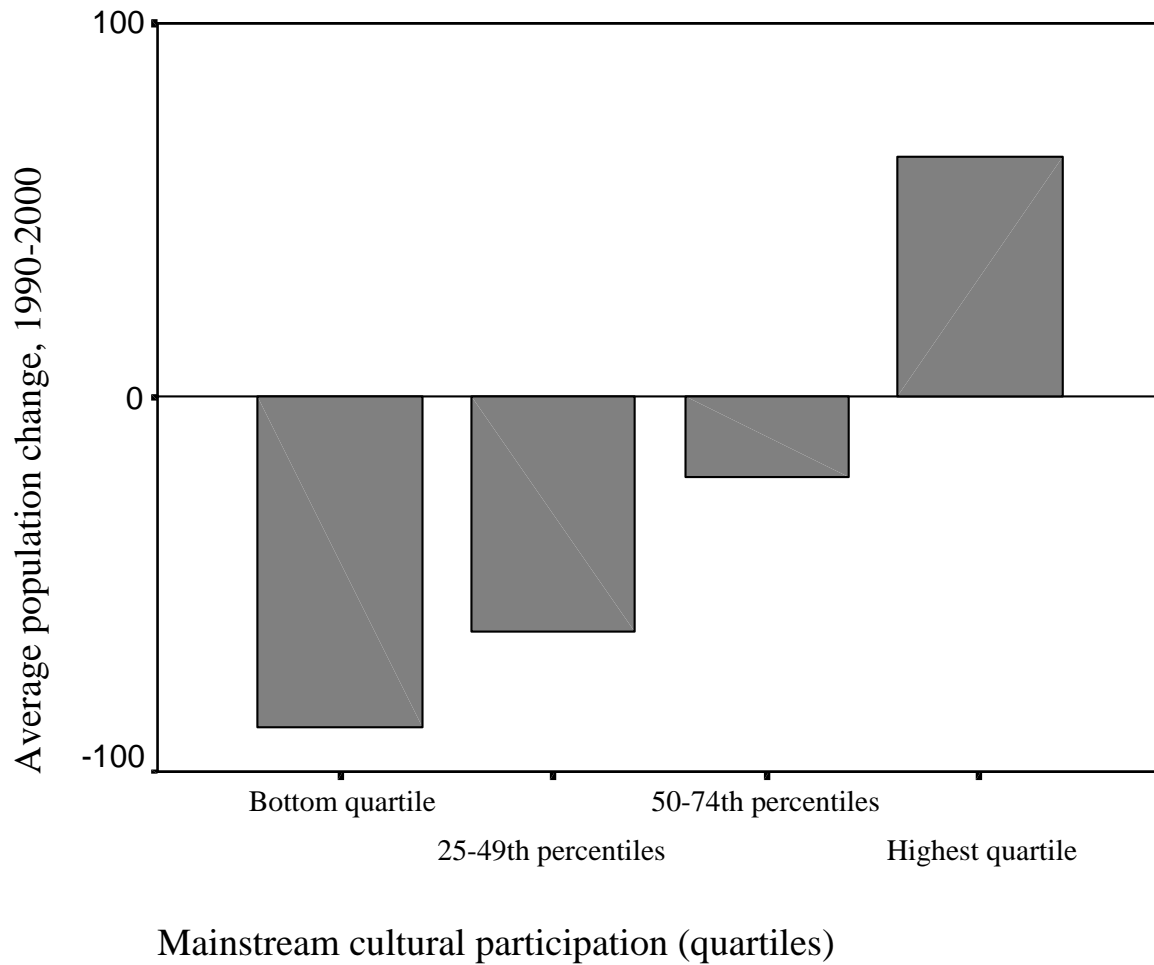
Source: SIAP participation data base, University of Pennsylvania Cartographic Modeling Lab

2.5. Neighborhood revitalization (poverty decline, stable or increasing population) and presence of cultural organizations, four metropolitan areas, 1980-1990



Source: US Census 1980, 1990, 2000; IRS master file of tax exempt organizations 1999.

2.6. Population change and cultural participation in Philadelphia, 1990-2000



Note: Average population change in 1990 block groups

Source: U.S. Census, SIAP participation database

anchored in the intrinsic value of arts and cultural production and in the ways that providers and participants connect with their communities and the region.

New opportunities for intervention

A fuller understanding of the structure and functioning of the community cultural sector is a foundation on which to develop more effective intervention strategies. An understanding of the sector's dynamics enhances the potential for influencing its development and amplifying its impact on the wider cultural community and urban neighborhoods.

A shift from an organizationally-based paradigm of the cultural sector to an ecological model is more likely to focus on the substantial assets that cultural agents bring to their work. Rather than focusing on the organizational deficits of cultural providers, one is more likely to see their "lean" organizational structure as an asset that allows them to take advantage of shifting opportunities in an ever-changing environment. Rather than trying to change individual groups by holding them to a single standard of the "good" organization, one is more likely to focus on how the functioning of institutional networks could be improved by reducing structural holes and expanding the transfer of information and other intangible resources.

The importance of diversity to the community cultural sector also provides opportunities for innovative urban policy making. Because a strong community cultural sector promotes stability in diverse neighborhoods and frequency of contacts across social class and ethnic barriers, investments in the arts pay substantial, multiple dividends. The recognition of the centrality of diverse neighborhoods to the twenty-first century city, by the same token, provides a clear rationale for public investment in all aspects of the community cultural system.

Finally, the shifting structure of the nonprofit cultural system nationally, as reported in a recent Rand Corporation study (sponsored by The Pew Charitable Trusts, 2001), suggests that the community cultural sector will become increasingly central to the arts world as a whole. Due to market realities, larger cultural organizations—both nonprofit and for-profit—will likely move to more conservative artistic policies, while mid-sized groups will face fewer options. As a result, Rand concludes that "an even larger and growing number of amateur performing arts organizations" are likely to fill "the demand for hands-on participation for avocational artists." It is likely that in the future the community cultural sector "could serve as incubators of innovation" for the entire cultural system.

Chapter Three. Did *Culture Builds Community* Achieve Its Goals?

The two overarching goals of *Culture Builds Community* were to build future audiences for the arts and to strengthen disadvantaged communities in the Philadelphia region. The primary strategy for realizing these goals—operationalized in the core-support grant program—was to strengthen established community arts organizations through long-term core operating support and technical assistance. Other strategies included funding emerging arts and cultural programs at community-based organizations and encouraging collaborations between community-based arts groups and non-arts organizations.

During the course of the initiative, the evaluation team tracked a number of indicators related to *Culture Builds Community*'s three sets of goals.

- Changes in fiscal stability and staffing capacity were the primary indicators of *strengthening organizational capacity*.
- Increasing the level and diversity of cultural participation and broadening of the network of artistic and cultural contacts were used as indicators of *expanding cultural opportunities and enhancing artistic quality*.
- Increased cross-participation, broadening institutional contacts, and changing the perception of non-arts community leaders were used as indicators of *expanding the role of culture in building community capacity*.

The chart in Figure 3.1 summarizes the relationship between the major databases developed for the *Culture Builds Community* assessment (described in Chapter One) and these outcome objectives.

Organizational capacity and fiscal stability

Culture Builds Community's focus on organizational capacity and fiscal stability grew out of the assumption that strengthening community arts organizations would in effect help build future cultural audiences and strengthen the communities served. To monitor changes in fiscal and organizational stability, the evaluation team gathered financial data as well as a set of staffing indicators reported by grantees over the course of the initiative. The team also collected data on the financial status of other cultural providers in metropolitan Philadelphia (stratified by organizational size and the economic status of their neighborhood) as a means of comparing the performance of grantees to that of similar organizations. (See comparative fiscal indicators in Figure 3.2.)

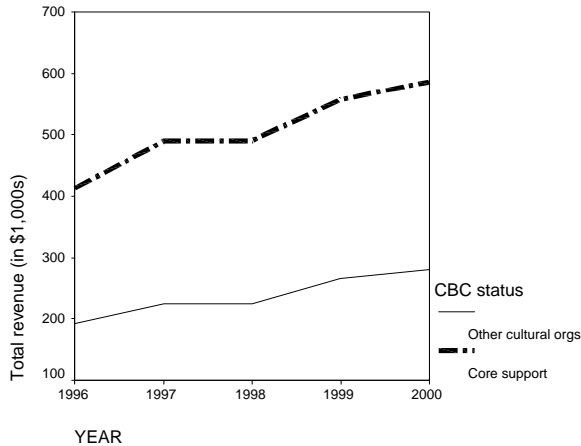
Generally, the late 1990s were good years for existing cultural organizations. Total revenues for cultural organizations that filed IRS-990 in every year rose from an average of 1.04 million dollars in 1996 to 1.34 million dollars in 2000, a gain of 29 percent. These gains were shared by cultural organizations of all sizes. Consistent with the findings of the *Rand* study cited in the previous chapter, the worst performing stratum in the cultural sector were mid-sized groups (with 1996 budgets between one and two million dollars). Between 1996 and 2000, mid-sized groups experienced smaller increases in their budgets (approximately 15 percent) while their average deficit ballooned from 44,000 dollars to 149,000 dollars.

3.1. Relationship of major datasets used in the assessment to the objectives of Culture Builds Community

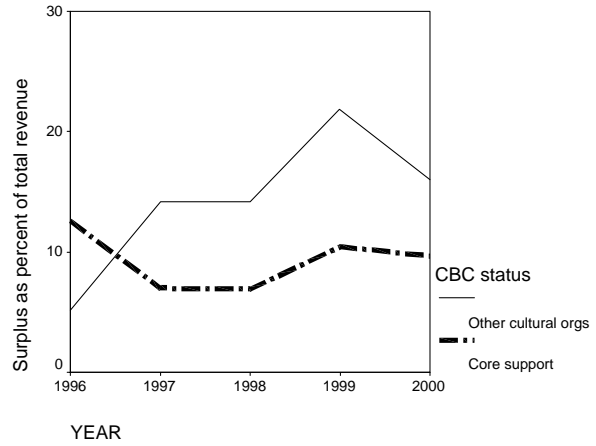
	Organizational	Arts and culture	Community building
<i>Participation databases.</i>		Changes in level and diversity of cultural participation	Role in bridging economic and ethnic barriers
<i>Fiscal data.</i>	Changes in fiscal strength		
<i>Community participation surveys.</i>			Cross-participation in cultural and non-cultural activities
<i>Artists' databases and surveys.</i>	Role of artists in organization	Expanding artistic contacts	
<i>Institutional networks.</i>		Changes in professional artistic contacts	Integration in community-building relationships
<i>Interviews</i>	Organizational strategies and realities	Strategies for improving quality;role of artists in program	Perception of cultural providers role in community building

3.2. Fiscal indicators for *Culture Builds Community* core support grantees and other cultural providers with 1996 operating budget under \$1 million, Metropolitan Philadelphia, 1996-2000

Total revenue

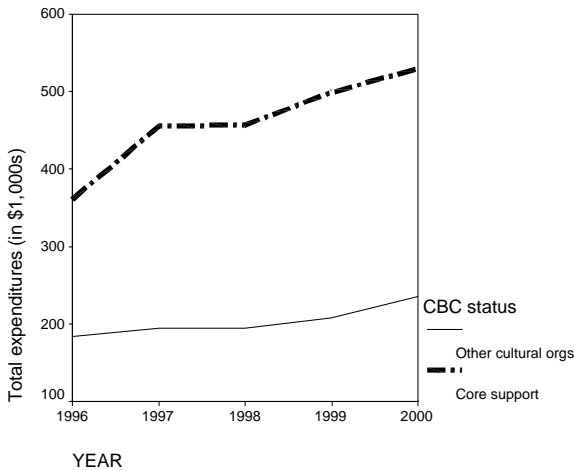


Surplus as percent of revenue

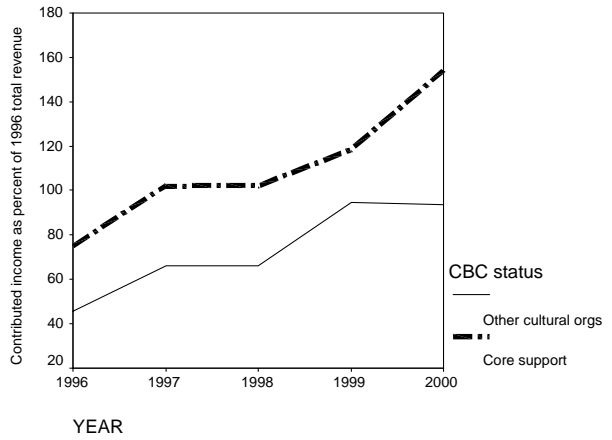


Weighted by total revenue

Total expenditures

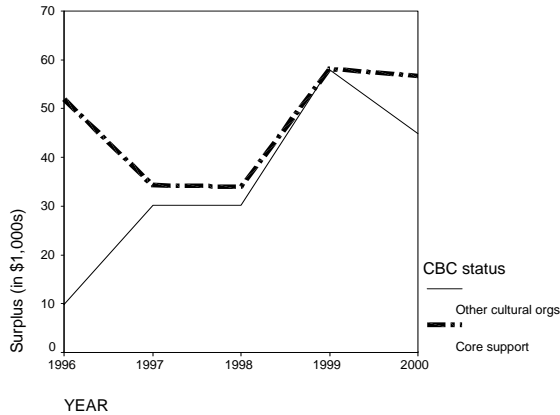


Contributed income (as percent of 1996 total revenue)

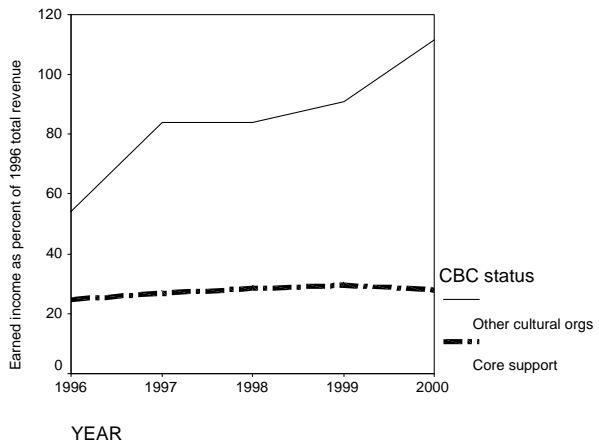


Weighted by total revenue

Operating surplus



Earned income (as percent of 1996 total revenue)



Weighted by total revenue

Source: National Center for Charitable Statistics

Culture Builds Community core operating support grantees by 2000 had rebounded from the deteriorating financial situation they had experienced in the mid-1990s. Organizations that received support for core operations saw their revenues expand by an average of 42 percent between 1996 and 2000. Between 1995 and 1997, the number of core support grantees who reported an operating deficit had increased from zero to five. By 1999 only one core-support grantee reporting a deficit in its operating budget, although several others did so in 2000.

Culture Builds Community grantees appear to have out-performed similar programs during the period. For example, between 1996 and 2000, among smaller organizations (operating budget under one-half million dollars) located in high-poverty neighborhoods, grantees saw their operating budget increase by an average of \$251,000 while non-grantees saw an average increase of only \$51,000. *Culture Builds Community* core-support grantees began the period with an average surplus that was larger than that of non-grantees and saw that lead expand during the initiative.

The relatively strong performance of *Culture Builds Community* core support grantees was attributable largely to their continued success in raising contributed income while diversifying the sources of these contributions. Compared to non-grantees, they were more dependent on contributed income and less dependent on earned income throughout the initiative. For example, in 1996 smaller grantees (under one-half million dollars) raised 86 percent of their revenues from contributions, twice the proportion of comparable non-grantees.

While the fiscal status of grantees clearly improved during the initiative, their staffing realities continued to pose great challenges. High staff turnover appears to be a fact of life for community arts providers. With the exception of founder-directors, most of the *Culture Builds Community* grantees experienced high rates of turnover in their major staff positions. This was particularly common among smaller emerging arts programs. While 30 percent of core support grantees experienced a change in their executive director, 68 percent of program directors at the start of the initiative had left their position by 2000.

Culture Builds Community did not fundamentally change the fiscal and organizational realities confronting community-based cultural providers, but it did contribute to an incremental improvement of their financial condition. Grantees began the initiative more dependent on contributed income than other cultural providers, and they ended the initiative in the same condition. Staff turnover, a reality deeply embedded in the organizational and social ecology of the sector, did not decline appreciably.

These quantitative indicators are complemented by our qualitative findings. Institutional “crises” are not the exception but the rule for small cultural providers. Especially among groups serving poor communities, crises can come in all forms, from the departure (or personal tragedy) of key staff to the effects of crime to breakdowns in program planning and marketing. Rather than judging cultural providers by their ability to *avoid* crises, the real standard should be their *resilience*—their ability to respond creatively to these inevitable setbacks. The source of resilience varied from provider to provider—for some it was the board; for others, the staff or program participants—but the need for a resilient core is a *sine qua non* of a successful community cultural organization.

Artistic opportunity and quality

A core rationale for *Culture Builds Community* was that expanding community cultural participation would help build future audiences for regional cultural institutions. At the same time, because participation is one of the core indicators of community capacity, the level and diversity of participation are important indicators of the contribution of cultural providers to community building as well.

Artistic quality was the most challenging of the *Culture Builds Community* goals to operationalize. In addition to gathering information on curriculum development and the professional training of program staff, the evaluation team relied on data on the cultural networks of grantees as a key indicator of changes in this objective.

Cultural participation

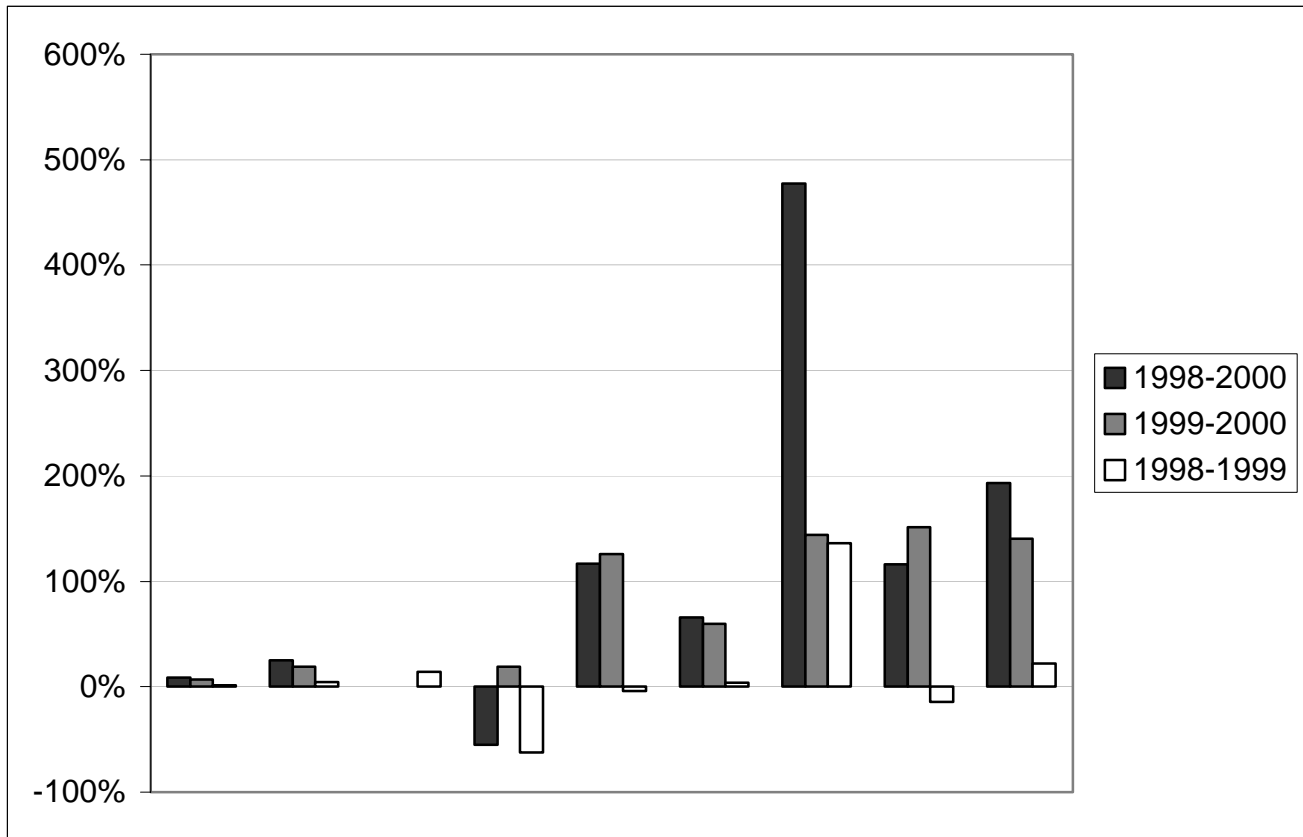
The evaluation team examined three dimensions of cultural participation: overall levels of participation in grantees' programs, the distribution of participants across the grantees' local service areas, and the extent to which the grantees drew participants from beyond their local service areas.

Culture Builds Community was successful in expanding direct participation by grantees. By 2000, although success was not uniform, core-support grantees were serving substantially more people than they had in 1998 (Figure 3.3). Aggregate participation in all programs increased by more than 30 percent over this period, while registration in classes and workshops rose by 58 percent. For example, Point Breeze Performing Arts Center saw its class registration jump from 105 students in 1997-98 to more than 600 students in 1999-2000. Point Breeze's success was largely attributable to its aggressive pursuit of satellite after-school programs, many of them outside of South Philadelphia, where the center is located.

One of *Culture Builds Community*'s objectives was to assure that poor and minority sections of grantees' service areas were not underserved. In reality, under-representation by poor or minority residents was a non-problem at the beginning and the end of the initiative. Although participation was not equally distributed across service areas, grantees did a reasonably good job of serving historically excluded populations within their communities. The grantees were generally present in very poor neighborhoods both inside and outside of their primary service area. Five of the ten core support grantees had higher than average participation in neighborhoods with concentrated poverty (poverty rate over 40 percent). The Philadelphia Folklore Project, Taller Puertorriqueno, and the Village of the Arts and Humanities had the strongest presence in these very poor neighborhoods.

Abington Art Center deserves special mention for its success in engaging African American sections of its primary service area in lower Montgomery County. At the beginning of the initiative, African American sections were over-represented in Abington's low participation areas; although seven percent of residents were African American, 11 percent of residents of low-participation neighborhoods were African American. Abington identified outreach to these neighborhoods as one of its strategic goals and was able to close this gap considerably. By 2000, although African American participation was still lower than that of whites, this gap had been cut in half.

3.3. Percent change in annual class registration, selected *Culture Builds* *Community* core-support grantees



Source: SIAP participation database

As noted in Chapter Two, people living outside of the primary service area compose a large proportion of the participants in community cultural programs. For *Culture Builds Community* core support grantees, this proportion ranged from 50 to 90 percent. Generally, neighborhoods with high economic, ethnic, and household diversity provide a large share of these outside participants. Most core support grantees conformed to this pattern throughout the initiative. In addition, three grantees—Community Education Center, Point Breeze Performing Arts Center, and Walt Whitman Cultural Arts Center—were able to expand “outside” participation in African American neighborhoods.

In summary, *Culture Builds Community* was generally successful in its goal of expanding cultural participation. General levels of participation rose. Participation was as high among historically underserved social groups as among the rest of the population. The regional audience for community arts remained an important part of the participant base of grantees. Although not all of these changes can be directly attributed to the initiative, it certainly made a positive contribution to them.

Artistic quality

By the end of *Culture Builds Community*, grantees had greatly expanded their integration into the region’s cultural networks. In addition, the artists involved in grantee programs were professionally trained and had considerable work experience.

The network of cultural relationships among *Culture Builds Community* grantees greatly expanded during the course of the initiative. In 1997 core support grantees reported 462 relationships with other cultural organizations, of which 363 were outside of their primary service area. By 2000 the number of contacts had expanded to over 650 with the bulk of the increase consisting of regional contacts. Furthermore, the quality of relationships had changed; relationships were more likely to be active, ranging from help in facilitating programs to collaboration and partnering on projects. Relationships with other cultural organizations tended to be among the more active and higher trust relationships within the grantees’ institutional networks. While 40 percent of core-support cultural contacts remained stable over the three years of the initiative, fully 49 percent increased in the level of engagement. By 2000 *Culture Builds Community* grantees were more integrated into regional cultural networks than they had been in 1997.

Another indicator of the artistic quality of grantees’ programs was the level of engagement of professional artists. The artists employed by grantees were professionally trained with substantial experience in the arts. Typically, the *Culture Builds Community* artists were mid-career (half had at least twenty years of experience) and 85 percent had teaching experience. In short, the grantees were clearly committed to engaging experienced, professionally trained artists.

These artists, themselves, constituted an impressive network of relationships (Figure 3.4). Of the more than two thousand artists associated with at least one of the core-support grantees, seven percent had an active association with two or more grantees. In addition, these artists often worked and lived in different neighborhoods. As a result, although outside of the established institutional networks of grantees, the artists represented a set of links between grantees and other parts of the cultural community. Indeed, the potential role of community-based artists in enhancing existing programs is an area that deserves greater attention by cultural policy makers.

3.4. Artist relationships maintained by *Culture Builds Community* core-support grantees, 1997-2000

<i>Grantee</i>	<i>Total number of artists in database</i>	<i>Artists with link to other CBC grantee</i>	<i>Percent of artists with link to other grantee</i>
Abington Art Center	507	7	1.4
AMLA	100	16	16.0
CEC	65	3	4.6
Fleisher Art Memorial	254	16	6.3
FrankfordStyle	33	5	15.2
Philadelphia Folklore Project	1081	117	10.8
Point Breeze PAC	42	1	2.4
Taller Puertorriqueno	182	36	19.8
Village of Arts & Humanities	80	10	12.5
Walt Whitman CAC	62	1	1.6

Source: SIAP artists' database, 1997-2000

Culture Builds Community grantees established an impressive record of expanding cultural participation and enhancing artistic quality. By 2000 they did a better job of serving their neighborhoods; more community residents were involved in their programs; and their programs reached out from their immediate neighborhoods. At the same time, the grantees expanded the number of cultural and artistic contacts they maintained and enhanced the quality of those contacts. They employed professionally trained artists with impressive credentials and experience. These artists, in fact, represented largely untapped potential for linking to the broader regional cultural scene.

Community building

A central goal of *Culture Builds Community* was to strengthen the role of community cultural providers in building community capacity. To assess this objective, the evaluation team gathered data on community residents who participated in both cultural and other activities (cross-participation), institutional networks, and the perception of grantees by leaders of non-arts community-based organizations.

Cross-participation—participation by community residents in more than one type of activity—has taken on increased importance in recent studies of community development because of research on the structure of community power. This research has concluded that the density of cross-participation networks and their ability to bridge other social barriers are critical to strengthening a neighborhood’s capacity.

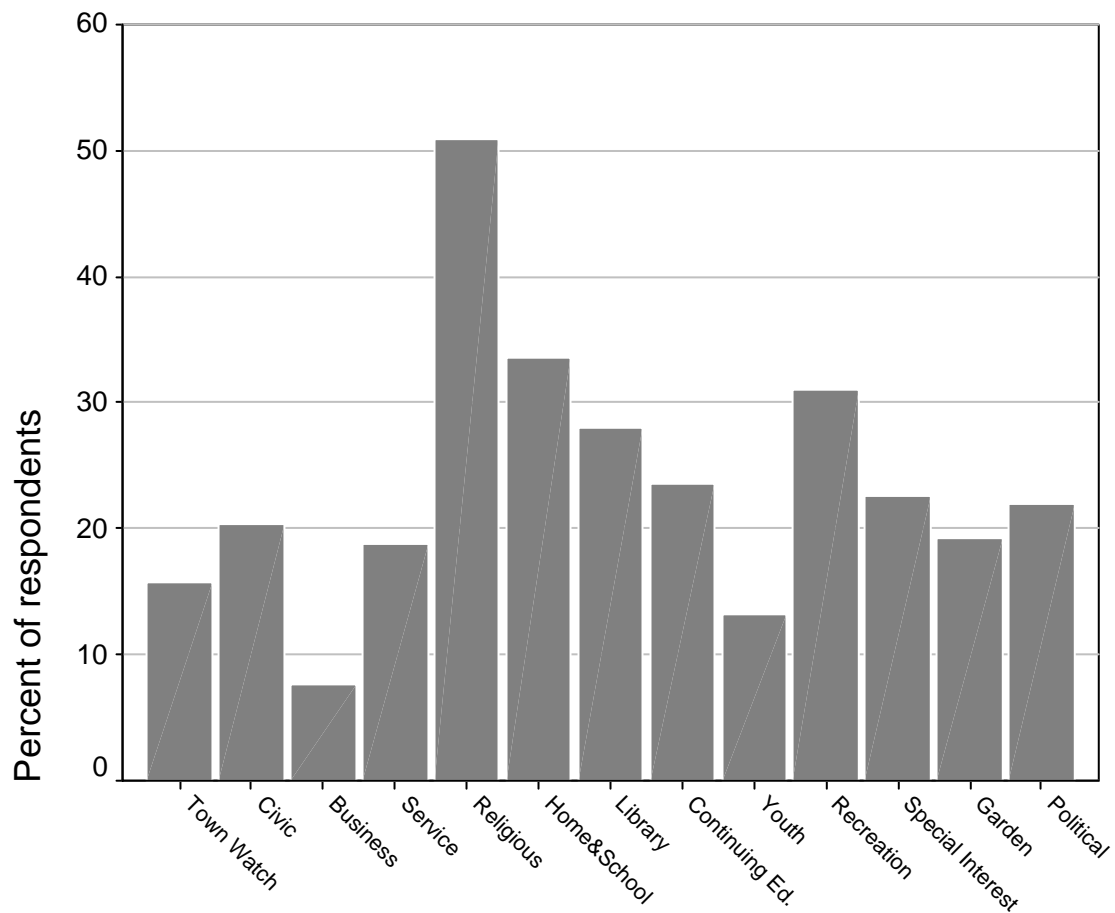
Cultural participants who responded to the community participation survey were very involved in other community activities (Figure 3.5). During the previous year, the average respondent had been involved in more than three different types of activities and participated in about thirty different events. In fact, only 15 percent of respondents said they were involved in no other community activities. A quarter of respondents, by contrast, were involved in five or more other forms of community participation. The non-arts activities in which respondents were involved included religious services (50 percent), home-and-school associations (33 percent), recreational activities (30 percent), and libraries (28 percent). Other activities that attracted more than ten percent of respondents included civic associations, continuing education, special interest groups, gardening, and political groups. The survey suggested as well that there was a clear association of adult and youth cultural participation.

Cultural participation clearly sparked wider community participation. People who are more involved in cultural activities are more likely to be involved in their communities in other ways. Those community residents who were most involved in cultural activities were about 50 percent more likely to be involved in other community activities than the average respondent. As with SIAP’s previous research, the survey found a clear relationship between respondents’ cultural participation rates and satisfaction with their neighborhood’s quality of life.

The community institutional networks maintained by *Culture Builds Community* grantees grew rapidly during the course of the initiative. In 1997, the ten core-support grantees maintained 1,124 relationships with other non-arts institutions; by 2000, this number had grown to 1,729. Among non-arts institutions, the most frequent links were with educational institutions, which made up about 25 percent of all relationships in 2000.

3.5. Types of community organizations with which adult cultural participants were involved, Philadelphia, 1999

“Cross-participation”—the involvement of cultural participants in other forms of civic activity—is one of the critical ways in which culture contributes to community-capacity building.



Source: SIAP community participation surveys, 1999

Social service, youth service, and recreation organizations comprised a substantial proportion of all relationships.

Grantees developed relationships with institutions both inside and outside of their neighborhoods. The Foundation's original concept paper for *Culture Builds Community* was clearly focused on building relationships *within* grantees' neighborhoods. Although these relationships are important, especially when they contribute to a web of youth-serving organizations, one of the unique features of cultural providers is their ability to combine these *within* neighborhood relationships with *bridging* relationships across the region.

The network of institutional relationships maintained by grantees grew stronger as it grew larger. Between 1997 and 2000, there was a distinct shift from passive relationships—for example, recognizing an organization as a *potential* resource—to more active relationships as partners or collaborators on projects. In addition, these institutional networks shifted from a *hierarchical structure* in which a few gatekeepers were more centrally located in the overall network to a *flatter, more democratic* structure (Figure 12). This was a consequence of the increased frequency of *multiple* connections. By 2000, over two hundred organizations maintained links with at least two core-support grantees. The most notable of these was the Philadelphia School District, which accounted for over 200 links itself. Altogether, these two hundred organizations accounted for more than seven hundred of the relationships maintained at the end of the initiative.

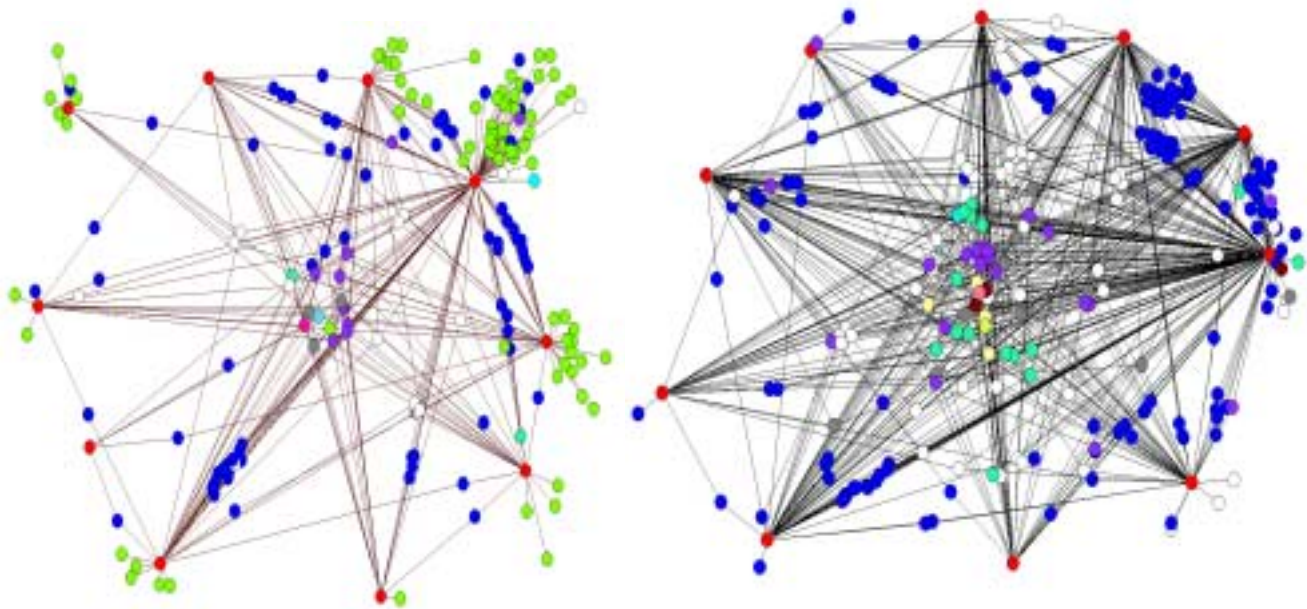
Taken together, the quantitative expansion in the number of relationships, the intensification of those relationships, and the changing structure of the overall institutional network fundamentally shifted the character of this network. As Figure ___ illustrates, the core of community building—the institutional relationships developed and maintained by *Culture Builds Community* grantees—had become stronger and more vital.

Although the accomplishments of *Culture Builds Community* grantees in developing individual cross-participation and institutional networks were impressive, a comparison of the two raises some questions about missed opportunities for greater relationship building by cultural organizations. At the beginning and end of the initiative, a great majority of the relationships were with educational institutions and other youth-serving organizations. By contrast, several other types of organizations, particularly religious organizations, special interest groups, and labor unions were rarely part of the grantees' institutional relationships, especially considering the number of these organizations located in the grantees' neighborhoods.

The *lack of relationship* between cultural organizations and religious institutions is particularly striking when compared with patterns of cross-participation. Recall that nearly half of individual cultural participants were involved with a religious institution. Yet, core support grantees maintained institutional contacts with *less than 3 percent* of all religious institutions in their own neighborhood. The *structural hole* between the leaders of cultural and religious organizations stands as a major question mark in assessing the community capacity building potential of cultural providers.

3.6. Institutional relationships maintained by *Culture Builds Community* core-support grantees, 1997 and 2000.

In the course of the initiative, grantees increased the extent and density of their institutional networks.



Institutional networks 1997

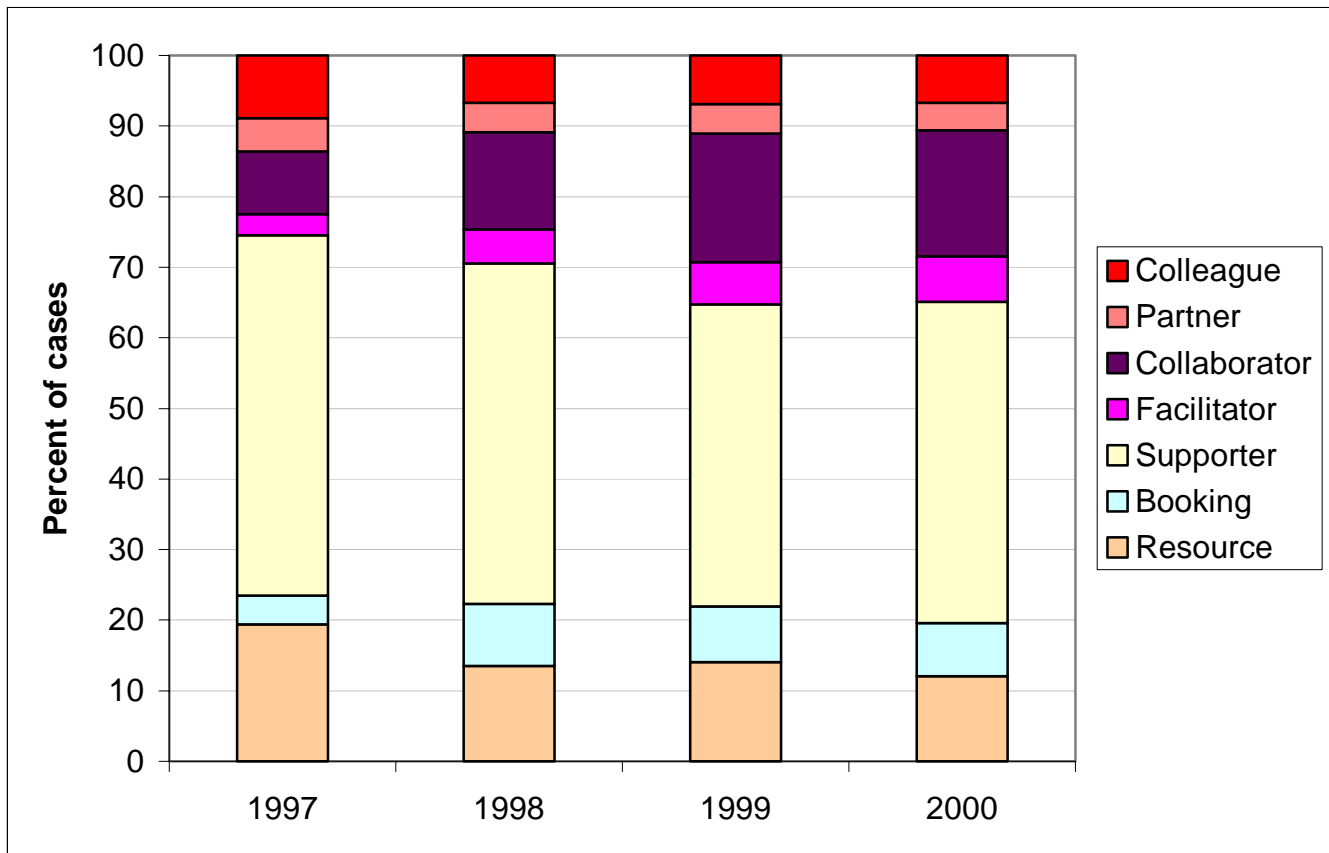
Institutional networks 2000

Note: red dots=CBC grantees, other dots=other community organizations with which grantees maintained or developed a relationship

Source: SIAP institutional network database, 1997-2000

3.7.Types of relationships maintained with other social organizations, *Culture Builds Community* core-support grantees, 1997-2000

The relationships that grantees maintained with other community groups became stronger and more trusting between 1997 and 2000. Active relationships—colleague, partner, and collaborator—became more common during the initiative.



Source: SIAP institutional network database, 1997-2000

The final indicator of grantees' community building accomplishments is based on the views of non-arts community-based organization leaders who were interviewed during the course of the assessment. Two conclusions can be drawn from these interviews:

- Cultural organizations are viewed positively by other community-based organizations. They are considered “very important” for the enrichment of poor communities, for opportunities for expression and creativity and celebration, as well as for community connectedness and empowerment.
- Cultural organizations have a “small footprint” in their neighborhoods. Although they are viewed as an asset, cultural providers are not seen as major players in issues of community development and revitalization. Along similar lines, although many grantees have a youth-focused mission, they are not consistently involved in discussions of youth development in their neighborhood.

Part of this “good news-bad news” finding may derive from competition between cultural and non-arts groups for artists and participants. Or it may derive from the lack of attention paid by many cultural organizations to issues of housing and economic development. Certainly, those grantees most involved with economic development—often because they are planning major facility expansion, like the Asociacion de Musicos Latino Americanos (AMLA) and the Point Breeze Performing Arts Center—were exceptions to this pattern.

All of the available evidence supports the conclusion that *Culture Builds Community* lived up to its name. Using cross-participation, institutional networks, and the views of non-arts community leaders as indicators, grantees expanded their role in community building. As with indicators of other objectives, one cannot say definitively that the initiative was responsible for all, or even most, of the observed changes. But, based on a simple “before-and-after” view, the grantees had fundamentally changed their engagement with their communities during the course of the initiative. Along with accomplishments in building organizational capacity and expanding artistic opportunities, building community capacity must stand as one of *Culture Builds Community*'s major achievements.

Chapter Four. *Culture Builds Community*—Lessons Learned

Ultimately *Culture Builds Community* must be judged by its outcomes—to what extent did it achieve its anticipated organizational and community objectives. This chapter, however, asks a different question: what can we learn from the *process* of the initiative that might benefit future efforts to accomplish the same goals. Although knowing one succeeded is gratifying, knowing *how* one succeeded may be even more important. This chapter is divided into two parts: one on the design of the initiative and one on its implementation. For each of these sections we identify those elements of the initiative that represent strengths and those that provide opportunities for improvement. Although any examination of a complex, innovative effort is likely to be seen as “Monday morning quarterbacking,” the evaluation team feels that understanding both the positive and less positive aspects of the initiative are important to an overall assessment.

For the most part, the views reported in this section are based on interviews and focus groups with grantees and others closely involved in *Culture Builds Community*. Although this summary does not include large numbers of direct quotations from grantees, we have attempted to give them voice in this part of the assessment.

Culture Builds Community design—perceived strengths

Linking organizational outcomes to community impacts was consciousness-raising.

The grantees found that the initiative expanded their thinking about how organizational goals should link to community outcomes. In this respect, a key assumption of the initiative—that organizational strengthening would have a “spillover effect” on neighborhoods—appears justified.

Multi-year funding is essential to building community.

Long-term funding signaled the Foundation’s recognition of the value of the community cultural sector to both the cultural community and the region’s neighborhoods and of the fact that building this value takes time. The findings of Chapter Three—that many of the outcomes of the initiative were not visible until its third year—support this premise as well.

Multi-year funding for core operating support enabled grantees to devote resources to diversifying contributed income, expanding outreach and membership, and nurturing institutional relationships. Building cultural participation, community partnerships, and community capacity are incremental, interdependent processes requiring a long-term commitment. Given this, the level of success documented by the assessment is quite remarkable. In fact, it suggests that the full “return on investment” in *Culture Builds Community* may not be appreciated for several years.

Non-traditional providers and partnerships broaden arts participation.

Culture Builds Community expanded access to the arts by bringing the arts to many “multi-purpose” settings. In addition to the community arts centers that received core-operating support, the initiative funded Boys and Girls Clubs, YMCAs and YWCAs, immigrant and refugee service organizations, and the Philadelphia Housing Authority to integrate culture into their social service programs. Grantees have pointed out, however,

the openness of the Foundation’s arts and culture program to funding youth and social service organizations has not been reciprocated.

Collaboration was encouraged among *all* grantees, not just those who received *Youth Collaboration* grants. A number of grantees integrated the arts into after-school programs. A university-community coalition used funding to support a community youth chorus. Community art centers used grants to build a set of satellite programs to serve church-based youth groups, charter schools, a juvenile detention facility, and childcare centers.

Data limitations made it impossible to document the quantitative impact of the *Youth Access*, *Artistic Enhancement*, and *Youth Collaboration* program grants on overall participation. However, in the opinion of those involved in the initiative, these programs did accomplish the objective of expanding opportunities for artistic involvement.

Culture Builds Community design—opportunities for improvement

The initiative would have benefited from broader community outreach and “buy-in” by organizations to program goals.

The Foundation devoted considerable effort to engaging existing cultural providers before launching the initiative. Given this, the number of cultural organizations that sought funding from the initiative was disappointing. Although many of the established community arts programs were incorporated into the core-support program, the response to other programs was lower than expected, and the quality of proposals was not as high as anticipated—in spite of the Foundation’s sponsorship of a set of grant-writing workshops. Although the timing of the initiative was appropriate for the Foundation’s grant cycles, cultural providers—especially non-traditional providers—might have benefited from a more flexible grant-making process. In this respect, the history of the City of Philadelphia’s Cultural Fund may be suggestive of a type of “entry-level” grant making that is appropriate for many members of the community cultural sector.

Grant categories and requirements were more complicated than necessary.

The structure of *Culture Builds Community* was needlessly complicated and confusing. The initiative was originally organized into six separate grant categories. Ultimately ten awards were made in core support, four (including 14 participants) in youth collaboration, six in youth access, and nine in artistic enhancement. Although two planning grants were made for earned income projects, only one was funded. Shortly after *Culture Builds Community* was designed, the Foundation dropped its Communities Program, so no grants were ever awarded in the community development category. The number of proposals received in all categories was lower than anticipated.

Moreover, a number of requirements for the pre-application for core operating support—deficit no greater than five percent, long-range or strategic plan, targeting of a specific geographic community—restricted the number of organizations eligible for funding. Ultimately, the initiative managers waived some of the requirements because even those organizations that applied did not meet them all; however, it is not known how many potential grantees may have been discouraged from applying. The requirement that grantees serve a single geographical neighborhood, in particular, does not jibe with what is now known about the regional reach of community cultural providers.

A simpler program structure with a continuum of funding from *entry-level* project grants through long-term core operating support would have benefited the initiative and any future investments in the community cultural sector.

Culture Builds Community needed to articulate the relationship of its youth development goals with those related to artistic quality and community building.

Youth development had an important place in the initiative. *Culture Builds Community* was launched at a time when the Foundation was expanding its commitment to children, youth, and families (CYF). Indeed, the CYF program funded two of the grant categories. Yet, the programmatic commitment was not matched by a rationale for how youth development complemented the initiative's other goals.

In practice, the initiative neglected to address the potential of youth-focused programs to upset the delicate balance between the goals of artistic quality and community building. Youth program directors were less likely to focus on the content or quality of the art and more likely to view their projects through a *social services* lens. But in poor, disenfranchised neighborhoods, it is unrealistic to think that encouraging kids to explore their understanding of the world will produce a totally positive experience. In addition, as the initiative became more youth-focused, it lost a focus on how culture can better integrate adults into the life of the community.

Culture Builds Community needed a more effective model for encouraging collaboration.

Collaboration and other forms of cooperation are central to the functioning of the community cultural sector. However, issues of trust, funding, and timing make collaboration a difficult activity for foundations to encourage. William Cleveland of the Center for the Study of Art and Community in Minneapolis, who twice consulted with initiative grantees, notes that when funding *leads* collaboration, the results can be less than optimal.

The Youth Collaboration grant category certainly suffered from these problems. The number of suitable proposals originally submitted to the Foundation was too small, which led the initiative to fund a workshop for potential grantees. Even then, however, the level of trust among collaborators was not uniform across the four projects. In addition, although a number of the projects funded through this category were worthwhile, they did not truly constitute collaborative projects.

As William Cleveland pointed out, “one-time” funding—like the Youth Collaboration category—tends to undermine collaboration. Foundation goals and expectations are not necessarily compatible with those of potential partners. How to balance the Foundation's need to pursue its mission accountably with the need for community partnerships to follow their own logic and timing is a critical issue for future grant making.

Culture Builds Community implementation—perceived strengths

External management by a local consultant provided continuity, consistency, and accessibility.

The Foundation began the initiative by funding Partners for Livable Communities (PLC) of Washington D.C. to manage the initiative and requiring PLC to hire a local consultant to assume day-to-day management.

The local manager was critical to the success of the initiative. Between 1997 and 2000, there was very high turnover both in Foundation staff responsible for *Culture Builds Community* and in the liaison between PLC's Washington office and the grantees. Given this instability, the local consultant provided a level of stability that was critical to the long-term success of the initiative.

The shift from “wholesale” to “retail” technical assistance was responsive to grantees’ needs.

Providing technical assistance to grantees was one of the initiative's unique features. Originally, technical assistance was to consist of workshops and trips to other cities to examine “best practices” in community arts. In fact, grantees were required to attend a certain number of workshops each year.

Over the first year of the initiative, the character of technical assistance changed dramatically. Several applicants needed help in completing their applications, and one grantee was required to complete a strategic plan after receiving an award. Other core-support grantees sought assistance in completing annual work plans. As a result, by the end of the first year, the local consultant found herself providing more one-on-one assistance than originally anticipated.

Over time, grantees continued to express doubts about the “wholesale” technical assistance—attendance at mandatory workshops became a sore point between the managers and the grantees—while the pace of one-on-one or “retail” technical assistance increased. Overall, the grantees perceived this drift away from mandatory workshops and toward individual consultation as a positive contribution to the initiative's success.

Culture Builds Community contributed to the professionalization of artists who work in community settings.

Individual artists did not have a large role in the original design of *Culture Builds Community*, but over the course of the initiative, they assumed more prominence. Initiative managers spent considerable effort helping non-arts grantees to recruit trained artists (and convincing them that it is worthwhile to pay artists appropriately.) One workshop was devoted to integrating artists into community organizations, which helped to raise consciousness about the importance of artists and their complex institutional roles. One Youth Collaboration partners' meeting, facilitated by William Cleveland, addressed issues concerning the integration of artists and as partners with cultural organizations.

Culture Builds Community helped to create a regional network of community arts professionals.

One of the unanticipated successes of the initiative was the creation of a *Culture Builds Community* network. Previous research on the community cultural sector has focused on the role of competition and isolation in reducing the effectiveness of this sector. Although networks are critical to the sector, competition for funding and lack of access to peers often prevent community cultural providers from pursuing cooperation.

Culture Builds Community contributed to an emerging professionalism among community arts and cultural workers. Although some grantees had reservations about the content of workshops, there was general agreement that the opportunity to meet with other directors and staff, to exchange ideas, and to build relationships was a tangible and positive outcome of the initiative. Through multi-year funding of so many providers, *Culture Builds Community* helped ease the isolation and competition and forge an identity and bonding among between those committed to the sector. The shared set of values, skills, and sentiments developed among grantees provides a foundation of trust upon which a mature professional culture—including standards of quality and practices of peer review and evaluation—can be built.

As one director noted with new realization: “I am a community arts professional!”

Culture Builds Community implementation—opportunities for improvement

The role of Partners for Livable Communities was never fully resolved.

Grantees reported that they were unable to benefit fully from the connections and expertise of Partners for Livable Communities. There were a number of reasons for this missed opportunity. First, distance matters: it was difficult for grantees and Washington-based staff members to develop knowledge and familiarity of one another. In addition, high turnover in the Washington-based liaison position (there were no fewer than five incumbents in the position) reduced possibilities for communication. In the end, PLC-Washington functioned more like a consultant on specialized matters of visibility and national impact than like the initiative managers. This change was accelerated by uncertainty in the Washington office about the Foundation’s expectations of its role.

Ultimately, there was a lack of fit between PLC’s vision and ambitions and the immediate needs of grantees. Partners sought to project a vision of the role of arts in transforming communities that would galvanize the region’s political, business, and nonprofit leaders’ interest and commitment. The grantees, however, found themselves struggling with more mundane concerns about funding, attracting audiences, and building relationships with neighborhood leaders. Partners for Livable Communities had much to contribute to building the community cultural sector, but its role in *Culture Builds Community* did not allow it to realize the best outcomes.

The initiative could have benefited from considering alternative models for providing technical assistance.

The shift from “wholesale” to “retail” technical assistance was viewed positively by most grantees, but the proliferation of “one-on-one” assistance raised questions about its structure. Essentially, *Culture Builds Community* used a “prepaid” model of technical assistance; as a grantee, an organization was entitled to some consultation by the

Philadelphia-based manager. Yet, a number of grantees questioned whether a single consultant could meet all of their needs. Although the local manager's expertise in strategic planning, organizational development, and sound business practices was valued by many grantees, several more-established organizations would have liked access to a wider range of specialized experts.

Finally, there was a deeper philosophical dilemma at the core of the technical assistance program: should it focus on *problem solving* or *capacity-building*? If a grantee presents a problem, should the consultant provide a "fix" or help the grantee develop its own ability to address similar issues in the future? This dilemma, which is central to many debates in business and social services, was not fully resolved during the initiative. The grantees favored development of in-house capacity through customized, on-site training along with the strategic use of external and specialized resources and were open to exploring other models for delivering these services.

The initiative should have invested more resources in developing the technical capacity of grantees to gather and use program data.

The Foundation's commitment to outcomes measures was not matched by a commitment to developing the computer-based data-gathering capacity of grantees. Computer capacity received little attention in the design of *Culture Builds Community*. Yet, many grantees reported problems with their ability to select and use computers to track registration, their budgets, and marketing. As a consequence, the quality of data available to grantees, initiative managers, and the evaluation team was of much lower quality than necessary. If community cultural providers are to be successful, they must develop "lean" organizational models in which a few staff members can use technology productively. Technology must be at the core of strengthening the community cultural sector.

Culture Builds Community struggled with its commitment to innovative and traditional models of grant making.

The concept of Culture Builds Community—placing the arts and culture at the center of community-capacity building efforts—was inspiring to practitioners and grantees. However, this innovative vision was teamed with a set of traditional interventions that focused on stabilizing and strengthening organizations. Grant letters, work plans, and technical assistance all tilted toward advancing organization goals, while *community building* occurred primarily through *consciousness-raising*.

Central to this dilemma is an imbalance in the field; there are many models of best practices for organizations but relatively few for community building. Still, the initiative did not take full advantage of existing knowledge on leadership development; community assessment and organizing; and strategies for building collaborations, partnerships, and organizational networks. More consistent attention to existing knowledge on methods for community-capacity building would have greatly improved the effectiveness of the initiative in achieving its community-building objectives.

Appendix to Chapter Four. *Culture Builds Community*—Grantee Perspectives

The bulk of Chapter Four has been devoted to a discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of the design and implementation of the *Culture Builds Community* initiative from the Foundation’s point of view. The following pages are devoted to perspectives gleaned “on the ground” by grantees during the course of the initiative regarding the dynamics of the community cultural sector—in particular, perspectives on organization, artists, community, and collaboration. Specific topics are:

- *organization*—a look at mission and philosophy of how to carry out the work, program planning, and organizational capacity building;
- *artists in the community*—roles of artists, relationship to organization, qualities organizations seek in an artist, and how artists are recruited;
- *community*—defining community, relationship with community, and reaching new communities; and
- *collaboration*—relationship to mission, goals and outcomes, strategies, types of partners, characteristics of successful collaborations, characteristics of difficult collaborations, plans and prospects.

Each of the four sets of text boxes represents a synthesis of the views expressed by grantees during interviews conducted by the evaluation team and in the narrative sections of the reports submitted annually to the Foundation. The purpose of this section of the report is to communicate the range of perspective as well as the actual voice of the grantee collective—a different angle on “lessons learned.”

Perspectives on Organization

From Culture Builds Community grantee interviews and narratives, 1998-2001

Mission and philosophy of how to carry out the work

- Traditional founding mission is to provide quality arts opportunities for community members. Contemporary work focuses on outreach, relationships, and more inclusive forms of arts education. Core philosophy is that the arts and culture are part of everyday life and integral to community.
- Ethnic-based organizations promote cultural preservation; transmission of cultural traditions to the young; cultural identity, dignity, and self-respect. Some groups promote positive imagery of local culture and history among economically disadvantaged— e.g., working class—communities. Many groups promote cross-cultural understanding and experience.
- Opportunities for established, emerging, and traditional artists are both part of mission and carrying out of mission. For some the goal is to uncover and support the artists and culture of disenfranchised communities.
- Relationship to school arts programs includes provision of varied and innovative arts programs as well as cultural programming that has never been part of curriculum.
- Arts are believed to help individuals cope with individual and social problems and, ideally, achieve personal transformation. “The arts help people to help themselves.”
- In poor communities “social services” work—family support, information conduit, referral—is considered part of carrying out the arts mission. “We do social services without realizing it.”
- Social justice, social change, and community transformation are central to many a mission. Most groups have a holistic view of building community—“addressing the needs of a healthy community” or “creating community through art.” Some include community economic development in mission or have affiliated with community development corporations.

Program planning

- Program planning builds on mission. Consciousness about communities drives program planning and shapes how groups relate to particular communities.
- Program planning is based on vision but is also flexible—“vision applied in a responsive way to needs brought forward.” New ideas and program innovations derive from efforts to reach new communities and address needs of communities already served. Some successful program innovations are serendipitous, the random thoughts of experienced community artists.
- Program planning draws on feedback from participants, teachers, artists, and communities. Program assessment involves evaluating use of resources against goals and priorities and program-by-program breakdown what worked and what didn’t work.
- Developing arts and cultural education for people of all ages is one focus. Program planning can involve expansion—hiring more teachers and increasing the number of students; cross-pollination—linking educational programs with gallery exhibits and artists or producing performances that involve children in their classes; and pedagogy—formalizing arts education methodology or developing curriculum or workshop materials.
- Direct nurturing of arts and artists is another focus. Program planning can involve increasing resources for artists; developing artist internships and residency programs; training of artists for work in community settings; or documentation of oral and folk traditions.
- Program expansion increasingly involves off-site programming and technical assistance. Off-site work involves taking the organization’s “whole philosophy” and “methods package” to another group. Others can “adopt our methods and apply them to their own situations.”

Perspectives on Organization

From Culture Builds Community grantee interviews and narratives, 1998-2001

Organizational capacity building

Resource and infrastructure issues:

- Most groups are working in resource poor communities, where all community organizations lack adequate resources to carry out programs.
- Growth potential is inhibited by the organization's lack of resources and inadequate infrastructure. Typically, the programming needs of and requests by various constituencies and underserved communities exceed the group's capacity to respond.
- Resources must be rationed: balancing program demands, program growth, and building infrastructure is an ongoing challenge. This balancing calls for strategic planning processes and strong leadership.
- Staffing objectives include: use new hires as strategy for increasing impact—need for increasingly specialized staff who are “totally committed to mission;” build and stabilize organization so that it can carry on after current leadership is gone; develop team-building and problem solving structures for the organization; figure volunteers into planning and resource deployment; and widen commitment to fiscal stability—everyone in the organization has to be financially responsible.
- Board objectives include: use board recruitment as part of network building strategy; include key people representing community institutions and partnering institutions; aim for a “hard-driving, community-based, professional board;” aim for an integration of old and new board members to fuse long-term commitment with fresh ideas of how to do business.
- Support strategies include: upgrade computer systems, data collection and documentation, in particular, tracking of participants and members; and retain consultants to provide technical assistance and support organizational development.

Growth and change issues:

- Mission—for some organizations, growth and expansion are part of mission and vision. For others, growth and expansion pull them away from mission and vision.
- Community—some see building a strong organization as the only way to respond to community needs and increasing requests for services. “Our growth potential is strong.” Others see building organization as counter to responding to community need. “We don't want to become an institution” but stay community-based.
- Organizational structure—a few question “what growth means” and its feasibility. Some groups need to build infrastructure before they can grow and expand. Meanwhile, growing organizations are required to adapt their infrastructure and alter leadership roles. More programs, staff, and volunteers require more structure, specialization, and formal communication.
- Collaborations—relationships with other institutions are a growth strategy: to gain access to new communities, increase financial support, or participate in local economic or cultural development.
- On-site facility—for some groups, growth has generated the need for new space. For others, they need new space in order to grow. Some organizations are currently expanding their facility or planning for new space.
- Off-site programs—Growth (and, in some cases, earned income) potential has been realized because of expansion of off-site locations, satellite programs, and bookings of resident company or member artists. Other groups have expanded outreach through workshops and exhibits traveling to other communities.

“An organization grows as an organic entity... If the organization fades away, the infrastructure in the community should be sustainable.”

Perspectives on Artists in the Community

From Culture Builds Community grantee interviews and narratives, 1998-2001

Roles of artists

- Artists and their networks are central to carrying out our mission and programs.
- Artists are the providers of high quality arts instruction.
- Artists are one of our constituencies—we find, support, and present artists.
- Artists exhibiting and performing through their work draw new participants to our programs.
- Teaching and resident artists draw people to the center as well as go out into communities.
- Artists are our links to communities; artists are the “knitters” of arts and community. “Artists go out in the community and put a face on the organization.”

Relationship to organization

- Artists have varying relationships to community arts organizations depending on structure, project, program, as well as the individual artist.
- Many teaching artists have minimal involvement in the workings of the organization. Some work independently and even build their own class rosters.
- Some organizations involve teaching artists in the planning of programs in which they are involved. Others encourage artists to participate fully in the mission and decision-making and work to integrate artists into the organization with a view to the long-term.
- Organizations try to ensure flexibility for artists, who need time for their own work.
- Some organizations value the internal relationships among their artists and the opportunities to learn from each other and other disciplines.

Qualities organizations seek in an artist

- Working artist, active in their fields; formal education or training not always necessary
 - High caliber artist who can also teach, creative artist who can work with kids
 - Relates well with children and young people, has realistic expectations of youth
 - Teaching experience, ability, commitment; enjoys teaching in a community arts center
 - Strong communicator, can communicate both skills and enthusiasm
 - Demonstrates respect for students and parents
 - Understands issues confronted by low-income families
 - Willing and able to be flexible
 - Bilingual preferable (Latino-serving organizations)
 - Navigates comfortably in the neighborhood
- “Ability to reach across age, class, gender, language, and ethnicity to engage people”*

How artists are recruited

- Word-of-mouth, known in the arts community, known in ethnic cultural circles—e.g., Latino (local, national, international)
- Word-of-mouth, known in the neighborhood
- Exhibitions or performances at the community arts center
- Collaborative projects with other organizations
- Referrals and contacts from other community arts groups.
- Long-term connections with organization—as student, teacher, staff, apprentice, volunteer
- Director, board, or staff’s personal connections in the arts world
- Unsolicited resumes, artists who seek out the organization
- Relationships with universities, schools of art, schools of dance
- Advertising in arts-related publications, Greater Philadelphia Cultural Alliance

Perspectives on Community

From Culture Builds Community grantee interviews and narratives, 1998-2001

Defining community

Community cultural groups serve “multiple and varied” communities. The community served varies by program. “It’s communities not community for us.”

- *Artists*—a community consciously served by many organizations by providing venues, support, opportunities, and a “safe and welcoming place for artists.”
- *Neighborhood*—arts groups foster a sense of neighborhood community. On-site educational programs tend to serve families from immediate neighborhoods, but most groups see their “area of impact” as ever-widening circles rippling out from their center. Suburban-based groups serve larger, less dense, and more prosperous neighborhoods as well as communities “with various resource needs” that may be some distance from the center.
- *Ethnicity*—many groups are grounded in an ethnic culture—e.g., Puerto Rican, Latino, Cambodian, Vietnamese—that defines mission and drives programming. “Bridging cultural gaps” with “mainstream” and other minority communities is part of mission. Some groups try not to define communities by ethnicity. Many are located in ethnically diverse or “mosaicized” neighborhoods. Terms like “African American,” “Asian American,” or “Latino”—although convenient—imply broad generalizations. Some refer to “people of color” or “non-English-speakers” or identify sub-communities such as Muslims.
- *Age or family status*—the most common way of characterizing program constituency, typically school-aged children or adults or sub-groups like teens, adolescents, seniors, or young adults. Some identify “parents” (of child participants) as a target community.
- *Social class*—economic or occupational status—poor, low-income, middle-income, affluent, professional; single parent, transitioning from welfare, working families; or diverse class background—as community. Still, groups object to class assumptions—e.g., that all inner city people are poor, the arts are elitist, or community arts are for poor people.
- *Identity or interest*—community arts both tap and create communities of identity or interest—e.g., non-Latinos interested in Latin culture, women’s film buffs, modern dance aficionados, teachers and intellectuals, the disabled, a gathering of women.
- *School*—community defined in relationship to a local school, schools, or district cluster.
- *Institution or special needs*—communities identified or accessed via institutions, such as day care centers, foster care, nursing homes, shelters, or health care facilities.

Relationship with community

- Organizations not only serve communities but also are a part of communities. “We’ve been part of many communities for a long time.”
- Multiple communities open new worlds to participants who enter via a particular community. Programs involve “shifting contexts” of communities, of identities, and of interests.
- Community engagement can be related to personal connections—e.g., staff or board members are neighborhood residents or members of a participant community.
- Collaborations with other local institutions and schools are a way of reaching out to the neighborhood community.
- Community arts programs provide opportunities for social interaction and interaction between ethnic communities.
- Visible, celebratory events—such as street festivals and parades—are an important part of the group’s image in and relationship with the local community.
- A community arts center in an urban neighborhood inevitably serves as community center and provider of social services and family support.
- Community art centers participate in local community planning and development activities.
- A few groups link to global communities through performances and artistic exchanges with community-based arts organizations in other countries.

Perspectives on Community

From Culture Builds Community grantee interviews and narratives, 1998-2001

Reaching new communities

Community cultural organizations strive to reach *new* communities—people who have never participated in their program and people with little access to arts and cultural programming.

Hard-to-reach communities present special challenges in identifying and reducing barriers to participation—e.g., ethnic groups (Asians, African Americans) or age groups (teens, elderly) who live in the neighborhood but are persistently under-represented.

Strategies for reaching new communities:

- Joint cultural marketing—expands audiences to include those of the collaborators.
- Artists' connections—gallery exhibitions and performances bring in new audiences and participants. Providing venues for artists increases visibility of host group among new communities.
- Bookings—some groups book artists and troupes in venues throughout the region. Painted Bride Art Center, stage and gallery in downtown Old City, is an important venue that helps community-based artists to reach new audiences and communities.
- Collaboration—with local agencies to raise community awareness about programs and with larger institutions to gain access to new audiences.
- Summer arts camp to reach new children and families. Some come back in the fall. Open house “to let people come for a look, try something new.”
- Outdoor activities and events—community murals, seasonal performances, annual festivals, gardens, farmers market—build community awareness, trust, and familiarity.
- Non-arts activities—community meetings, voter registration, health education, parent workshop, “Fashion Share”—bring people into the center.
- Data collection—improved tracking of current participants and mini-audience surveys to broaden, deepen, and diversity participation.

Strategies for reaching hard-to-reach communities:

- Communication—groups “take on hard-to-reach kids” by being flexible, responding to individual needs, involving parents, and listening to the community. Some hold community meetings inviting general discussion and feedback.
- Access support—groups reach out to low-income households by providing support such as scholarships for students, transportation services, and free tickets to performances.
- Targeted outreach, niche markets—Groups identify and target hard-to-reach communities that correspond to their artistic and social missions. Some groups use a business model: “we create a market for artists”—e.g., children with behavioral programs—and “train artists to fill that market.”
- Program design—responding to needs of particular communities drives programming. “We tailor programs to specific groups,” e.g., “keeping teens interested by making them mentors for younger children in arts programs.” Some groups involve the target population—teens or seniors, in particular—in program planning.
- Collaboration—working with arts and non-arts organizations as an important way to reach new and hard-to-reach communities. Collaboration and technical assistance often leads to off-site programming, school programs, and artists' residencies.
- Off-site programming—main strategy for reaching groups who don't come to the site is to go where they are, find settings where groups are comfortable, take artists and events out into communities. Groups target sites or institutions—e.g., public housing or senior centers.
- School programs and artist residencies—work in schools as a way of reaching new school-aged children and therefore new communities. Some groups target middle or high schools as a way to reach older youth and teens.

Perspectives on Collaboration

From Culture Builds Community grantee interviews and narratives, 1998-2001

Relationship to mission

- Collaborations are a way of carrying out our mission. Collaborations are central to our work.
- All of our work is essentially collaboration. It is what we do. Collaboration is more about the process and the relationship than it is about the product.

Collaboration goals and outcomes

- Bring communities together; help groups connect with other groups and communities.
- Raise community awareness about our programs; encourage joint marketing of local arts and cultural programs.
- Reach more participants, new communities and audiences; expand our “area of impact.”
- Build and expand our programs; enrich the work that two groups are doing separately.
- Expand arts, cultural, multi-cultural education programming in schools.
- Share scarce resources—venues, teachers, and programs—to maximize benefits.
- Find new artists; engage in artistic exchange, performance exchange, multi-disciplinary programming.
- Provide technical assistance and serve as advocate for grassroots arts groups.
- Bring in new resources for the organization, the kids, and the community.
- Contribute to community, economic, and cultural development.

Collaboration strategies

- *Strategic*—groups initiate joint program planning; artists are often the initiators and the link with other organizations. Sometimes the group or artist “takes up the work and eventually others follow along.” Groups provide technical assistance to community organizations to design arts program, often with goal of starting-up new self-sustaining program.
- *Opportunistic*—groups respond to requests for commissions, performances, workshops, or technical assistance; requests by “mainstream” groups for ethnic identity culture—e.g., Latino, Asian American—to diversify programming or audiences; and requests by community organizations who “see us as able to work creatively with social problems” or who simply “come to us for help.”
- *Adaptable*—groups plan and implement formal and informal collaborations with both larger and smaller organizations. Strategy varies by type of partner, whether the group is similar to them—in size, culture, value—or is a larger, richer institution; by number of partners—with multiple groups, they “need to create a magnet”; and by timeframe, whether goal is a one-time joint project, an annual event, or an ongoing collaborative.

“We have no fixed policies on collaborations; we have lots of types of interactions.”

Types of partners

- Community cultural organizations—*Culture Builds Community* network and more. Many community arts groups “were built on collaboration” and now spawn fledging arts groups.
- Regional cultural organizations—e.g., Painted Bride Art Center, Philadelphia Museum of Art.
- Universities—e.g., University of the Arts, Moore College of Art, Temple, Penn
- Community-based organizations—e.g., schools (public, charter, parochial, special needs youth in residence), social service agencies and community centers (day care, after school, seniors), health centers, hospitals, churches, police precincts, juvenile detention facility, tenants and neighborhood associations, business and community development groups.
- Local businesses and corporations, business associations, chambers of commerce.
- Local politicians and public officials.

Perspectives on Collaboration

From Culture Builds Community grantee interviews and narratives, 1998-2001

Characteristics of successful collaborations (benefits are greater than costs)

- Quality outcomes in collaborations depend upon mutual respect, communication, shared interests and aims, shared responsibility, equitable sharing of resources, flexibility—and lots of work! Each partner needs a leader and key contact person. Partners must understand differing realities, abilities, and capacities.
- Working with a school or large, bureaucratic agency is a long process that can take years. Key is linking with an individual, but support from leadership is essential. An on-site coordinator, teacher and staff workshops at the arts center, and opportunities for parent and community participation contribute to successful school-based artist residencies.
- Equitable collaborations are easier with smaller groups. For many, smaller organizations with similar values, structures, and appreciation of community make the best partners.
- Differences can make rich collaborations. Collaboration with non-arts groups, or groups with a different mission, can be fruitful because partner does not have a preconceived notion about arts education.
- Good collaborations bring together “something that’s bigger than the sum of the parts.” Good collaborations “make something happen ... but they all have to do with particular issues, the right moment, the right people.”

“... any collaboration is based on several different layers of relationships ... there are institutional relationships, there may be project relationships, but there are also personal relationships. We need all of those to make it work.”

June Cairns, Executive Director, United Communities of Southeast Philadelphia, June 2000.

Characteristics of difficult collaborations (costs can be greater than benefits)

- Big v. small—fundamental imbalance in relationship between small community cultural group and large institution based on differing interests and objectives, resources, and structures. Large, bureaucratic organizations—notably, public schools and social service agencies—tend to be rigid in contrast to the flexibility characteristic of community arts. Large agencies often lack respect for the needs, interests, and resources of smaller groups.
- Regional v. community arts—large cultural institutions tend to approach community-based arts groups to signify their minority connections for a grant application without interest in “real” collaboration. Sometimes the small group is left out of planning and just told to “show up” with artists. It is important that smaller partners have “a true collaborative role.”
- Arts educators v. community artists—institutions with different philosophies of arts education, schools in particular, present special challenges.
- Changing internal and external environment—departure of founder-organizer, agency or school leadership, or key contact person can undermine developing relationship. Context matters—such as, School District politics, violence in a local school, or depopulation of target neighborhood due to demolition of a housing project.

Plans and prospects

- Expand community cultural connections. Pursue collaborations with colleagues and newer arts groups, based on complementary goals and qualities. Build collective work among community arts groups.
- Expand neighborhood connections. Pursue connections with local churches based on common participants and shared musical interests. Expand work in and with schools to address lack of arts and multicultural curriculum, to connect with underserved groups in community. Work with economic development and business organizations.
- Expand regional and resource connections. Build capacity to fulfill numerous requests for artists and multi-cultural programming from community-based and regional organizations.

Chapter Five. Strategies for Change—Sustaining the Community Cultural Sector

The community cultural sector plays an important and unique role in the broader cultural community and the region’s neighborhoods. At a “macro” level, culture is deeply embedded in the structure of urban life. At the very least, cultural advocates can use the relationships documented in this report as a rationale for programs and funding.

Yet, this report does more. It provides a policy framework for thinking about improving conscious efforts to make the community cultural sector more effective at accomplishing its objectives. Earlier sections of this report have documented that:

- a vital community cultural sector is important to sustain the quality and diversity of the arts and culture in metropolitan Philadelphia, and
- a vital community cultural sector makes a significant contribution to enhancing the quality of life in urban communities.

An important policy goal, therefore, is to sustain the community cultural sector. This chapter makes some suggestions about how to do so. It first takes a step back to examine some theoretical perspectives on this process and then uses the findings of the *Culture Builds Community* assessment to look at future opportunities.

An ecological policy framework

Chapter Two proposed an ecological model for viewing the community cultural sector, not as a set of worthwhile programs and organizations, but as a collectivity. The “ecology” model is borrowed from John Kreidler’s classic article—“Leverage Lost: Evolution in the Nonprofit Ecosystem.”

An ecological model helps to reframe policy options in a number of ways. It begins with the idea that culture is deeply embedded in urban neighborhoods, not something that is exported to them. It begins by viewing the assets and strengths of community culture, rather than using an external yardstick to measure its deficits. The purpose of policy intervention is not to create something new but to allow a sector that is already effective to work even better.

An ecosystem approach is based on the premise that community culture is composed of a number of interdependent “agents.” Historically, only a few of these agents have been visible; many operate “below the radar” without the aid or hindrance of outside entities. As argued in Chapter Two, viewing the entire ecosystem as a network opens up the possibilities for both assessing the effectiveness of the sector and identifying strategies for intervention.

New organizations in a networked society

One of the major preoccupations of *Culture Builds Community* has been with strengthening organizational capacity, yet this focus did not take full advantage of new, emerging paradigms about adaptive organizations. Manuel Castells, for example, has pointed out that in the new technological and economic environment, models of smaller, more flexible organizations that use social networks to accomplish their goals have displaced traditional *bureaucratic* organizational models. From this perspective, many of the “deficits” of the community cultural sector can be viewed as assets.

There is a large and impressive literature on stability among nonprofit organizations. It generally focuses on a set of tasks that well-run organizations should undertake: board development, market analysis, and strategic planning. The *Culture Builds Community* assessment, however, suggests that good business practices are the wrong yardstick by which to judge small cultural organizations.

The implicit assumption of current practices is that community arts programs should be “*rational*,” that is, they should conform to the classic definition of a bureaucracy. This classic definition calls for organizations to include: a functional division of labor, hierarchy of authority invested in legal positions; written procedures, records, and files; thoroughly trained, expert employees; specific standards of work and output; and formal rules and policies that equally bind management and labor. By linking these bureaucratic means to the goals of organizational strength and survival, current policy makers seek to make nonprofits more rational.

Clearly, the rules of bureaucracy and “rationality” have benefits for cultural organizations. Most grantees have benefited from learning methods for orderly registration of students and tracking the real costs of the services they provide. Certainly, “rationality” can advance the work of many cultural organizations.

Yet, the lure of “rationality” may be misleading. On the one hand, there are a number of reasons—including shortages of funding, trained staff, and realistic career advancement—why community arts groups could never live up to the model of a bureaucracy. On the other hand, *Culture Builds Community* grantees’ critical social impact on the fabric of their communities does not arise from their organizational strength and “rationality” but from their intense, passionate engagement in the lives of their communities. The organizations’ effectiveness does not derive from their “rationality” but from the strength of their commitment and vision. In this sense, successful community cultural programs are “irrational.”

Staffing and personnel issues provide one example of how this “irrationality” operates in practice. According to the bureaucratic ideal, staff should have clear lines of authority, clear procedures, adequate training, and sufficient longevity to provide regularity and continuity to the organizations. In practice, the compensation and stability syndrome plagues almost all groups. Small community arts groups cannot afford to pay adequate salaries. As a result, their staff usually consists of a few long-term employees with a strong commitment to the organization—including founder-directors—that leads them to accept artificially low compensation and many staff members who are looking for part-time work or a short-term career move. This staffing pattern creates, in turn, one of the great problems for community cultural organizations—succession. Many *Culture Builds Community* grantees faced the dilemma of how to replace the individual who for many years had embodied the organization. The organizations would “never be the same” without them, their poor pay and long hours promote burnout; and the high turnover among the staff makes the grooming of a successor a tricky proposition.

In addition to the structural barriers to “rationality,” many community cultural organizations operate by a different logic, one that stresses networking, opportunism, and lean organizations. Although not inherently illogical, judged by the yardstick of a bureaucracy, this makes them appear to be “irrational.”

For example, “irrationality” can derive from the importance of community and resource networks for these organizations. Smaller organizations tend to operate on a much shorter time-horizon than more established organizations. Community-based groups are constantly involved in the “scanning” of the environment to identify resources, make contacts, and follow emerging trends. Because they tend to have smaller staffs, community groups are likely to respond to new opportunities, sometimes at the expense of longer-term goals. Smaller groups, as a result, find themselves in “crisis” more often, as the search for new funding, the replacement of key staff members, or new opportunities within the community forces them to change course.

The “irrationality” of small community-based cultural organizations has implications as well for the yardstick of success that is used. Generally, success for community cultural organizations is equated with mobility. An organization is a success if it grows their program, budget, and reputation. Indeed, there are a number of *Culture Builds Community* grantees that fit this definition of success.

But, the *Culture Builds Community* experience should lead us to question whether mobility and growth are the right yardsticks to use for judging success. It is hard to argue with success, but one needs to consider as well the costs of this type of success. Take the example of facility development. Given the lack of adequate space, building a new facility is quite attractive to many organizations. Yet, a major capital project and the added pressure of new operating support often require a community organization to limit its outreach efforts—there is simply not enough time or money for both. Often a new facility makes sense, but just as often it can divert a group from its less obvious “successes” in promoting neighborhood mobilization and engagement.

The day-to-day experience of community arts administrators is more commonly managing crisis than promoting growth. During the course of *Culture Builds Community*, over a third of the core-support grantees and two-thirds of the program grantees lost senior staff members. Several organizations faced shutdowns of one or more of their programs because of funding problems. This is reality for the community cultural sector, not the abnormal. The success of the grantees more often was based on their *resilience* in the face of crisis rather than on their ability to grow.

Looked at in isolation, “rationality” appears to be the only yardstick by which to judge community cultural providers. However, if one views them within their ecosystem, a different set of standards can be used. A network-centered model would take into consideration the diversity of programs and motivations. How does their participant base have spillover effects in other community activities through cross-participation? Are they able to mobilize quickly and effectively in the face of new realities? Are they capable of reaching out to literally hundreds of other organizations and individuals, creating a community of influence far beyond their organizational size?

One of the achievements of *Culture Builds Community* is that, for the first time, we have credible systematic data on how a three-year initiative can influence these—harder to measure—yardsticks of success. The success of *Culture Builds Community* goes far beyond the achievements of grantees in building their budgets and surpluses. Its success derives from grantees’ increasing engagement in the lives of their communities; bringing artistic opportunities to community residents who did not previously enjoy them;

improving the professionalism of the arts available in community-based organizations; and leveraging their commitment through institutional connections to other organizations, artists, and cultural agents in their neighborhoods and across the metropolitan area.

This is no trivial legacy.

Upon further review—lessons of *Culture Builds Community* for future cultural policy making

Currently, the William Penn Foundation has no plans to follow up *Culture Builds Community* with a similar initiative. However, when in the future the Foundation or other policy actors examine comprehensive approaches to the community cultural sector, the initiative provides a set of lessons for policy making:

Use the full community cultural sector, not just a part of it.

The community cultural sector includes a variety of “agents,” of which nonprofit cultural organizations are the most prominent. Future efforts to improve the functioning of this sector need to develop strategies for intervening with artists and cultural workers, informal cultural organizations, for-profit cultural firms, and non-traditional cultural providers. This would require foundations to develop new mechanisms for providing funding and to develop strategies for balancing funding and technical assistance.

View the cultural sector from the “bottom up.”

Recent research by the Rand Corporation suggests that the entire cultural sector is on the verge of a fundamental restructuring as new technologies, economic forces, and changes in audiences force some painful changes. As noted above, a model based on “immortality” (to use Paul DiMaggio’s term) and stability has never worked for the community cultural sector. It is likely that the instability always faced by community cultural groups will now become more common throughout the cultural sector. The “small is beautiful” philosophy that has spawned so many community cultural organizations may have an attraction for larger groups as well.

At the same time, this restructuring will likely increase the prominence of small cultural organizations and informal groups as a primary source of cultural and artistic experience. In short, neglect of the community cultural sector has the potential to deplete the food chain for the entire cultural world.

Fund networks and individuals, not just organizations.

The *Culture Builds Community* assessment suggests that institutional networks, not strong organizations, are the key to sustaining the community cultural sector. Yet, this is a form of policy making with which cultural foundations are not experienced. Indeed, the experience of *Culture Builds Community* with the Youth Collaboration grants suggests that the models used by the Foundation need to be seriously reassessed.

One area of policy making that may hold out some lessons for community cultural policymakers is national experience over the past several decades with *comprehensive community initiatives*. These efforts to address all aspects of poor and disenfranchised communities have identified three basic “levels of social agency”—individuals, organizations, and networks—for intervention. A key strategy is development of *social*

capital—i.e., networks of positive social relations that provide a context of trust and support and provide resources—through the elaboration of social networks. In addition, these initiatives have employed a wider set of instrumentalities than those used by *Culture Builds Community* including leadership development; community organizing; and the building of “the organizational infrastructure of communities” through development of collaborations, partnerships, and organizational networks.

Fill in “structural holes.”

Although the community cultural sector is composed of a an impressive set of relations, it is also characterized by a number of missed opportunities for collaboration and engagement. These “structural holes” include:

- *Linking the regional and community cultural sectors.* Social distance and mistrust often characterize the relationship of regional cultural organizations and community-based resources, especially when they are reinforced by ethnic and economic divisions. Although cultural participants cross the regional-community divide, organizational leaders often do not follow.
- *Linking nonprofit and for-profit organizations.* For-profit cultural firms provide a large share of the cultural experiences of the Philadelphia region, yet they have very few connections with the nonprofit cultural sector. At the community level, artists easily move across this boundary, but organizational leaders do not use their experience for building stronger relationships.
- *Giving cultural workers a bigger voice in community culture.* Community cultural workers are a critical element of the community cultural sector but are largely invisible in organizational planning and policy making. Developing vehicles whereby artists can support themselves and share their knowledge across the sector would improve its effectiveness.
- *Bridging the arts-religion divide.* Although cultural participants are very engaged with religion, leaders of cultural organizations are not. Understanding the sources of this standoff and taking steps to overcome them deserve special attention.

Balance stability and innovation.

Cultural policy has been dominated by efforts at institutionalization, growing cultural organizations and promoting their immortality. An ecological perspective suggests that there is such a thing as *too* much stability, especially because innovation and creativity are so central to arts and cultural production. Future efforts should not stop with stabilizing existing resources but should invest in new resources as well. This would require more attention to the *informal* cultural sector and how “entry-level” grant making might encourage emerging and innovative groups to enter the community cultural mainstream.

Support social diversity.

Economic, ethnic, and household diversity promote cultural engagement. Diverse neighborhoods are home to more organizations and have higher levels of participation than other sections of the city. As a result, much community cultural policymaking—including *Culture Builds Community*—adopts a compensatory model that invests in

communities with fewer groups. This practice has the unintentional consequence of reducing support for diverse neighborhoods.

Diverse neighborhoods should be at the center of community cultural policy initiatives. Thanks to the regional audience for community arts, residents of diverse communities are likely to cross neighborhood boundaries and develop links across the region. Rather than penalizing cultural organizations in diverse neighborhoods, policy makers should adopt an assets-based approach that places these groups at the center of future efforts to promote the sector.

Culture Builds Community represented a bold effort on the part of the William Penn Foundation to intervene in the community cultural sector. That effort was marked by many successes and a few failures. Wise policy making should be guided by a tempered assessment of what works and what does not. The William Penn Foundation has demonstrated that a commitment to evaluation need not become a pretext for timidity.

Appendix One.
CULTURE BUILDS COMMUNITY GRANTEES

Core Support Grants

Abington Art Center
Asociacion De Musicos Latino Americanos*
Community Education Center
FrankfordStyle
Philadelphia Folklore Project
Point Breeze Performing Arts Center
Samuel S. Fleisher Art Memorial
Taller Puertorriqueno, Inc.
Village of Arts and Humanities
Walt Whitman Cultural Arts Center

**Also received an Earned Income Grant.*

Program Grants—Artistic Enhancement

Bridesburg Boys and Girls Club (Boys and Girls Club of Metropolitan Phila, Inc.)
Cambodian Association of Greater Philadelphia
Chester Springs Studio
Intercultural Family Services
Nictown Club for Boys and Girls (Boys and Girls Club of Metropolitan Phila, Inc.)
North Light Community Center
Philadelphia Housing Authority, Resident Affairs Department
West Kensington Boys and Girls Club (Boys and Girls Club of Metropolitan Phila, Inc.)
Young Women's Christian Association of Germantown (YWCA)

Program Grants—Youth Access

Camden School of Musical Arts
Chester Swarthmore College Community Coalition—Chester Youth Chorus
Darlington Fine Arts Center
Germantown Boys and Girls Club (Boys and Girls Club of Metropolitan Phila, Inc.)
R.W. Brown Community Center (Crime Prevention Association of Philadelphia)
Vietnamese United National Association of Greater Philadelphia

Youth Collaboration Grants

Asian American Youth Association collaborating with Asian Arts Initiative (via Greater Philadelphia Urban Affairs Coalition)
Columbia North Branch (YMCA of Philadelphia and Vicinity), collaborating with American Jewish Committee—Partners in Education, and City of Philadelphia Department of Recreation Mural Arts Program
United Communities of Southeast Philadelphia and Hawthorne Family Center collaborating with Samuel S. Fleisher Art Memorial, Traci Hall & Co—the Young Professional Dance Company, and Sabree Youth Core
Urban Bridges at Saint Gabriel's Episcopal Church, Inc. collaborating with Central East Middle School, Cooke Middle School, Olney Elementary School

Appendix Two.

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