

Measuring Up:

Program Evaluation and Grant Reporting in an Age of Accountability

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A Master's Project
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Oregon in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the Master's Degree in
Arts Management.

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Abstract

This Master's Project was conducted in partial fulfillment for a Master of Arts Degree in Arts Management from the University of Oregon. The following document details the research conducted for this mixed methods study of how program evaluation and grant reporting influences state funding for arts organizations. Included is a review of key literature regarding community arts, community cultural development, current and historical evaluation methods, and standards of performance measurement and accountability used by State and Local granting agencies. The findings of this study are framed as a narrative synthesis of the literature review in comparison to the interviews and questionnaires, and the literature review in comparison to the content analysis. This study concludes with a discussion of findings and recommendations for (1) the Washington State Arts Commission, (2) Local Arts Agencies, (3) preparation in the field of Arts Management, and (4) further study.

Keywords: community arts, community cultural development, program evaluation, grant reporting, cultural policy

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Project

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this research project was to study how program evaluation and grant reporting influence state funding for arts organizations. During this study, I analyzed the methods used by local arts organizations to evaluate their impact on community development by reviewing Final Reports submitted by Local Arts Agencies to the Washington State Arts Commission (WSAC).

Statement of the Problem

The emergence of a new generation of artists and art administrators working together to solve community issues has resulted in increased competition for funding. Arts commissions and other state funding agencies have responded to a growing “need-base” by spreading resources among a variety of community-development and social service organizations. In turn, many community arts-based organizations do not have sufficient funding to serve the needs of their constituents (Cleveland, 2002, p. 7).

Private and public grant makers feel that they are in the midst of an “accountability environment”, both inside and outside of their organizations. Their subsequent search for impact and ways of demonstrating it are consequentially driving change in programs. Many cultural philanthropists would argue that state governments are beginning to “fund for results” (Salamon, 2002, p.198). We can expect that, in coming years, there will be an increased emphasis on the use of performance measurement and outcome-based evaluation at state and federal levels, which is why it is critical that we begin discussing the advantages and disadvantages of developing and implementing systematic program evaluation procedures for nonprofit arts organizations.

Due to the differing definitions of art and culture, there have been no consistent tools for measuring the success or failures of collaborations between artists, arts organizations, and community members. After a preliminary literature review, I found there to be a gap in the research and understanding of the impact of art and culture on communities. According to Cleveland (2002), the small body of knowledge that exists in this field “will have to contend with being defined, through the lens of the research, as therapeutic or remedial methodology” (p. 8). In order to understand and communicate the impact of art and culture on communities, we must develop a language with which we can describe, document, and learn from what we see.

By creating a common language with which we can discuss the social and economic impacts of arts and culture, organizations can demonstrate accountability to their stakeholders, and the communities they serve. However, the inherent problem in constructing definitions for the field of arts-based community development is that it is constantly changing to encompass new ideas and projects. According to Cleveland (2002, p. 8), less institutionalized, informal art projects are sprouting in smaller cities in response to community needs. Both Borrup (2003) and Wali, Marchesi, Severson, and Longoni (2001) confronted this issue as well in their research on informal community art collaborations. These innovative projects, which are a starting point for many social service organizations, are often overlooked by traditional research collection methods. In order to accommodate the diverse range of arts-based community-development projects we will need a more all-encompassing approach to evaluation.

Background of Study

Because the field of arts-based community development includes many aspects of art and culture, it is critical that we learn how to talk about it. The literature on this

subject provides a breadth of definitions to describe the field of “community art”. Dean (2000), for example, writes about this field in terms of access, community participation, and empowerment. Cleveland (2001) on the other hand, uses terms like conflict resolution, public safety, economic development, and community revitalization to describe this topic. Wali, et al (2001) illustrate the concept as a “continuum, ranging from the most spontaneous and non-commodified, to the highly select or commercialized sorts of activities” (p. 212). Despite the variety of definitions used to define the field of community arts, the underlying question addressed by all of these authors was; does involvement in arts and culture have an impact on communities?

The outcomes of projects studied vary between the social impact and application of community arts in everyday life, to the economic value of these art-based projects on the community. According to Jackson (1998, p. 201), methods for data collection are still non-comprehensive, because of the varied definitions of arts and culture in society. She argues that in most studies done on arts-based community participation researchers have viewed the arts as cultural experiences to be consumed rather than experiences that are embedded in our everyday lives (Jackson, 1998, p. 202). Wali, et al (2001) continue to discuss this issue in their study of the impact of the “informal arts” on communities. Through the observation of art and cultural experiences found in everyday life, Wali, et al (2001, p. 219) conclude that informal arts cross boundaries of diversity, abandon the hierarchy created by some art forms, allow the sharing of a common interest, and provide easy access to all members of a community. While these authors agree that participation in community arts helps people to develop social skills and to become civically engaged, their definitions of the field and methods of evaluation are incongruent and/or inconsistent.

The most apparent issue in studying the impact of arts-based community projects is that it is difficult to measure and evaluate an abstract idea such as “community building”. In 1996, the Urban Institute initiated the “Arts and Cultural Indicators in Community Building Project” (ACIP) to determine how to integrate arts and culture-related measures into neighborhood quality-of-life indicator systems (Jackson & Herranz, 2002, p.1). In their report, Jackson and Herranz (2002, p. 2) comment on how little theoretical or empirical research exists that speaks to how arts and cultural participation contribute to social dynamics. The measurement framework created by ACIP seeks to create a middle-range approach, by “acknowledging the complexity and interrelationships of arts, culture, and creativity in neighborhoods, but offers a bounded conception based on strong suggestive evidence of the relationship of arts, culture, and creativity to neighborhood quality of life characteristics” (Jackson, Herranz & Kabwasa-Green, 2003, p. 4). Other researchers have adopted evaluation techniques centered on “asset-based” community development. This approach encourages the artist and administrator to draw out the creative and cultural assets of each person, and of communities of people as a first step to creating cultural dialogue (Borrup, 2003, p. 2). Due to dynamic definitions of the field of community arts, these practices of formal data collection are constantly being revised.

Guiding Questions

The primary research question used in conducting this study was; how does program evaluation and grant reporting influence state funding for arts organizations?

In addition to the research question, the following questions have served as a guide in the development and implementation of this research project:

- What role does the state granting agency play in assisting organizations with program evaluation and grant reporting?
- What evaluation techniques are currently being used to measure the performance of arts organizations?
- How is information from grant reports used by state granting agencies to inform decisions about cultural policy?
- How can arts organizations be more accountable to their stakeholders and communities through systematic evaluation?
- How will online grant reporting systems influence the methods of evaluation and reporting for arts organizations?

Significance of Project

By almost any measure, State and Local Arts Agencies have supported an impressive number of people and organizations that are dedicated to supporting community arts and enhancing community cultural development. Nevertheless, as the competition for federal and state dollars increases and the debate about the government's role in the arts continues, there will be a growing demand for outcome-based performance measurement. According to Moore (2005), "the interest in having organizations measure outcomes goes deeper than the desire to hold the organization accountable; it expresses some concern about whether the organization, even when it is performing well, can deliver something that is publicly valuable" (p. 86). As public servants, State and Local Arts Agencies must strive to invest public resources in the arts organizations and arts-based community projects that produce the greatest public value for their citizens. By creating a supportive framework of cultural policy, State and Local Arts Agencies can be proactive in creating systems of program evaluation and report that

not only strengthen the public's trust, but also inform and promote healthy long-term planning within arts organizations.

There are multiple tangible benefits of this research to acknowledge as well. By standardizing evaluation methods and creating tools with which we can talk about the impact of the arts on community-development, we have greater potential to improve the quality of our arts organizations. In turn, this information will help organizations to be more accountable to their stakeholders and community members. By providing art advocates with more accurate tools to measuring the impact of arts and culture, they will be better able to make a case for arts funding to policymakers and other granting agencies. This study may also contribute to the body of knowledge surrounding the concept of community development and evaluation, especially as it relates to the arts and culture.

Delimitations

This study is delimited to programs supported by WSAC. This study is additionally limited to Final Reports submitted by eleven local arts organizations, for a multi-year Organizational Support Grant. The interview component of this research is limited to the perspectives of three employees of WSAC, the Grants to Organizations Manager, the Community Arts Development Program Manager, and the Executive Director. The questionnaire portion of this research is limited to responses from arts leaders within Local Arts Agencies who recently received grant monies in Washington State. In addition, this study is limited by the amount of time available within the scope of the Arts and Administration Master's degree program at the University of Oregon.

Definitions of Terms

- **Arts-based community development (ABCD):** “arts-centered activity that contributes to the sustained advancement of human dignity, health, and/or productivity with a community” (Cleveland, 2002, p. 5).
- **Local Arts Agency (LAA):** A local arts agency, arts council, or other entity must meet the criteria below: (a) Have as its principal purpose the provision of planning, financial support, services, programs and development opportunities for arts organizations, artists and the public, in a community or communities during a major portion of the year. (b) Involve, on a regular basis, activities, programs or services in more than one arts discipline (literary, media, performing and visual arts). (c) Is not a single-purpose organization, such as a theater, dance company, visual arts league, museum, orchestra, art school, or music ensemble, nor is it solely an arts presenter (WSAC Guidelines, 2005, p. 2).

Assumptions of the Study

I believe that the arts and culture can play a significant role in community building by supporting civic dialogue and participation. By promoting art education and cultural understanding, via the exchange of information, knowledge, and resources, local arts organizations can become catalysts for more engaged communities and thereby contribute to a more vibrant civic life.

Conceptual Framework

The topical areas that are addressed in my Master’s Research include the participants in the community development process, current and historical evaluation methods, and standards of performance measurement and accountability used by granting

agencies. The conceptual framework used for this study outlines the cycle of funding, evaluation and reporting used by WSAC. WSAC receives funding from the Washington State Legislature, as well as Federal resources such as the National Endowment from the Arts. In turn, they offer grant funding to established arts organizations that provide artistic events, programs or services to citizens, communities, artists or arts organizations within their State. The purpose of their granting programs is to support organizations that show outstanding artistic merit, public benefit, and long-range management strategies (WSAC Guidelines, 2005, p. 1). Recipients of the grant are required to submit a Final Report to the State Arts Commission, which provides a self-evaluation of the organization's successes and disappointments, national information standards, and information detailing the use of granted funds. The process of evaluation demonstrates accountability to stakeholders and community members, as well as informing cultural policy at a state and federal level. These subjects encompass the participants and process of the program evaluation and grant reporting.

Methodology

This study utilizes quantitative and qualitative methods of field research through emergent design to gather information. This case study looked at how program evaluation and grant reporting influences state funding for arts organizations. The research for this study was composed of five components: (a) a review of related literature, (b) an analysis of documents related to WSAC, (c) a content analysis of Final Reports submitted by Local Arts Agencies who were awarded funds during the 2004-2005 granting period, (d) three in-depth interviews with key informants at WSAC, and (e) a brief questionnaire completed by arts leaders within Local Arts Agencies in Washington State. The final

product of this research is a descriptive synthesis of material generated from these findings, focusing on common emergent themes.

Sites and Participants

The site for this study was the Washington State Arts Commission (WSAC), located in Olympia, Washington. Study participants included three key informants within positions at the WSAC, including the Grants to Organizations Manager, the Community Arts Development Program Manager, and the Executive Director. Additional participants included three arts leaders from Local Arts Agencies who received an Organizational Support Grant in Fiscal Year 2005 from WSAC.

Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

In order to study how program evaluation and grant reporting influences state funding for arts organizations, I gathered information from multiple levels of participants. In doing so, I developed five main research instruments, which were used to organize and code information retrieved from documents, Final Reports, interviews and questionnaires. In addition to taking handwritten notes, I used an audio tape recorder for transcription and validation purposes.

This study used a grounded theory approach in data coding and analysis. Documentation and analysis of collected materials took place throughout the research process. Documents were gathered in three-ring binders according to the topic areas. Code sheets and thematic identification were used to identify emergent codes throughout the study.

Recruitment and Consent Forms

A recruitment and consent form was used to recruit participants in this study. (Examples of human subject recruitment and consent forms for each research instrument can be found in Appendix B and C).

Data Management and Confidentiality

Involvement in this study was voluntary, meaning that participants were free to withdraw their consent and discontinue participation at any time without penalty. By consenting to participate in interviews or observation, participants demonstrated a willingness to have their name used in any resulting documents and publications and to relinquish confidentiality. Any information obtained in connection with this study that can be identified with the participant will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with their permission. Any information obtained during this study was carefully and securely maintained in a locked desk and will be shredded upon completion of the research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Purpose of the Literature Review

The purpose of this research project was to study how program evaluation and grant reporting influence state funding for arts organizations. During this study, I reviewed Final Reports submitted to WSAC in order to determine the methods used by a selection of Local Arts Agencies to evaluate and report their impact on community development.

This literature review provides an overview of the process of art-based community development, especially as it relates to the definition of community arts, current and historical evaluation methods, standards of performance measurement, and accountability used by State and Local granting agencies. Finally, this review will draw on emerging themes from the literature to provide a context for this study within the larger body of literature devoted to arts-based community development, program evaluation, and grant reporting.

Method and Sources for Review

Literature searches were conducted using the library facilities through the University of Oregon. This service includes ORBIS (Oregon Interlibrary Loan). The indexes through the University of Oregon's Janus and First Search software were: (a) Art Abstracts, (b) Arts & Humanities, and (c) Academic Search Elite. Additionally, the World Wide Web was searched using Yahoo, Google and other search engines. Materials used in this literature review include books, journal articles, academic documents, organizational documents, and web site information.

Initial searches were conducted using keyword searches in broad topical categories, which provided a context for the larger research problem. Through the use of

“related search terms”, additional related keywords and topics were identified. Additional resources were identified using bibliographies from books and articles in the initial search. Throughout the course of the literature review, subtopics emerged and the review was increasingly refined.

Literature Review (by topic area)

Literature regarding the definition of community arts

According to Adams and Goldbard (2001), the term *community arts*, is commonly used in Britain and most other English-speaking countries to describe community cultural-development (p. 107). The term is also occasionally used to describe conventional arts activities based in a community or municipality (Adams, 2001, p. 107). Blandy and Congdon (1998) further define this term, by stating that community arts include, “performing arts (music, theater, dance, etc.); multimedia arts; visual arts; literary arts; culinary arts; clothing and textiles; and the multitudes of other forms that people, individually and collectively, create to make the ordinary extraordinary” (p. 1).

While the field of community arts encompasses a wide variety of mediums, methods and subject areas, there are two underlying principles behind the term “community arts”. The first principle is grounded in the belief that cultural values and creative expression exist within each community. The second principle is that the partnership between community members and artists is central to value of the work (Goldbard, 1993, p. 2).

Community arts typically stem from local cultures, which may recognize “groups of people with common interests defined by place, tradition, intention or spirit (Cleveland, 2002, p. 5). Under this definition, communities no longer exist in the traditional physical form; rather they are thought of as dynamic and fluid groups that are

shaped by shared histories, cultures and identities. Community arts often encompass what are known as the informal or unincorporated arts, or activities that are embedded within the everyday life of the community, such as drum circles, quilting groups, and book clubs.

The role of the *community artist*, or “culture worker”, is to assist people in developing their creativity. This role exists in contrast to the field of fine arts, which relies on the skills of trained, professional artists (Goldbard, 1993, p. 2). Under this definition, culture-workers can include teachers, librarians, community activists, and artists (Flood, 1998, p. 3).

The field of community arts is founded in the belief that the arts have the ability to bring deeper meanings of experience to the surface so that social transformation can occur. However, this was not always the case. Twenty-five years ago, community arts advocates used terms like “beautification, quality of life, and community animation” to describe their work. Now, it is more common to hear phrases like “conflict resolution, public safety, economic development, and community revitalization” to describe the work of community arts (Cleveland, 2005, p. 1). According to Goldbard (1993), the fact that “community arts have been insurgent ideas – as much as rebellions against establishment arts practice as visions of another way for artists” makes it even more difficult to define (p. 1).

The history of community arts is thought to have evolved from the social reformist movements in mid-19th century in the United States (Blandy, 1998, p. 1). These movements later came to fruition during the mid-twentieth century, in such forms as the Works Progress Administration, the development of the National Endowment for the Arts, and the “Culture Wars” (Blandy, 1998, p. 1). According to Blandy (1998), the

theory behind community arts is derived from the fields of philosophy, sociology, education, anthropology, folklore, and cultural studies, among others (p. 1). This theory has been dispersed through a variety of mediums, such as journals and other publications, conferences and symposia, professional education programs, as well as word of mouth (Blandy,2004, p. 1).

Community arts are closely linked to community and cultural development (Blandy & Congdon, 1998, p. 4). Using community arts as a tool for development often associates it with the agendas of public and private funders. These community partnerships can result in grass-roots initiatives that further the connection between the arts and economics, urban revitalization and social justice (Blandy, 2004, p. 4).

Literature regarding the arts-based community development process

In community cultural development work, community artists, individually or in groups, place their artistic and organizing skills at the service of the identified community. According to Cary (1998), community development is “the deliberate attempt by community people to work together to guide the future of their communities, and the development of a corresponding set of techniques for assisting community people in such a process” (p. 1). While there is potential for individual learning, the focus of the work is on the development of the community. The arts in this case, are used to bring consciousness to community issues, while at the same time building cultural capacity and contributing to social change (Adams, 2001, p. 61 & 107). On the other hand, Cleveland (2005) argues, “linking art with the improved economic or social health of a community greatly alters the nature of the work” (p. 1). It asserts that there are tangible community benefits, beyond the aesthetic realm, that naturally occur from these endeavors (Cleveland, 2005, p. 1).

Flood (1998) describes community cultural development as, engaging people of a community in taking action to build on and improve their shared culture (p. 1). Flood (1998) argues that “if culture is what connects us, then community cultural development is the tool that tempers and strengthens the connection” (p. 1). Cleveland (2002) furthers this definition by providing four examples of arts-based activities that encourage community development:

- (1) activities that *educate* and *inform* us about ourselves and the world;
- (2) activities that *inspire* and *mobilize* individuals or groups;
- (3) activities that *nurture* and *heal* people and/or communities; and
- (4) activities that *build* and *improve* community capacity and/or infrastructure. (p. 5)

Community cultural development must respond accordingly to the diverse and rapidly changing nature of communities. The impetus for community cultural development is to provide a safe place for people to, “tell their stories, to make connections with others, to come out of isolation, to celebrate their successes, to utilize their talents and learn new skills—to be creative” (Flood, 1998, p. 2). Through community cultural development we create opportunities for civic dialogue and the building of social capital. Community cultural development embraces the ethic that it is beneficial for people to participate in the cultural life of their communities, raise cultural concerns and strategies that will strengthen their community, and help them to collectively move forward.

Community cultural development is primarily concerned with issues surrounding democracy, social justice and diversity. According to Burnham, Durland, and Ewell (2004), democracy means that “all people’s voices must be heard”, and that, “dialogue between and among groups is foundational” (p. 3). Social justice means that people have

“equitable access to resources for all people and equitable treatment of all people is essential, whether the arena is environment equity, racial equity, economic equity, legal equity, gender equity or countless others” (Burnham, et al, 2004, p. 3). Diversity accounts for “communities, places and culture are unique and shape people and their behaviors and relationships; diversity is essential for democracy; and its opposite – the uniform, the generic, the monolithic – is a dangerous state to be avoided” (Burnham, et al, 2004, p. 3).

Literature regarding current and historical evaluation methods

Recent studies have indicated that one of the best ways to evaluate the role of cultural participation in enhancing a community is to examine the field of community arts. Community arts have been noted as having the ability to “bridge the social boundaries of age, gender, race, and neighborhood” (Strom, 2001, p. 36) by creating shared participation in cultural activities. Social scientists have concluded that creating social networks is among the most important efforts towards building social capital. It has been further identified, that people are likely to, “value and derive satisfaction from the presence of cultural assets in their communities” (Strom, 2001, p. 13). By participating in cultural activities, people have the opportunity to reinforce their connections to their community. Nevertheless, the question remains of how to determine what kind of impact arts organizations are having on community cultural development.

Researchers have approached the role of evaluation and performance measurement in the cultural sector in a variety of ways. The following sections will explore the historical role of evaluation at the state and local level, looking specifically at how it relates to performance measurement and accountability.

A brief history of evaluation

In comparison to other policy fields, cultural policy has not been subject to the same level of analysis and evaluation due to the difficulty to measure its impact (Schuster, 2003, p. 5). However, according to Wyszomirski (2002), “cultural philanthropists expect a continuing emphasis on and increased use of performance review and outcome-based evaluation” (p. 198), especially as the competition for scarce funds increases. Barsdate (1996) agrees that, “Virtually every state legislature now engages in more rigorous evaluation practices than ever before” (p. 9). In order to align their services with the public’s needs and to build voter confidence in the legislative process, government officials are relying more on information from performance assessments. In turn, cultural policy is shifting towards building public ownership and involvement in the arts through the analysis and evaluation of outcomes.

In 1993, the United States Government passed the Performance and Results Act (GPRA), which required that by the year 2000, federal agencies demonstrate precisely what they intend to accomplish with federal funds. Federal agencies, including cultural agencies, were required to develop five-year strategic plans with measurable goals and year-by-year-indicators. This has been problematic in that the nonprofit community is not fully aware of GPRA, nor have they been involved in its implementation (Bass, 1998, p. 2).

In 1995, the United Way led the way in outcome-based evaluations by redirecting their program evaluation efforts. Instead of documenting and reporting on observed behaviors, United Way staff developed and measured expected outcomes of their programs (Dreeszen, 2003, p. 256). This shift in thinking prompted other public and

private granting agencies to begin requiring outcome-based measurements from their grantees.

In 1996, statewide performance measurement mandates affected four out of five state arts agencies (Barsdate, 1996, p. 9). These mandates required state arts agencies to collect extensive data about their grants and services, include performance appraisals in their annual budget requests, justify their programmatic decisions through efficiency data, and articulate measurable outcomes in their strategic plan. With this data, state art agencies have been able to evaluate the effectiveness of their programs by analyzing the costs and benefits. They are also able to be more transparent about their use of public monies, thereby overcoming the recently heightened level of public criticism of nonprofit and governmental spending. In addition, information that demonstrates accountability and organizational capacity is useful in supporting the argument for scarce tax dollars (Barsdate, 1996, p. 10).

In 2000, the combined appropriations for State Arts Agencies totaled \$396.5 million, which represented an increase of nearly 7.2 percent from the previous year. This year was the sixth consequential increase in total appropriations since 1993, when the combined amount was only \$211 million (Wyszomirski, 2002, p. 191). In 2003, State Legislatures appropriated \$353.9 million for State Art Agencies, which also received another \$23.5 million from other government sources. In addition, the National Endowment for the Arts contributed \$116.5 million to the arts, of which \$33.3 million of which was distributed to the states (Schuster, 2003, p. 4). Because State support for the arts has exceeded the amount of federal support, and continues to be on the rise, it is important that State Art Agencies begin to confront issues of performance measurement and accountability.

More and more cultural programs and projects are being adopted at the state and local level to address a wide variety of societal needs, such as economic development, cultural tourism, and at-risk youth. These issues are more likely to be pursued at a state and local level because it is their constituents who are most likely to be affected. According to Schuster (2003), “the move toward delegation, devolution, and decentralization in government policy making and implementation has made it more important to understand how policy actually plays out at lower levels of government” (p. 5). Under these circumstances, it is the state agency’s responsibility to respond to the public’s growing concern about the effectiveness of the government’s involvement in the arts. In order to maximize the potential benefits of evaluation, a supportive framework of policy must be in place.

Despite the many important reasons for conducting external and internal evaluations, relatively few organizations have a system for evaluation in place. Easterling (1999) argues that the grantors design of their granting programs plays a major role in how the grantees use the funds (p. 2). He speculates that the granting agencies establish a distinct persona simply through the design of their granting programs. If the grantor maintains a hands-off role in the distribution of funds, it is likely that they will receive a reciprocal response in terms of final grant reports (Easterling, 1999, p. 2).

In addition to a lack of human and financial resources within State and Local Arts Agencies, the biggest problem associated with evaluation is that it is most often associated with a sense of judging. According to Easterling (1999), evaluation is associated with a sense of threat or fear that our well-being or survival is at risk (p. 4). Thus, it is not surprising that many organizations do not have established evaluation techniques.

Outcome-based Program Evaluation

Nonprofit organizations typically work from their mission to identify several overall goals that drive their actions. In many cases, these goals become organized programs, which are suited to benefit their constituent's needs. These programs must be evaluated on an ongoing basis to determine whether they are being effective and productive in obtaining their mission. *Program evaluation* is the, "careful collection of information about a program or some aspect of a program in order to make necessary decisions about the program" (McNamara, 1998, p.2). There are a variety of evaluation methods that can be used to collect data, however, this review focuses on outcome evaluation because it is the "prevailing paradigm in nonprofit funding" (Dreeszen, 2003, p. 256).

Goal or outcomes-based evaluations looks at to what extent programs are meeting their predetermined goals and objectives, using the *logic model*. A logic model is simply a graphic representation of the "if-then" logic of your evaluation. It is saying, "If we do this, then we should accomplish this" (Dreeszen, 2003, p. 256).

Goal ⇔ *Objective (intended outcome)* ⇔ *Activities* ⇔ *Actual outcome*

The logic model asks: Is your organization doing the right program activities to bring about the outcomes you believe to be needed by your clients? In deliberately planned programs, the process begins by defining long-term *goals* and short-term *outcomes* (Dreeszen, 2003, p 256).

While the incentive to evaluate comes primarily from funders interested in accountability, the real value of evaluation is the information it provides to improve programs. The following list (McNamara, 1998) demonstrates some of the ways that program evaluation can improve an organization's effectiveness and productivity:

- Help an organization to understand, verify or increase the impact of products or service on customers or clients by identifying program strengths and weaknesses.
- Often times in nonprofit organizations programming and plans change frequently to adapt to community needs. Program evaluation can help verify that an organization is obtaining its goals or if new goals need to be set.
- Improve the program delivery methods, thereby becoming more efficient and less costly.
- Affect how budget strategies are determined by validating the need for programs.
- Information retrieved from evaluation can be used for public relations and promoting the organizations' services in the community.
- Funders are increasingly requiring nonprofits to provide outcomes evaluations as verification that the nonprofits are indeed helping their constituents. (p. 3)

The overextended resources, human and financial, make it difficult to prioritize evaluation. However, many funders expect that five to ten percent of program costs will be appropriated towards evaluation (Werther, 2001, p. 148). Effective managers will monitor programs outcomes as they are occurring (*formative evaluation*) and will make adjustments and improvements as needed.

Literature regarding standards of performance measurement and accountability used by State and Federal granting agencies

In response to the changing accountability environment, the National Assembly of States Arts Agencies (NASAA) has developed *A State Arts Agency Performance Measurement Toolkit* (1996). This toolkit identifies how arts agencies can demonstrate the impact of their activities, what evidence they can cite to demonstrate effective service delivery to the community, artists and arts organizations and how public arts agencies can

respond to increasing government pressure to meet performance standards (NASAA, 1996). This publication acts as a practical guide to assist arts leaders and public agency officials in creating solutions surrounding the issue of performance measurement.

Since the publication of the *Performance Measurement Toolkit* in 1996, the field has developed even more experience in trying to define and implement performance measures. One study, performed by the RAND Corporation, linked arts participation with social benefits, by encouraging a “broader, deeper, and more diversified experience with arts in any given community” (Moore, 2005, p. 88). However, the RAND researchers could not find strong empirical evidence to support the claims of social benefits. Eventually they decided that they could not support the conclusion that “indirect, instrumental effects of arts participation were present or could be attributed to arts participation in itself” (Moore, 2005, p. 88). This does not mean that this claim should be altogether dismissed, but rather that it should become part of a greater argument in the support of the social justification for the arts.

While the RAND Corporation was focusing their research through a conceptual lens, a number of State Arts Agencies were working to develop theories that were more practical for their specific situations. What developed from these individual efforts was a series of “goal hierarchies” and “measurement grids” (Moore, 2005, p. 89). Organizations created higher-level goals, which were then broken down into more specific and measurable categories of activities.

The problem, however, was not in developing concepts and theories surrounding the issue of performance measurement. Rather, the issue has been how to encourage State and Local Arts Agencies to make a commitment to upholding a given set of measures. The difficulty with committing to a particular set of performance measures has become a

political problem, as well as a technical problem. Moore (2005) comments, “It is hard for both the authorizers and those who lead the SAAs [State Arts Agencies] to make a firm, binding commitment with one another about how to measure the impact of the SAA. Neither side wants to be pinned down to a particular deal. Each side wants to be able to change the terms of their evaluation when it suits their interests to do so” (p. 91). In addition, the administrative resources required to develop and maintain performance measures often outweigh the potential benefits of completing the study. There is no guarantee that the efforts committed to using performance measurements will result in enhanced legitimacy, improved performance, or significant organizational learning. Because arts organizations do not exist in a vacuum, it is important that they maintain the flexibility to shift with changes in the environment.

Counter to that opinion, exists the idea that with the basic methods of performance measurement in place internally and externally, agencies would have the ability to track plans, goals, and outcomes over time (Stevens, 1998, p. 2). This documentation would aid arts advocates when asked by legislators, “What is the impact of the funding distributed by this agency?” Without having to resort to second-hand justifications, agencies could respond with real, comparable data. According to Barsdate (1996), legislators are accustomed to seeing sophisticated measurement approaches in high-profile government agencies, such as those involved with justice, economic development, and education (p. 10). By creating a framework for measurement, agencies could be more competitive, do better long-term planning, and be more cost-efficient.

In order to carry out performance measurement, agencies need to assign anticipated outcomes or indicators of success to each goal and objective in their strategic plan. These should be aligned with the organization’s mission, grant criteria, and design

of the granting program. Some agencies will be bound by requirements provided by their state budget offices, which may dictate the kinds of measures to be used and the process to implement them. Other states may have more flexibility in how to connect their evaluation practices to their existing strategic plan (Barsdate, 1996, p. 13). In either situation, the agencies system for performance measurement should reflect its unique needs.

Emerging themes from literature review

Common themes of relevance to program evaluation and grant reporting emerged in the literature review. These themes, many of which overlap, will shape and inform the analysis of the Final Reports, interviews, and questionnaires, as well as the conclusions presented at the end of this report.

- The arts can be used to bring consciousness to community issues, while concurrently building cultural capacity and contributing to social change (Adams, 2001, p. 61 & 107).
- Using community arts as a tool for development often associates it with the agendas of public and private funders (Blandy, 1998, p. 4).
- More and more cultural programs and projects are being adopted at the state and local level to address a wide variety of social needs (Schuster, 2003, p. 5).
- It is the state agency's responsibility to respond to the public's growing concern about the effectiveness of the government's involvement in the arts.
- Increased competition for funding is leading more cultural philanthropists to rely on information from performance measurements (Barsdate, 1996, p. 9).

- In order to carry out performance measurement, agencies need to assign anticipated outcomes or indicators of success to each goal and objective in their strategic plan (McNamara, 1998, p. 2).

Chapter 3: Data Collection and Findings

The purpose of this research project was to study how program evaluation and grant reporting influence state funding for arts organizations. The following data collection and analysis was performed in accordance with this purpose. Data was collected from four different sources in an attempt to identify common emergent themes of relevance and importance to State granting agencies. These sources included: (a) a review of documents related to the WSAC, (b) a content analysis of Final Reports forms submitted by Local Arts Agencies who were awarded Operational Support Grants during the 2003-2005 granting period, (c) three in-depth interviews with key informants at the Washington State Arts Commission, and (d) a brief questionnaire to the arts leaders of the aforementioned Local Arts Agencies.

The purpose of this chapter is to present and analyze the data that was collected from the document review, content analysis, interviews, and questionnaires. This analysis will respond to each of these areas as they relate to program evaluation and grant reporting.

Washington State Arts Commission: Overview and Background

The purpose of the document review is to provide background information about the WSAC, regarding their budget and reporting processes, grant programs and procedures, and strategic planning. These topics will be reviewed primarily using information from the WSAC Web site (www.arts.wa.gov), WSAC's Organizational Support Program Guidelines, WSAC's 2005 Annual Report, and WSAC's 2005-2011 Strategic Plan.

Washington State Arts Commission

WSAC was established in 1961, to “support the arts as essential to the state's social, educational and economic growth, and to contribute to Washington's quality of life and the well-being of its citizens” (WSAC Web site, 2006). The purpose of their programs is to, “increase citizen access to and participation in the arts, incorporate the arts into the education of every Washington K-12 student, and to increase public support for the arts” (WSAC Web Site, 2006).

Approximately fourteen-percent of WSAC’s budget comes directly from funds contributed by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) (WSAC Annual Report, 2005, p. 2). In order to maintain funding from the NEA, WSAC is required to resubmit an application every three years. Typically, each state arts agency is required to submit an application annually. However, organizations that have met the review requirements and criteria are not required to submit another full-scale application, including all material necessary for panel review, for another three years. During the "off years", the application requirements are greatly simplified. It is at the discretion of the Arts Endowment Chairman to revoke the multi-year approval if state support is substantially reduced or if other circumstances threaten an agency's ability to carry out their approved plan (NEA Web Site, 2006). Furthermore, it is to an agency’s advantage to achieve multi-year approval in order to continue carrying out its approved plan.

The remaining portion of WSAC’s budget is derived from the State General Fund (42%), the State Capital Fund (40%), and private donations/other funds (4%) (WSAC Annual Report, 2005, p. 2). Each budgeted agency within Washington State is subject to an annual Agency Activity Inventory, which summarizes their major activities. This document provides individual descriptions of the nature of their services, what clients are

involved, the expected results of the programs, and the estimated activity costs assuming the Governor's 2006 supplemental budget proposal. In many cases, agencies provide estimated costs of new budget items, and later reassign these costs to the proper activities after the budget is enacted (OFM Web Site, 2006).

Under the state's Budget, Accounting, and Reporting Act (RCW 43.88.090), state agencies are required to submit strategic plans and performance measures with their budget submittals, and to assess performance on an on-going basis. The Office of Financial Management (OFM) provides a computerized system for agencies to enter and update their mission statements, goal statements, performance measure descriptions, and estimated and actual performance levels (OFM Web Site, 2006). For the 2005-07 Biennium, agencies have developed and will be reporting on performance measures, which show the results of agency activities. While a few agencies are still in the process of developing new activity measures to be tracked during 2005-2007, this activity inventory represents the new "activity-based" approach to performance measurement (OFM Web Site, 2006).

Grant Programs and Procedures

One way that WSAC offers financial support to Washington's nonprofit arts organizations is through their Institutional Support grants, Operating Support grants, Project Support grants, and Cooperative Partnerships. This funding helps to reduce the cost of producing or presenting arts and cultural events for the public, thereby making them more accessible to Washington State residents. In the Fiscal Year 2005, WSAC distributed more than \$1.1 million dollars, budgeted from state appropriations and the NEA, to their Grants to Organizations Program. This grant money assisted with more

than 49,000 events, serving more than 8.9 million people in attendance (WSAC Web site, 2006).

About a quarter of WSAC's budget is designated for Grants to Organizations (WSAC Annual Report, 2005, p. 2). Because WSAC is responsible for the distribution of public money, it is important to discuss the role of performance measurement and accountability in this process. In the State of Washington, the constitution dictates, "state money cannot be used for unrestricted grants or for general operating support" (Schuster, 2003, p. 16). Therefore, instead of issuing a grant, the WSAC must write contracts for services to be paid on a reimbursement basis. In some ways, this system allows for greater accountability, as taxpayer money is more likely to be used for its intended purposes. Although, this presents a problem for smaller arts organizations that do not have the money to support their projects while awaiting reimbursement from the Arts Commission (Schuster, 2003, p. 16).

In the case of WSAC, the granting process is traditional, wherein proposals are submitted and reviewed using general funding guidelines. There are slight variations in the review of grant applications for each of the four categories of grants within the Grants to Organizations Program. However, the evaluation and review of applications is primarily based upon the written responses and support materials submitted with each application. Initially, WSAC staff reviews every grant application for eligibility within the specific categories of funding. Once eligibility is determined, applications are then reviewed by a peer panel composed of professionals from the field. The review committee makes the initial funding recommendations and the Executive Director then approves awards for project grants. Panel recommendations are presented to a Committee

of the Washington State Arts Commission, which makes recommendations to the full Commission for final review, approval, and funding amounts (WSAC Web site, 2006).

Organizational Support Program Grant Guidelines

The Organizational Support Program Grant (OSP) offers funding to established arts organizations that provide artistic events, programs or services to Washington citizens, communities, artists or arts organizations; and can demonstrate a record of programmatic and administrative stability. These grants allow qualifying organizations to support their goals, ongoing programs and services without undue emphasis on specific projects as a justification for funding. Funding covers two fiscal years, with allocations made annually based on the Commission's available budget in state and federal funds (WSAC Guidelines, 2005, p. 1).

Eligible applicants must be 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations or governmental agencies, with an operating budget of at least \$79,000. Organizations must have a three-year history of offering arts programs in Washington State, with at least one part-time paid staff member, or a minimum five-year history of arts programming with an all-volunteer staff (WSAC Guidelines, 2005, p. 1).

In addition to the mission statement, goals, and general rules, there are three primary criteria used to review grants:

- **Artistic merit** of the artistic effort, events, programs or services.
- **Public benefit:** appropriate size and distribution of the audience or public served; efforts to diversify audiences, increase public access and serve people with disabilities, and commitment to community and public education.
- **Management:** long-range strategies for on-going financial stability, fund-raising, and planning.

Organizational Support grants are grouped for the panel to review in four categories: Arts Producing organizations, Arts Presenters, Arts Service Organizations, and Local Arts Agencies (WSAC Guidelines, 2005, p. 1). This study focuses specifically on grants awarded to Local Arts Agencies (see Definition of Terms on page 7).

Recipients of grants are required to submit a Final Report at the end of the contract period, which includes a self-evaluation, final budget, and copies of actual documents from the grant or project activities (OSP Guidelines, 2005, p. 7).

2005-2011 Strategic Plan

Every two years, WSAC is required to submit a strategic plan to the governor. WSAC is currently working from a Strategic Plan, which outlines their objectives and provides measurable results, which can be assessed through activity indicators, performance measures, and other ongoing documentation (WSAC Strategic Plan, 2005, p. 3). Their 2005-2011 Strategic plan focuses on five objectives, which include; (1) Enhance the ability of arts organizations to improve artistic quality, organizational stability and outreach; (2) Increase participation in the arts by traditionally underserved communities; (3) Improve teaching and learning by supporting and promoting sustainable arts-based curricula and programs in K-12 public schools; (4) Integrate and conserve visual art in public spaces; and (5) Develop and pursue an agenda to enhance public policy that supports the arts” (WSAC Strategic Plan, 2005, p. 3). These goals and objectives will be implemented through targeted strategies and action steps, which are further outlined in their Strategic Plan.

Content Analysis: Organizations Support Grant Final Reports

In order to contextualize the interviews and questionnaires that follow, it is important to understand the content of the Final Reports. The purpose of the content analysis is to review the Final Reports from the 2005 Organizational Support Grant, looking specifically at how local arts agencies are reporting their successes and disappointments and what common themes emerge. From an initial review of the Final Reports, the researcher recognized that the arts organizations were identifying common successes and/or disappointments within general “themes”. These themes, which can be broken down further into sub-themes, include *budget*, *community involvement/participation*, *programs*, *administration*, *collaboration/partnerships*, and *other*.

Coding Procedure

In order to code the data, the researcher first compiled common keywords from the self-evaluation portion of the eleven Final Reports. These keywords were categorized into larger themes for both “successes” and “disappointments”, which included *budget*, *community involvement/participation*, *programs*, *administration*, *partnerships and/or collaboration*, and *other*. The researcher then reviewed the Final Reports for these themes. Each time a theme was discussed in the Final Report, it was tallied on an Excel spreadsheet (See Appendix A for Content Analysis of Final Reports). This information, along with the National Standards Information, is used later to compare and contrast program evaluation methods and grant reporting techniques used by the selected Local Arts Agencies in Washington State.

Final Report Successes and Disappointments

The following list represents the number of Local Arts Agencies (out of eleven) that reported successes or disappointments within certain themes in their Final Report. Within each designated “theme” drawn from the Final Reports, a number of sub-themes or keywords emerged. The following list also shows examples of what grantees reported as their successes or disappointments within these sub-themes.

What did most people report as their successes?

Budget (7/11)

- Fundraising/Donor development
- Fiscal – “in the black”
- Gallery sales
- Matching/New grants
- Endowment campaign

Community Involvement/Participation (8/11)

- Supported by the community
- Participation up
- Gallery attendance
- New audiences (types of people)
- New audiences (other counties)
- Volunteer recruitment
- Reception attendance
- Community dialogue
- Increased new membership
- Membership renewals

Programs (10/11)

- New programs
- Program continuation
- Expanded programs
- Positive evaluations (feedback)

Administration (4/11)

- New staff/positions
- Improved administration
- Technological advancement

Partnerships/Collaboration (6/11)

- Collaboration/partnerships
- Stable/Increased sponsorship

Other (5/11)

- Exhibit quality
- Facility improvements
- New publications

What did most people report as their failures?**Budget (9/11)**

- Low gallery sales
- Budget cuts
- Difficulty fundraising

Community Involvement/Participation (5/11)

- Participation down
- Decreased membership

Programs (2/11)

- Canceling programs
- Programs not reaching intended audiences

Administration (2/11)

- Staffing (lack or transition)
- Technology out-of-date

Partnerships/Collaboration (0/11)

- Facility availability issues

Other (4/11)

- Vandalized or stolen art
- No money for public art maintenance
- Economic downturn (because of 9/11)

Emergent themes from content analysis

- Ninety-one percent of people reported that their *programs* were a success within for their organization.
- Eighty-two percent of people reported that their *budget* was a disappointment for their organization.
- Thirty-six percent of people reported that their *administration* was a success for their organization.

- Zero percent of people reported that their *partnerships/collaboration* was a disappointment for their organization.

Interviews: Washington State Arts Commission

Three key informants were selected to participate in this study because of their leadership positions within WSAC and their experiences with and expertise pertinent to cultural development in the State of Washington. Kris Tucker, the Executive Director of WSAC, was interviewed regarding her advisory role in the grant making process, as well, as the use of Final Report data. Bitsy Bidwell, the Community Arts Development Program Manager, was interviewed regarding her role in providing technical assistance and organizational training to organizations about in grant making and reporting. Finally, Mayumi Tsutakawa, the Grants to Organizations Program Manager, was interviewed regarding her role in the drafting of grant applications and guidelines, and her involvement in the distribution of grants.

Questions prepared for the interviews were developed in relation to the purpose statement and guiding questions of this research project. The questions were open-ended to elicit information from the participants that reflected observations and issues related to program evaluation and grant reporting. With the permission of Tucker and Tsutakawa, interviews were tape-recorded. Bidwell consented to being audio-recorded; however, the recorder did not function properly. All participants were able to review the transcriptions of their interview to make corrections and additions. Following a brief introduction of the participant's background and their role in the grant making process, the narrative synthesis of the interviews generally follows the structure of the guiding questions. (See Appendix A for interview questions)

Kris Tucker | Executive Director

Kris Tucker, the Executive Director of WSAC, is a community-based political activist, originally appointed to her position by Governor Gary Locke and later reappointed by Governor Christine Gregoire. With a staff of eighteen, she cultivates the arts statewide with outreach and education efforts, grants and a state arts program. She has worked for the Arts Commission for seven years, before that, she worked for the Idaho Arts Commission. With a degree in nutrition and community health, her interests in serving the public are deeply rooted. She later worked as a freelance writer, writing about health, and acting as a ghostwriter. She also helped found the Magic Valley Arts Council in Twin Falls, Idaho (Tucker, personal communication, July 28, 2005).

Tucker's role in the granting process is primarily to supervise the Grants to Organizations Program Manager. Tucker advises on selection of panelists for the grant application review and attempts to sit in on at least part of all the panel meetings. In terms of distribution of grant monies, Tucker reviews all of the materials before they go to the commission to look at the formulas and make sure that the rationale that the panel used makes sense. In addition, Tucker advises on information to be used in the Annual Report, which is presented to the Washington State Legislature and the National Endowment for the Arts to demonstrate the use of funds (Tucker, personal communication, March 3, 2006).

Bitsy Bidwell | Community Arts Development Program Manager

Bitsy Bidwell has been the Community Arts Development Manager for WSAC for the past eighteen years. She is a trainer, facilitator, and resource to the field regarding information on a broad range of arts administration topics. She is a specialist at locating the most helpful information for local arts councils and commissions, arts producing and

presenting organizations, artists around the state, and others. She regularly offers arts administration workshops around the state, and provides services specifically tailored to arts organizations upon request. She handles all requests for technical assistance, information and referral, and often does special projects for the agency. She has personal experience as an artist and a touring professional and holds an M.A. from Western State College in Gunnison, Colorado (Bidwell, personal communication, April 5, 2006).

The Community Arts Development Program (CAD), which Bidwell manages, provides management information and assistance (called ‘technical assistance’ or TA) as well as guidance and encouragement to arts organizations, artists, local arts councils and commissions, municipal governments and the public. The CAD Program provides information, guidance to resources, assistance in addressing specific or general issues, networking opportunities, provision of data and information, best practices, and other help for managing the arts. Topics include such areas as forming and managing a nonprofit arts organization, organizing and presenting art events, or finding, earning, and raising money to support the arts. Most technical assistance takes place through phone calls or email conversations with the CAD Manager. In addition, Bidwell provides on-site meetings with organization’s staffs, boards, volunteers or other groups for a minimal fee (WSAC web site, 2006).

Mayumi Tsutakawa | Grants to Organizations Program Manager

The Grants to Organizations Program Manager, Mayumi Tsutakawa, only recently began working for WSAC, after the previous staff member of 30 years retired. Prior to her position at WSAC, Tsutakawa was the manager of the Cultural Resources Division for King County. She later worked for the King County Arts Commission for seven years as the Community Arts Coordinator and Assistant Director. Through her

work at King County, Tsutakawa came to learn a lot about grant making and government responsibility in the arts (personal communication, March 3, 2006). After nine years of working with county government, Tsutakawa became a freelancer and worked on a number of literary and visual arts community-based projects, exhibitions, and anthologies of writers of colors and artists of color, both past and present. She later became the Director of Development for the Wing Luke Asian Museum (Tsutakawa, personal communication, March 3, 2006). Tsutakawa originally began her work at WSAC as a freelancer, assisting with a multi-year grant from the Wallace Foundation, specifically working in the underserved communities around Washington State.

Tsutakawa's primary responsibilities include the distribution of guidelines and applications, the processing of the grant applications, providing technical assistance to grantees, and selecting and convening the Grant Review Panel. The Washington State Arts Commission provides two different documents in the granting process, the Grant Guidelines and the Grant Application Form. Tsutakawa's role is to draft the guidelines for the various grants, which are then approved by the commission. Important policy points, such as "an organization must have had five years of experience in consistent arts programming", are also approved by the commission, but small wording changes, deadlines and logistics on the application form itself are the responsibility of staff (Tsutakawa, personal communication, March 3, 2006).

Interviews in Relation to Guiding Questions

What role does the state granting agency play in assisting organizations with program evaluation and grant reporting?

According to the interviewees, besides providing general assistance to grant applicants, WSAC is currently doing very little to assist arts organizations with program

evaluation. They do not pay for program evaluation specifically; however, in some of their programs, there is an evaluation component with tools provided. The Arts in Education program, for example, has received private funding to conduct what Tsutakawa called “academic-based evaluations” by an external reviewer (personal communication, March 3, 2006). General assistance is provided to people applying for grants through the Community Arts Development Program. Bidwell remarked, however, “Program evaluation is rarely what they ask for and often what they need” (personal communication, March 3, 2006).

What evaluation techniques are currently being used to measure the performance of arts organizations?

When asked what is important for arts organizations to know about evaluating their programs and services, Bidwell responded, “You can’t do it on a whim” (Bidwell, personal communication, March 3, 2006). Program evaluation is part of an ongoing planning cycle, which requires that organizations set clear goals, objectives and strategies. Currently, in the field of arts administration, everyone is looking at evaluation as a way of ‘proving’ the intrinsic and extrinsic value of the arts. Bidwell argued that what you get with most evaluation techniques is “data” or “sound bites.” The grantee’s opinion, expressed in “sound bites”, needs to be supported by data. “You have the ability to shape the message through stories or anecdotes and to use the data to tell stories” (Bidwell, personal communication, March 3, 2006).

Tsutaakawa stated that WSAC primarily relies on evaluation through quantitative measures, because of their funding from the National Endowment for the Arts. WSAC’s Fiscal Director requires the agency to collect data, called FDR’s (the Federal Descriptive Report) about the amount of money arts organizations received, where they are located,

how many people they served, and what kinds of populations were served. WSAC codes this data and uses it to create reports for the NEA. Additionally, every three years, Tucker submits a proposal to the NEA based on WSAC's strategic plan. The quantitative data from the Final Reports is also available for WSAC's internal use, for example, if someone were to ask, "How much money did you grant to the Yakima area or how many people from this congressional district" or "how many programs supported disabled audience members" (Tsutakawa, personal communication, March 3, 2006).

Tsutakawa pointed out that the agency does not "prefer quantitative data over qualitative". To illustrate this opinion Tsutakawa provided the Arts Participation Initiative (API) as an example. This WSAC grant program, which has been used as a test area for new ideas, attempted to develop a logic model for evaluation. API grantees were required to use a "journal", to show their key contacts, inputs, outputs, and most importantly, outcomes. The API program did not award large sums of money to grantees, but because the first round of funding was three years long, WSAC was able to work with the grantees to develop this kind of information. In addition, WSAC provided two trainings annually for grant recipients.

When asked what is important for arts organizations to know about reporting the results of their programs and services, Bidwell responded that there are three things to be aware of (a) accountability, (B) shrinking resources, and (c) sustainability. In the past, organizations in the nonprofit sector as a whole have overlooked the importance of program evaluation and reporting. However, people are starting to pay attention to where their dollars are being spent which is why more and more arts organizations are being asked to demonstrate their results. The growing demand for a shrinking supply of resources is causing many organizations to fail or merge with similar organizations.

According to Bidwell, those organizations that can report on the specific impact of their programs and services are more likely to survive this process. She believes that in order to maintain and improve arts organizations, “we need to create an environment that nurtures and supports the arts”. Up until now, our evaluation and reporting methods have been shortsighted. “Evaluation done by arts organizations is not just about immediate lessons or even just about the organization itself. It should be, ultimately, about creating the kind of community that you want” (Bidwell, personal communication, March 6, 2006).

How is information from grant reports used by state granting agencies to inform decisions about cultural policy?

At the end of each granting period, WSAC requires grantees to submit a Final Report. This document demonstrates that the grant money was used in the manner that it was contracted for. In addition, the Final Report asks agencies to give a brief self-evaluation of their organizations successes and disappointments during the grant year. However, according to Tsutakawa and Tucker, this document has not been fully utilized in the past. Tucker reports, “I am embarrassed to say that I really don’t sit down and on a regular basis with the final reports. I just don’t, and I think there’s just a lot of blood, sweat and tears that goes into that and some really good material that we don’t really use” (personal communication, March 3, 2006). Tucker elaborates that Final Reports are really only about grants, which are only a small portion of the work of the agency, and in some ways, their most expedient program (Tucker, personal communication, March 3, 2006). There are other valuable components of the agencies work, which will not be documented in the Final Reports. Tsutakawa explained that the Final Reports give an organization an opportunity to articulate what they have accomplished, but this information is not used

when it comes time to look at their application for the next year (personal communication, March 3, 2006).

It became apparent from the interviews that information from the Final Reports was not necessarily used to determine whether they met the requirements of the grant. The requirement of the grant is that grantees use the money for the specific purposes outlined in their application. However, according to Tsutakawa, if the organization experienced some “disappointments”, like the principle conductor fell ill or they did not have as many audience members as they had hoped, organizations would not lose the granted money. In other words, if they completed the program, they met the requirement of the grant (Tsutakawa, personal communication, March 3, 2006).

In the Grant to Organizations area, there are multiple granting programs, each with a budget of around \$5,000 a year for conducting evaluation. This year, because WSAC is in the process of revising their strategic plan, they are doing a couple of things differently. In addition to hiring someone to collect constituent input from the field through interviews, surveys, and focus groups, they plan to hire someone to make a summary of the Final Reports. According to Tsutakawa, “as long as I’ve been here, I’ve never seen anybody summarize them, so this will be a new thing that we’re going to do right in the next couple of months” (personal communication, March 3, 2006).

In addition to their report to the NEA, WSAC compiles an annual report, which provides both qualitative and quantitative information about the organizations’ activities. The narratives used in the annual report are derived for the most part, through the filter of staff. Stories are chosen to represent the organization’s activities for various reasons; some are compelling, some are chosen because they are in the district of a key legislator, or others are selected because the organization’s feels the need to say something about

something about work done in the southwest corner of the state (Tucker, personal communication, March 3, 2006). The information in the Annual Report illustrates what percentage of the budget is available for arts organizations, and what would be possible with more money. According to Tucker, the best advocacy to legislators is, “not about deficit, it’s about results” (personal communication, March 3, 2006).

How can arts organizations be more accountable to their stakeholders and communities through systematic evaluation?

Bidwell described the relationship between evaluation and state funding as being like a “permeable membrane” that goes up and down (personal communication, March 3, 2006). If arts organizations tell their story effectively, it is likely to be passed onto the state level. Once WSAC is aware of the local stories, those advocating at a state level can use the stories to influence funding. Arts stories from across the spectrum of the community show the broad extrinsic and intrinsic value of the arts. Bidwell’s argument was that, if the community did not support the arts in a variety of settings, their support would not continue. This cycle carries on until there is more money available to arts organizations (Bidwell, personal communication, March 3, 2006).

While all three interviewees agreed that evaluation was an important aspect of programming and grant reporting, no single method or approach to evaluation was suggested. Tsutakawa argued that one way that organizations could be more accountable is through strategic planning (personal communication, March 3, 2006). Strategic planning takes into account the conditions within the field, the conditions of the organization, including the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (the SWOT). Tsutakawa stated that stakeholders, who could include public officials or individual donors, should expect access to the same type of information that WSAC requires

(personal communication, March 3, 2006). Bidwell argued that evaluation has to be done on a case-by-case basis. Her feeling was that there is a general value to having a system in place, but that the questions cannot be the same for every organization. There are basic program evaluation methods to use as models, with a variety of options of how to collect that data. However, it is the responsibility of each arts organization and community to customize and implement their evaluation process (Bidwell, personal communication, March 6, 2006).

The question of whether systematic evaluation would be beneficial is not just about arts organizations evaluating their own activities, but also about how we can bring a broader arts evaluation process into the whole community. Bidwell asks herself,

How do we self-monitor? How do we determine what data should be collected and what it should be used for? What story do we want to tell? Are we [the arts] in control of the story or letting others make the plot? (personal communication, March 6, 2006)

Her feeling is that the rage for accountability is driven by non-arts forces and is, in some ways, antithetical to the whole idea of art. Her observation is that there seems to be a pendulum going away from accountability via only hard data and numbers. Many people are beginning to argue that the arts cannot and should not lose an equal focus on the intrinsic values.

All three interviewers agreed that many arts organizations in Washington are “on the edge”, working hard to create a product, with no energy or resources to devote to program evaluation. In order to encourage arts organizations to start doing program evaluation, Bidwell suggested that grantors use the “carrot on a stick approach” (personal communication, March 3, 2006). This method, which is used with the Arts Facility

Survey for ADA/504 access, allows participants who pass a training program to receive a certificate. This certificate becomes an incentive or an indicator of approval (Bidwell, personal communication, March 3, 2006). Before this can happen, however, Bidwell argued that WSAC must first identify their own evaluation methods and begin to model good evaluation techniques for measuring both intrinsic and extrinsic impacts. Once this internal evaluation is complete, they can begin looking at how to encourage organizations to collect data and the anecdotal program information.

How will online grant reporting systems influence the methods of evaluation and reporting for arts organizations?

WSAC intends on having their grant process online for fiscal year '08, starting July 1, 2007. WSAC is currently pursuing this in collaboration with King County and the City of Seattle. By co-investing in the technology, applicants would have some similar user interfaces. However, the program would be customized to accommodate the needs of both Seattle and King County (Tucker, personal communication, March 3, 2006). Arts organizations applying for grants will be able to log in on the WSAC Web site and update their grant application. When it comes time to compose their Final Report, grantees will be able to log on and view their application to see what they proposed to accomplish. Tucker notes that this system “isn’t a test about how good you are, but it’s a way to really explain what happened” (personal communication, March 3, 2006). According to Tucker, this is one way that WSAC can be more intentional with arts organizations.

Tucker believes that an online granting system will improve WSAC’s efficiency in many ways (personal communication, March 3, 2006). Information submitted online will be automatically inputted into WSAC’s databases, which will reduce the risk of errors from information being re-keyed. In addition, it will be easier for WSAC to

generate reports because the data will be much easier to sort. By design, this system will allow WSAC to retrieve additional information as well. For example, if the organization wanted to conduct a survey of local arts agencies that have strategic plans, they could easily include it as part of the application form (Tucker, personal communication, March 3, 2006).

However, there is some speculation that switching to an online granting system will be problematic, due to the imposition of new technology. Tucker argued, however, that WSAC is certainly not the first to implement an online system, and that the conventional wisdom right now is that they are not doing arts organizations a service by keeping them away from technology (personal communication, March 3, 2006). In order to survive as small businesses, arts organizations will, “need to be fully functional in an IT environment and that can be at their desktop, or it can be at the public library or at the home of a board member” (Tucker, personal communication, March 3, 2006).

Emergent Themes from Interviews

Interviews with key informants from WSAC provided a diverse array of perspectives regarding the role of program evaluation and grant reporting. During the course of the interviews, there emerged several common themes of relevance to program evaluation and grant reporting.

- Besides providing general assistance to grant applicants, WSAC is doing little to assist arts organizations financially with program evaluation.
- Some of WSAC’s grant programs have an evaluation component, but the Organizational Support Program does not.
- Program evaluation is part of an ongoing planning cycle, which requires organizations to set clear goals, objectives and strategies.

- A combination of quantitative and qualitative data is necessary in reporting the successes and disappointments of programs.
- Final Reports are not being fully utilized by WSAC.
- Final Reports are not used to determine whether the grantees met the requirements of the grant.
- WSAC is in the process of revising their strategic plan, which will influence how they conduct evaluations.
- Evaluation of and within arts organizations should be done on a case-by-case basis.
- While there are some drawbacks to an online granting system, interviewees believe it will improve WSAC's efficiency in many ways.

Questionnaire: Local Arts Agencies

The purpose of the questionnaire was to supplement findings from the Final Reports with firsthand information from the Arts Leaders of the corresponding Local Arts Agencies. Brief questionnaires containing nine questions regarding program evaluation and grant reporting were distributed to the "Grant Contact Person" listed in the OSP Final Reports. Of the eleven questionnaires distributed, three arts leaders responded, including Karen Mobley, Spokane Arts Commission; Daniel Barringer, Allied Arts of Whatcom County; and Frances Chapin White, Edmonds Arts Commission. The following section is a summary of the questions; given in the order they were asked. (See Appendix A for questionnaire). This summary is followed by a discussion of common themes that emerged from the questionnaire.

Question 1: How do you view the role of program evaluation in your organization?

Chapin generally viewed the role of program evaluation as very important. Barringer responded by saying that, “program evaluation is essential for measuring how the program fits in the organizations mission, meeting the organization’s objectives, meeting the program objective’s financial goals, and resource goals” (personal correspondence, March 29, 2006). Mobley responded that their organization has a staff of one person, and while they have periodically conducted surveys about their programs, they are not doing much at this point.

Question 2: What method(s) of program evaluation do you use?

The Edmonds Arts Commission uses participation numbers, revenue and participant evaluations. Allied Arts of Whatcom County uses regular evaluation as an ongoing part of planning meetings, through ongoing and final budget evaluation, customer feedback, staff, Board and committee evaluation, and program inventory comparison. The Spokane Arts Commission conducts surveys, which are mailed to participants or are given out at events. They also rely on input from board members and volunteers at “wrap-up” meetings.

Question 3: What kinds of technical assistance could WSAC provide to assist you with program evaluation?

Chapin responded that an annual email of examples of great evaluation methods would be useful. She would share this with local organizations to help them think about how they could apply the method to their own programs. Barringer also requested models of successful programs, which would provide examples of good planning. He also requested consulting on preplanning, and consulting on evaluation. Mobley, argued that

she is “stretched” and would be unable to attend an event, but that they would read information about program evaluation if it was distributed.

Question 4: How much time did you dedicate to completing your final grant report?

Chapin spent at least a full day completing the Final Report. Barringer also spent six to eight hours. Mobley reported completing the report in less than a day. She elaborated that the accounting was done in advance, and that she was responsible for completing the questions.

Question 5: Did you consult your original grant application when writing your final grant report?

All three respondents reported that they had consulted their original grant application when writing their Final Report. Mobley reported that she, “look[ed] back to see what we said we were doing and look[ed] to see what worked or what didn’t” (personal communication, March 20, 2006). She also reviewed their strategic plan and a few other things in writing the report.

Question 6: Did you or do you feel that the final grant reports are an effective way of communicating your organization’s “successes and disappointments”?

Both Chapin and Barringer felt that the Final Reports allowed for their organizations to reflect on their successes and disappointments. Barringer further explained that the Final Reports allows them to “look at their programs, be aware of their accomplishments, and consider the program success in the context of the whole program menu” (personal communication, March 29, 2006). Mobley was skeptical that the reader of the form communicates the information to others in decision-making roles (personal communication, March 20, 2006).

Question 7: What are your expectations of how the final grants report forms are used by WSAC?

Chapin hoped that the Final Reports were used in part to evaluate the effectiveness of the WSAC grant program. She hoped also that they would keep WSAC informed of problems that local arts organizations are experiencing and opportunities they are able to utilize and share statewide (personal communication, March 29, 2006). Barringer felt that the reports are useful when deciding which organizations should continue to receive grants. His view was that those who put an “honest effort” into evaluation should be “better risks for directing funds” (Barringer, personal communication, March 29, 2006). Mobley, on the other hand, did not have any expectations for the use of the Final Reports (personal communication, March 20, 2006).

Question 8: Are there other ways that you communicate your organization’s successes and disappointments to WSAC? If so, what are they?

All three respondents noted having had occasional one-one-one conversations about their organizations with WSAC staff. Barringer reported that he has developed “good personal relationships with WSAC staff”. He regularly consults WSAC about programs, and often provides staff with brief updates of programs (personal communication, March 29, 2006). Mobley also noted that she periodically speaks to staff members on the telephone and collaborates on projects (personal communication, March 20, 2006).

Question 9: How would you feel about applying for and reporting about your grants online?

All respondents seemed open to the idea of switching to an online granting system. Barringer reported that “this would be useful, except for the need to include supporting evidence, like articles, programs, and other things that would need to be

scanned” (personal communication, March 29, 2006). Mobley pointed out that their organization has done some online reporting within the City of Spokane, and that she has been disappointed by the technology. She noted that sometimes she has been “kicked out of the system”, which has increased her time commitment to the process. In addition, she reported that while online granting systems are improving, they have not always worked to accurately report information (Mobley, personal communication, March 20, 2006).

Emergent Themes from Questionnaires

Information from questionnaires represents the perspective of three arts leaders within Local Arts Agencies in Washington State. The following emergent themes were identified through the questionnaire responses above.

- Evaluation is essential for measuring how the program fits in the organization’s mission, objectives, financial goals, and resource goals.
- Local arts agencies rely on a diverse array of program evaluation techniques, including the number of participants, surveys, revenue comparison, program inventory comparison, and board, staff, volunteer, and participant evaluations.
- Local arts agencies are in need of information about successful models of program evaluation.
- Local arts agencies typically spend a full day completing Final Reports.
- Arts leaders within local arts agencies typically consult their original grant application when writing their Final Report.
- The Final Reports encourage arts agencies to reflect on their successes and disappointments.

- Final Reports are not the only way that local arts agencies communicate their successes and disappointments with WSAC. Most organizations regularly consult or update WSAC staff about their programs.
- Local arts agencies are open to the idea of online granting systems.

Comparison of Emergent Themes

Literature Review to Interviews and Questionnaires

The literature review endorses the importance of program evaluation and planning in order for arts organizations to achieve their mission and meet the criteria of the grant. From information gathered from interviews, WSAC agreed that program evaluation is important, and that it is part of an ongoing cycle of setting goals, objectives, and strategies. Besides providing technical assistance, however, WSAC does little to assist grantees with program evaluation. Bidwell remarked that “Program evaluation is rarely what they ask for and often what they need” (personal communication, March 3, 2006). In a questionnaire to local arts agencies, respondents agreed that program evaluation is essential for measuring how the program fits in the organization’s mission, objectives, and financial goals. LAA’s rely on a diverse array of program evaluation techniques to collect this information, and they all noted that they were in need of more information about successful models of program evaluation.

While it is clear from the interviews that WSAC is undergoing some organizational change in how they collect and report on data retrieved from Final Reports, it is evident that there is a disconnect between what the literature review acknowledges as important and what is actually happening in the field. According to the literature review, public and private funders are requiring agencies to be more accountable through program evaluation and reporting. In practice, however, the WSAC

has done very little in the past with information received from grantees in Final Reports about the effectiveness of their programs. While some of the quantitative information from the reports is compiled and used in WSAC's reporting, the qualitative information regarding the grantee's successes, disappointments, and further needs, is often overlooked. Local Arts Agencies, some of which spend an entire day writing the Final Report, feel that this document helps them to reflect on their goals and accomplishments. While, many Local Arts Agencies use other ways to communicate their successes and disappointments, they expect that Final Report information is used to inform WSAC staff of problems that Local Arts Agencies are experiencing and find out about opportunities that they might be able to utilize and share statewide.

Literature Review to Content Analysis

According to the literature review, an increasing number of cultural programs and projects are being initiated at the state and local levels to address the immediate needs of community members. From a content analysis of Final Reports, one can conclude that this trend is indeed a reality. Ten out of eleven local arts agencies considered their programs as successful, making it the most frequently noted category. Success in programming meant anything from creating new programs, continuing existing programs, expanding programs, or receiving positive feedback about programs.

The literature review reveals that the increased competition for funding is leading more cultural philanthropists to rely on information from performance measurements. This statement was supported by information from the content analysis, which showed that nine of the eleven Local Arts Agencies had budget-related disappointments. A number of the reported disappointments were a result of budget cuts, difficulty fundraising, or low gallery sales.

A number of other issues were reported as successes, which support the idea of community arts and community cultural development. The literature review pointed out that the arts can be used to bring consciousness to community issues, while contributing to social capital. Information from the content analysis showed that eight out of eleven local arts agencies felt they were successful in increasing community involvement and participation. The Final Reports revealed these successes to be support by the community, increased participation, gallery attendance, new audiences (types of people), new audiences (other counties), volunteer recruitment, reception attendance, community dialogue, more new members and membership renewals.

Chapter 4: Findings and Recommendations

Restating the Problem and Purpose

It is no longer enough to promise in a grant application that you'll change people's lives with your arts programs and then note in your final report that lots of people attended and seemed to have a good time. (Dreeszen, 2003, p. 251)

Now, more than ever, public and private funders are requiring arts agencies to demonstrate results. We can expect that, in coming years, there will be an increased emphasis on the use of performance measurement and outcome-based evaluation at state and federal levels, which is why it is critical that we begin discussing the advantages and disadvantages of developing and implementing systematic program evaluation procedures for nonprofit arts organizations.

The purpose of this project was to examine how program evaluation and grant reporting influence state funding for arts organizations. During this study, I analyzed the methods used by local arts organizations to evaluate their impact on community development by reviewing Final Reports submitted by LAA's to WSAC. An initial literature review provided information regarding the definition of community arts, the arts-based community development process, current and historical evaluation methods, and standards of performance measurement and accountability used by State and Local granting agencies. Common themes from the literature review were used to analyze data gathered through document review, content analysis, interviews, and questionnaires.

Findings

The delimitations of the study make it difficult to generalize across the spectrum of program evaluation and grant reporting in State Arts Agencies. However, the data collected provides some insight into the processes and procedures that exist between arts

organizations and State granting agencies. The following section addresses a number of issues that were raised as a result of this research.

This study, which looks only at the Operating Support Grant and its effect on selected Local Arts Agencies, neglects the overall impact of WSAC and its other programs. The Operational Support Grant makes up a small percentage of most arts organizations annual expenses, ranging from the lowest contribution in FY 2005 at 0.5% (Vashon Allied Arts) to the highest at 9.31% (Lynnwood Arts Commission). The subsequent question is whether the amount of additional paperwork to meet the requirements of the grant is worth the small percentage of contribution to an organization's operating costs. However, the funding may not be the primary reason arts organizations seek support from WSAC. For some, the grant may act as a "seal of approval", that will make them more appealing other funding sources.

This study does not acknowledge the possibility that the narrative portion of the Final Reports might be an unnecessary part of the granting process. Responses to the interview and questionnaires agree that the Final Report helps organizations reflect on their successes and disappointments. However, because this information is not being used by WSAC, it simply creates more work for arts organizations. Tucker thought that perhaps just having arts organizations complete the Final Report creates a level of accountability, even if the information is not looked at (personal communication, March 3, 2006). While portions of the Final Reports are used for reporting, the purpose of the narrative section could be achieved through frequent conversations or communication between WSAC staff and arts leaders within Local Arts Agencies.

What this study also shows is that the process of writing and reporting effective grants is a matter of skill. The way an arts organization aligns them self with the mission

of the granting agency or phrases their needs could determine their ability to get funding.

Tsutakawa provided an example of this situation in our interview:

Say you have four different orchestras in four smaller to midsize cities and they are very similar in budget, in program direction, and the makeup of the orchestra. Two of the orchestras articulated that they were successful in diversifying and therefore building their audiences the previous year, and the other group for example said, ‘we’ve had a steady audience, we’ve been very supported by our town, and we’ve had the same board for ten years’. I would think that the [grant review] panel would say that the first two orchestras are more successful and therefore have a better advantage in the competition for funds. (personal communication, March 3, 2006)

This would lead us to assume that organizations could profit from writing their grant application using “buzzwords”, provided the information is not fraudulent. For example, if they choose to write about diversifying their audience, whereas the other group does not, then maybe they are overemphasizing something that will be to their benefit. The staff at WSAC and the grant review panel can only make decisions based on what an organization submits in the application. Tsutakawa quotes, “We’re a government agency, we’re not Santa Claus. We have to use certain guidelines, forms, and procedures in order to dispense the public money” (personal communication, March 3, 2006).

There are other gray areas in the grant application process which were identified as a result of this study. In general, the staff of WSAC obtains an understanding of the arts organizations’ in Washington from Final Report information, personal communication, newspaper articles, and attending events. For the grant review process, WSAC selects a panel of arts professionals from various disciplines. Everyone on the

panel is required to read all of the grant applications prior to the actual review. At which time a lead reviewer presents the basic information about a grant, typically in their discipline. It is at this point, that the knowledge held by WSAC staff becomes an issue. While WSAC staff are not allowed to vote on grant applications, they “provide interpretation” according to Tsutakawa (March 3, 2006). This means, that if the lead reviewer does not point out something that the WSAC staff deem as important, they might interject. Alternatively, WSAC staff might bring attention to information that they know could affect the ability of the organization to be successful, for example if the arts organization did not mention that their director and half of their board just quit (Tsutakawa, personal communication, March 3, 2006). In many ways, this gray area gives WSAC some influence over which arts organizations receive funding.

Another question raised in this research is whether we are we doing arts organizations a favor by restricting them with rules, paperwork, and standards of measurement. If the goal is to help organizations that are struggling succeed in a competitive realm of funding, then why are we placing more restrictions on them? WSAC has to be careful how they position themselves as an agency, whether they are supporting innovation or sustainability through their grants. Bidwell would argue that this is why “arts administration is an oxymoron”. Her theory is that “by the time something is established enough that it needs ‘administrating’, it is no longer art. It isn’t risky, it isn’t pushing the envelope, it isn’t new. It’s consensus” (Bidwell, personal communication, March 3, 2006). In this case, the rage for accountability is driven by non-arts forces and is, in some ways, antithetical to the whole idea of art. Bidwell pointed out a response written by Phillip Kennicott to William Safire’s recent Nancy Hanks lecture, which said,

It's possible that for years now, arts advocates have been wasting their breath, arguing into a black hole, with opponents who will never happily yield an inch to art....By limiting the debate to the idea that art is useful for developing practical skills, [Bidwell writes: or collecting numbers and being 'accountable'] the arts world disengages from a more epic battle with forces in our society that prefer a world closed to questioning, impatient with the new or threatening, and comfortable only with certainties passed down from authority figures. (p. 3)

While the pendulum may be swinging away from performance measurement and accountability for the time being, it would not be presumptuous to assume that it will swing back with the increased pressure on government agencies to deliver results.

While government agencies should continue to hold arts organizations accountable, they should take into the account the evaluation needs of individual arts organizations. Existing models of evaluation do not necessarily serve arts organizations well as they are themselves unique and constantly changing. This may mean that instead of creating systematic approaches to evaluation, that granting agencies need to find ways to accommodate a variety of styles that allows for a more interdisciplinary combination of outcomes.

This theory brings us back to where this research originated, which was with an interest in non-traditional arts experiences that exist outside the realm of measurement and often funding. Informal arts experiences in some ways have been the birthing ground for many of society's greatest community building achievements. This idea led to a conversation with Tucker, regarding the role of WSAC in this shift. According to Tucker, in the past five years we have moved from thinking of the arts and artists as our primary constituents to thinking of the public as our primary constituents (personal

communication, March 3, 2006). Because of this shift, WSAC faces two separate issues: (1) creating opportunities for people to participate in the arts and (2) strengthening arts organizations. Tucker considered that maybe it would be in their best interest as an agency to support informal arts, by helping people buy art supplies, encouraging people to sing in a church choir, or by supporting those “show-up-if-you-can” band concerts. These types of activities are not about being a 501(c)(3) arts organization, so if WSAC was to take that on, she asked, what kind of structure would they need as an agency? What kind of support would they offer? The question then becomes about how could they be accountable for using the money.

Recommendations

This study has provided data regarding program evaluation and grant reporting as it occurs between State Arts Agencies and Local Arts Agencies in Washington State. The following section provides recommendations for (a) the Washington State Arts Commission, (b) Local Arts Agencies, (c) preparation in the field of Arts Management, and (d) further study.

For the Washington State Arts Commission

In theory, the Final Reports serve a purpose as a measure of accountability and tracking. While this serves a purpose legally and in reporting to the NEA, this information should also be used to inform WSAC about their effectiveness as a granting body, and supporter of the arts. WSAC clearly recognizes this disconnect, and is working to improve their understanding of organizations’ needs through hiring someone to compile information from the Final Reports. However, the fact that information from the Final Reports is not used raises other questions, like is WSAC asking the right questions? What should be done with the information from Final Reports? Is there a better way to

collect this information? The following is a list of recommendations for the Washington State Arts Commission.

- WSAC should review their procedure for using Final Report information in relation to their updated Strategic Plan. WSAC should ask themselves why they are doing the Final Report in relation to their mission and objectives. It may be helpful to look at how other State Arts Agencies have structured and are using their Final Reports.
- Define categories in the Final Report such as *budget, community involvement/participation, programs, administration, partnerships/collaboration, and other*, and ask grantees to rank their organizations successes and disappointments in these categories. This would provide qualitative information to WSAC that could be used in the Annual Reports or other materials.
- Request that organizations submit 2-3 narrative/qualitative examples of community building in their arts organization as a result of the WSAC grant. This information could be used to recognize the public benefit of WSAC's programs in the WSAC Annual Report and in other publications.
- Utilize an online grant reporting system to obtain information from arts organizations

In addition, WSAC should take a more proactive approach to providing information to arts agencies about model programs or program evaluation methods by addressing the following recommendation:

- Devise a strategy for providing all arts organization's throughout Washington with technical assistance for grantwriting and program evaluation, as opposed to responding on a need-only basis.

- Provide free program evaluation tools, resources, and model programs on the WSAC Website.
- Review information in the “Comments & Input” section of the Final Reports for insight into trends that arts organizations are experiencing. Respond accordingly.
- Provide funding to organizations specifically for performance measurement or require that a percentage of the grant funds be budgeted for evaluation.

For Local Arts Agencies

Local Arts Agencies in Washington State are working with limited resources to achieve a variety of important outcomes. The following is a list of recommendations for arts leaders within Local Arts Agencies on how to improve their systems of program evaluation and grant reporting.

- Create a strategic plan that clearly outlines your organizations mission, goals and objectives.
- Secure funding from grants that will support the development of a program evaluation plan.
- Research the internet or contact other organizations for effective program evaluation models.
- Utilize your board, program managers, staff, and clients in the process of evaluating programs and services.
- Pick the evaluation method that is best suited to your organization’s needs.
- Make your objectives/outcomes SMART: specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-referenced.
- Take the time to review your program evaluations and make changes to them annually or quarterly.

- Find an evaluation expert or a peer in your field to review and make suggestions on your outcome evaluation plan.
- DON'T leave your evaluations to the last minute before a grant application is due!
- DON'T skew your program evaluation results to make your organization appear to be more effective/productive than it really is.

For Preparation in the Field of Arts Management

In order to be more effective arts leaders, students with an interest in Arts Administration should prepare themselves for working in the field. The following is a list of recommendations for preparation in the field of Arts Management.

- Take courses in program evaluation to gain an understanding of its value throughout the programming process
- Gain practical experience working with organizations to establish outcomes, indicators, measurements. Practice writing and submitting grant reports.
- Take courses or review literature about grant writing. If possible, review previous grants that were awarded funds.
- Observe a grant review panel.

For Further Study

Though this study identifies issues of importance in community cultural development and performance measurement, there are many ways in which this study could be expanded. The following section outlines areas of further study.

- Systems and effectiveness of online grant reporting
- Comprehensive study of evaluation across Local Arts Agencies and State Arts Agencies

- Study the breadth and depth of evaluation studies that exist in the field, comparing qualitative and quantitative studies.
- Determine if there is a relationship between evaluation and program development
- Compare the evaluation of arts program with the evaluation of other civic initiatives (such as economic and participation studies)

Conclusions

This study has demonstrated the significance of program evaluation and granting reporting in state funding for arts organizations. The move towards performance measurement and increased accountability requires that leaders within State and Local Arts Agencies be prepared to document and report on the benefits of their programs. In this study, I have highlighted issues of importance that emerged from related literature, interviews, content analysis, and a questionnaire, which provides an argument for the need to further develop and implement of sustainable program evaluation techniques.

This study is predicated on the belief that arts and culture can play a significant role in community building by supporting civic dialogue and participation. By promoting art education and cultural understanding, via the exchange of information, knowledge, and resources, both State and Local Arts Agencies can become catalysts for more engaged communities and thereby contribute to a more vibrant civic life. Through the creation of a supportive framework of cultural policy, State and Local Arts Agencies can be proactive in creating systems of program evaluation and report that not only strengthen the public's trust, but also inform and promote healthy long-term planning within arts organizations.

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Appendix A: Data Collection Tools

A.1 Interview: Community Arts Development Manager

1. In the arts organizations that WSAC funds, what evaluation techniques do you see currently being used to measure the social and economic impact of community development?
2. Does the Washington State Arts Commission pay for program evaluations?
3. What tools, if any, does WSAC provide to help organizations perform effective program evaluations?
4. What is important for arts organizations to know about evaluating their programs and services?
5. What do you think is important for arts organizations to know about reporting the results of their programs and services?
6. Do you think arts organizations could be more accountable to their stakeholders and communities through systematic evaluation?
7. How can we provide technical assistance to arts organizations to encourage the use of systematic evaluation methods?
8. In what ways does an arts organization's evaluation of community development influence state funding?
9. Are there any questions that I haven't asked, that you think might inform my research?

A.2 Interview: Grants to Organizations Manager

Background

1. What is your background?
2. How did you come to work for the Washington State Arts Commission?

Grant Applications—Washington State Arts Commission

3. What role do you play in drafting grant application guidelines?
4. What influences, do you think, the content of grant application questions?
5. What part do you play, if any, in distribution of grant monies?

Program Evaluations

6. Does the Washington State Arts Commission pay for program evaluations?
7. What tools, if any, does the WSAC provide to help organizations perform effective program evaluations?
8. How does the Washington State Arts Commission measure success in funded programs? Does it prefer quantitative measures versus anecdotal evidence?

Public Benefits of the arts

9. Aside from mission, what is your organization's position regarding the benefits of the arts?
10. How do you think this is reflected in the grant applications questions themselves?
11. What are the social and economic impacts that WSAC is looking for when appropriating funds for community development?
12. What "impact"/outcome has the strongest weight with grant panelists: organizational capacity, artistic merit, or public benefit?
13. This is a three part question: The Organizational Final Grant Report asks the organization to do a self-evaluation from their perspective of their successes and disappointments during the grant year.
 - a. How does this question determine whether an arts organization has been effective in meeting the requirements of the grant?
 - b. Do you believe that grantee organizations measure success differently than asked by the final reports? Or is this in addition to?
 - c. Finally, does the competition for funds and limited resources lead organizations to articulate measures of success (or benefits of the arts) that they aren't necessarily striving for?
14. Do you think arts organizations could be more accountable to their stakeholders and communities through systematic evaluation?
15. In what ways does an arts organization's evaluation of community development influence state funding?
16. Are there any questions that I haven't asked, that you think might inform my research?

A.3 Interview: Executive Director

Grant Applications – Washington State Arts Commission

1. What role do you play in drafting grant application guidelines?
2. What influences, do you think, the content of grant application questions?
3. What part do you play, if any, in distributing grant monies?

Public Benefits of the arts

4. Aside from mission, what is your organization's position regarding the benefit of the arts?
5. How do you think this is reflected in the grant applications questions themselves?
6. In what ways does an arts organization's evaluation of community development influence state funding?

Reporting & Advocacy

7. How do you use information from final grant reports to report to the State Legislature?
8. How do you use information from final grant reports to advocate for funding at the State level?
9. How do you use information from final grant reports to report to the NEA?
10. How do you use information from the final grant reports to advocate for funding at the National level?

Online Grant Reporting

11. How do you think an online grant reporting system will impact methods of evaluation and reporting for arts organizations?
12. How do you think an online grant reporting system will impact the methods of evaluation and reporting for the State Arts Commission?
13. Are there any questions that I haven't asked, that you think might inform my research?

A.4 Questionnaire: Local Arts Agencies

Organization Name:

Managing Director's Name:

Managing Director's Title:

Date:

- 1.) How do you view the role of program evaluation in your organization?
- 2.) What method(s) of program evaluation do you use?
- 3.) What kinds of technical assistance could WSAC provide to assist you with program evaluation?

By receiving an Organizational Support Grant in fiscal year 2005 from the Washington State Arts Commission (WSAC), you were required to complete a final report.

- 4.) How much time did you dedicate to completing your final grant report?
- 5.) Did you consult your original grant application when writing your final grant report?
- 6.) Did you or do you feel that the final grant reports are an effective way of communicating your organization's "successes and disappointments"?
- 7.) What are your expectations of how the final grants report forms are used by WSAC?
- 8.) Are there other ways that you communicate your organization's successes and disappointments to WSAC? If so, what are they?
- 9.) How would you feel about applying for and reporting about your grants online?

A.5 Content Analysis

Local Arts Agency Successes

LOCAL ARTS AGENCY Organization Name	SUCCESSSES						OTHER
	BUDG	PART	PROG	ADMIN	COLL	OTHER	
Allied Arts Council of Yakima Valley	X	X	X			X	
Allied Arts of Whatcom County	X	X	X			X	
Bainbridge Island Arts & Humanities Council	X	X	X			X	
City of Kent Arts Commission	X	X	X			X	
City of Spokane Arts Commission			X	X			surviving facility upgrades, exhibit quality
CREATE		X		X			
Edmonds Arts Commission	X		X	X			
Enumclaw Arts Commission	X		X			X	
Greater Tacoma Community Foundation/ Cultural Council		X	X	X			new publication outreach to ethnic orgs
Lynnwood Arts Commission		X	X			X	
Vashon Allied Arts	X	X	X				new publication
TOTAL	7	8	10	4	6	5	

Local Arts Agency Disappointments

LOCAL ARTS AGENCY Organization Name	DISAPPOINTMENTS						OTHER
	BUDG	PART	PROG	ADMIN	COLL	OTHER	
Allied Arts Council of Yakima Valley	X	X					
Allied Arts of Whatcom County							none
Bainbridge Island Arts & Humanities Council	X		X	X			
City of Kent Arts Commission	X						input re programs
City of Spokane Arts Commission	X			X			
CREATE	X	X					
Edmonds Arts Commission	X	X	X				facility availabilities
Enumclaw Arts Commission	X	X					
Greater Tacoma Community Foundation/ Cultural Council	X						
Lynnwood Arts Commission		X					vandalized art tech issues
Vashon Allied Arts	X						
TOTAL	9	5	2	2	0	4	

Appendix B: Recruitment Letter and Consent Forms

B.1 Interview Recruitment Letter

Date

Name

Address

City/State/Zip

Dear <POTENTIAL INTERVIEWEE>:

You are invited to participate in a research project titled *Measuring Up*, conducted by Abbey Norris from the University of Oregon's Arts and Administration Program. The purpose of this study is to explore how the evaluation of community-development affects state funding for arts organizations.

The emergence of a new generation of artists and art administrators working together to solve community issues has resulted in increased competition for funding. Arts commissions and other state funding agencies have responded to a growing "need-base" by spreading resources among a variety of community-development and social service organizations (Cleveland, 2002, p. 7). In an age of accountability, nonprofit arts organizations are increasingly required by funders to demonstrate the effectiveness and outcomes of their programs. In turn, many community arts-based organizations do not have sufficient funding to serve the needs of their constituents.

You were selected to participate in this study because of your leadership position with <NAME OF RELEVANT CASE STUDY ORGANIZATION> and your experiences with and expertise pertinent to cultural development in <CASE STUDY CITY>. If you decide to take part in this research project, you will be asked to provide relevant organizational materials and participate in an in-person interview, lasting approximately one hour, during the winter of 2005-2006. If you wish, interview questions will be provided beforehand for your consideration. Interviews will take place at <NAME OF ORGANIZATION>, or at a more conveniently located site. Interviews will be scheduled at your convenience. In addition to taking handwritten notes, with your permission, I will use an audio tape recorder for transcription and validation purposes. You may also be asked to provide follow-up information through phone calls or email. **It may be advisable to obtain permission from your institution and/or your supervisor to participate in this interview to avoid potential social or economic risks related to speaking as a representative of your institution. Information gathered in this interview will not be confidential.**

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at (541)344-5441 or anorris2@uoregon.edu, or Doug Blandy at (541)346-3683. Any questions regarding your rights as a research participant should be directed to the Office of Human Subjects Compliance, University of Oregon, Eugene, OR 97403, (541) 346-2510.

Thank you in advance for your interest and consideration. I will contact you shortly to speak about your potential involvement in this study.

Sincerely,

Abbey Norris
University of Oregon
Arts & Administration Program

B.2 Interview Consent Form

Research Protocol Number: _____

Measuring Up

Abbey Norris, Principal Investigator
University of Oregon
Arts and Administration Program

You are invited to participate in a research project titled *Measuring Up*, conducted by Abbey Norris from the University of Oregon's Arts and Administration Program. The purpose of this study is to explore how the evaluation of community-development affects state funding for arts organizations.

You were selected to participate in this study because of your leadership position with <NAME OF RELEVANT CASE STUDY ORGANIZATION> and your experiences with and expertise pertinent to arts based community-development in <CASE STUDY CITY>. If you decide to take part in this research project, you will be asked to provide relevant organizational materials and participate in an in-person interview, lasting approximately one hour, during the winter of 2005-2006. If you wish, interview questions will be provided beforehand for your consideration. Interviews will take place at <NAME OF ORGANIZATION>, or at a more conveniently located site. Interviews will be scheduled at your convenience. In addition to taking handwritten notes, with your permission, I will use an audio tape recorder for transcription and validation purposes. You may also be asked to provide follow-up information through phone calls or email. There are minimal risks associated with participating in this study, particularly since this phase of research is exploratory in nature.

Information collected in this study will be associated with your name and organization, with your permission. However, if you would prefer to protect your confidentiality, your information will be identified with a pseudonym. In this case, the researcher will create a code list, which will link pseudonyms with your individual identity. However, even if a pseudonym is used, there is still a possibility that loss of confidentiality may occur because an individual's identities could be inferred from the context of the information you have given. You may initial your preference on the next page of this form.

It may be advisable to obtain permission *from your institution and/or your supervisor* to participate in this interview to avoid potential social or economic risks related to speaking as a representative of your institution. Topics related to the role of evaluation and accountability can be controversial and sensitive. Further use of the interviewees name could potentially displease their colleagues or supervisors. However, the potential social and economic risks of this study are minimal. Your participation is voluntary. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time without penalty. Any information obtained during this study will be carefully and securely maintained in a locked desk, and will be shredded upon completion of the research.

I anticipate that the results of this research project will be of value to the cultural sector as a whole. However, I cannot guarantee that you personally will receive any benefits from this research.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at (541)344-5441 or anorris2@uoregon.edu, or Doug Blandy at (541)346-3683. Any questions regarding your rights as a research participant should be directed to the Office of Human Subjects Compliance, University of Oregon, Eugene, OR 97403, (541) 346-2510.

Please read and initial each of the following statements to indicate your consent:

_____ I consent to the use of audiotapes and note taking during my interview.

_____ I consent to my identification as a participant in this study.

_____ I consent to the potential use of quotations from the interview.

_____ I consent to the use of information I provide regarding the organization with which I am associated.

_____ I wish to have the opportunity to review and possibly revise my comments and the I information that I provide prior to these data appearing in the final version of any publications that may result from this study.

_____ I wish to maintain my confidentiality in this study through the use of a pseudonym.

Any information obtained during this study, including audio tapes and code lists, will be carefully and securely maintained in a locked desk, and will be destroyed upon completion of the research.

Your signature indicates that you have read and understand the information provided above, that you willingly agree to participate, that you may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty, that you have received a copy of this form, and that you are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies. You have been given a copy of this letter to keep.

Print Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Thank you for your interest and participation in this study.

Sincerely,

Abbey Norris
University of Oregon
Arts & Administration Program

B.3 Questionnaire Recruitment Letter

Date

Name

Address

City/State/Zip

Dear <POTENTIAL RESPONDENT>:

You are invited to participate in a research project titled *Measuring Up*, conducted by Abbey Norris from the University of Oregon's Arts and Administration Program. The purpose of this study is to explore how the evaluation of community-development affects state funding for arts organizations.

The emergence of a new generation of artists and art administrators working together to solve community issues has resulted in increased competition for funding. Arts commissions and other state funding agencies have responded to a growing "need-base" by spreading resources among a variety of community-development and social service organizations (Cleveland, 2002, p. 7). In an age of accountability, nonprofit arts organizations are increasingly required by funders to demonstrate the effectiveness and outcomes of their programs. In turn, many community arts-based organizations do not have sufficient funding to serve the needs of their constituents.

You were selected to participate in this study because of your leadership position with <NAME OF RELEVANT CASE STUDY ORGANIZATION> and your experiences with and expertise pertinent to cultural development in <CASE STUDY CITY>. If you decide to take part in this research project, you will be asked to complete a brief questionnaire during March or April of 2006. Questionnaires will be sent to you via email. You may also be asked to provide follow-up information through phone calls or email. It may be advisable to obtain permission *from your institution and/or your supervisor* to participate in this questionnaire to avoid potential social or economic risks related to speaking as a representative of your institution. Information gathered from this questionnaire will not be confidential.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at (541)344-5441 or anorris2@uoregon.edu, or Doug Blandy at (541)346-3683. Any questions regarding your rights as a research participant should be directed to the Office of Human Subjects Compliance, University of Oregon, Eugene, OR 97403, (541) 346-2510.

Thank you in advance for your interest and consideration. I will contact you shortly to speak about your potential involvement in this study.

Sincerely,

Abbey Norris
University of Oregon
Arts & Administration Program

B.4 Consent Form

Research Protocol Number: _____

Measuring Up

Abbey Norris, Principal Investigator
University of Oregon
Arts and Administration Program

You are invited to participate in a research project titled *Measuring Up*, conducted by Abbey Norris from the University of Oregon's Arts and Administration Program. The purpose of this study is to explore how the evaluation of community-development affects state funding for arts organizations.

You were selected to participate in this study because of your leadership position with <NAME OF RELEVANT CASE STUDY ORGANIZATION> and your experiences with and expertise pertinent to arts based community-development in <CASE STUDY CITY>. If you decide to take part in this research project, you will be asked to **complete a brief questionnaire during March or April of 2006. Questionnaires will be sent to you via email.** You may also be asked to provide follow-up information through phone calls or email. There are minimal risks associated with participating in this study, particularly since this phase of research is exploratory in nature.

Information collected in this study will be associated with your name and organization, with your permission. However, if you would prefer to protect your confidentiality, your information will be identified with a pseudonym. In this case, the researcher will create a code list, which will link pseudonyms with your individual identity. However, even if a pseudonym is used, there is still a possibility that loss of confidentiality may occur because an individual's identities could be inferred from the context of the information you have given. You may initial your preference on the next page of this form.

It may be advisable to obtain permission *from your institution and/or your supervisor* to participate in this questionnaire to avoid potential social or economic risks related to speaking as a representative of your institution. Topics related to the role of evaluation and accountability can be controversial and sensitive. Further use of the respondents name could potentially displease their colleagues or supervisors. However, the potential social and economic risks of this study are minimal. Your participation is voluntary. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time without penalty. Any information obtained during this study will be carefully and securely maintained in a locked desk, and will be shredded upon completion of the research.

I anticipate that the results of this research project will be of value to the cultural sector as a whole. However, I cannot guarantee that you personally will receive any benefits from this research.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at (541)344-5441 or anorris2@uoregon.edu, or Doug Blandy at (541)346-3683. Any questions regarding your rights as a research participant should be directed to the Office of Human Subjects Compliance, University of Oregon, Eugene, OR 97403, (541) 346-2510.

Please read and initial each of the following statements to indicate your consent:

_____ I consent to my identification as a participant in this study.

_____ I consent to the potential use of quotations from the questionnaire.

_____ I consent to the use of information I provide regarding the organization with which I am associated.

_____ I wish to maintain my confidentiality in this study through the use of a pseudonym.

Any information obtained during this study, including questionnaires and code lists, will be carefully and securely maintained in a locked desk, and will be destroyed upon completion of the research.

Your signature indicates that you have read and understand the information provided above, that you willingly agree to participate, that you may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty, that you have received a copy of this form, and that you are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies. You have been given a copy of this letter to keep.

Print Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Thank you for your interest and participation in this study.

Sincerely,

Abbey Norris
University of Oregon
Arts & Administration Program

Appendix C: Human Subjects Application