

CASES & POINTS

Funder Exchange on Evaluating Arts & Social Impact

Summary

Presented by Animating Democracy, a program of Americans for the Arts
May 22, 2013

The Funder Exchange on Evaluating Arts & Social Impact, presented by [Americans for the Arts' Animating Democracy](#) program and hosted by the [Nathan Cummings Foundation](#), brought together 32 individuals—funders, evaluation professionals, and arts practitioners and intermediaries—in a case-based exchange to learn about concrete approaches and measures funders are using to understand the impact of arts and social change work and investments. The Funder Exchange is part of Animating Democracy's [Arts & Civic Engagement IMPACT Initiative](#), supported by the Cummings and [Lambent](#) Foundations. (See sidebar for a list of participants.)

The day featured two in-depth case studies about evaluation approaches from the [Crossroads Fund](#) and [J.W. McConnell Family Foundation](#) selected to shed light on two different evaluation approaches for substantiating social outcomes of funded organizations and projects and getting a cumulative view of the effects of funder investments. Crossroads Fund, a public foundation, supports community organizations working on issues of racial, social, and economic justice in the Chicago area. The J.W. McConnell Family Foundation is a private philanthropic organization working nationally to fund programs that support Canadians in building a more innovative, inclusive, sustainable, and resilient society. Although neither Crossroads nor McConnell are arts funders, they spoke to arts and culture strategies that are part of grantees' work. The exchange also included brief presentations about the [Mural Arts Program's](#) [Porch Light Initiative](#) evaluation, the [Fledgling Fund's](#) use of the [Sparkwise](#) dashboard with filmmakers supported by the fund, and reflections by artist and cultural organizer [Favianna Rodriguez](#) and Maria Rosario Jackson, senior program advisor for the [Kresge Foundation](#).

Through discussion of concrete approaches, participants looked at:

- pros and cons of each case study's approach;
- purposes of and values underpinning evaluation;
- outcomes and indicators of interest; and
- roles and relationships of funders and grantees in developing and conducting evaluation.

Discussion explored application and implications of concepts, approaches, and methods for evaluation in relation to participants' own work. The day concluded with pop-up panels formed to address two questions of interest defined by participants. The convening was facilitated by Chris Dwyer, of [RMC Research](#), and Barbara Schaffer Bacon, co-director of Animating Democracy.

PARTICIPANTS

Funder Exchange on Evaluating Arts & Social Change May 22, 2013

FUNDERS

Maurine Knighton, Nathan Cummings Foundation
Brandi Stewart, Nathan Cummings Foundation
Michelle Coffey, Lambent Foundation
Jane Kimondo, Crossroads Fund
Eddie Torres, Rockefeller Foundation
Sheila Leddy, Fledgling Fund
Maria Rosario Jackson, Kresge Foundation
Angel Ysaguirre, Chicago Office of Cultural Affairs, formerly with Boeing
Angie Wang, Asian Women's Giving Circle
Adey Fisseha, Unbound Philanthropy
Chris Peters, Seventh Generation Fund
Javier Torres, Boston Foundation
Lauren Embrey, Embrey Family Foundation
Anita Contini, Bloomberg Philanthropies
Jess Garz, Surdna Foundation

EVALUATION PROFESSIONALS, RESEARCHERS

Chris Dwyer, RMC Research
Kevin Chin, J.W. McConnell Family Foundation
Lisa Marie Pickens, Independent Evaluation Consultant, former Board Member and Current Chair of the Evaluation Tool Working Group of the Crossroads Fund
Maribel Alvarez, anthropologist, Assoc. Research Prof. and Associate Research Social Scientist at the Southwest Center, University of Arizona
Kelly Barsdate, National Assembly of State Arts Agencies
Steven Shewfelt, Office of Research & Analysis, National Endowment for the Arts
Lisa Yancey, consultant, evaluator for Nathan Cummings Foundation

PRACTITIONERS, FIELD LEADERS

Carlton Turner, Alternate ROOTS
Sara Ansell, Porch Light Initiative, Mural Arts Program, Philadelphia
Ellen Schneider, Active Voice Lab for Story & Strategy
Favianna Rodriguez, artist; member of the Culture Group
Erin Potts, Air Traffic Control and the Culture Group
Betsy Richards, Opportunity Agenda

Barbara Schaffer Bacon, Animating Democracy, Americans for the Arts
Pam Korza, Animating Democracy, Americans for the Arts
Joanna Chin, Animating Democracy, Americans for the Arts
Clay Lord, Local Arts Advancement, Americans for the Arts

PART 1 – KEY POINTS

Case Studies

Please see Part 2 for summaries of case presentations by the [Crossroads Fund](#), [J.W. McConnell Family Foundation](#), [Mural Arts Program/Porch Light Initiative](#), and [Fledgling Fund](#).

OVERVIEW

A desire to move beyond conventional evaluation paradigms that have proved inadequate in evaluating the impact of arts and social change work characterized this lively and candid **Funder Exchange on Evaluating Arts & Social Impact**. Participants explored evaluation models that: foster co-learning and collaboration between funders and grantees, provide useful information to both, reconsider the evaluator’s position in a more engaged role, look at multiple sector outcomes and indicators given the cross-sector nature of arts for change work, and support creative and compelling communication of impact.

This report provides a touchstone for participants and contributes to current discourse among funders and others about assessing arts and social impact. Key points include:

“How do we not get trapped by having to evaluate in the traditional ways we’ve done before?”

Anita Contini,
Bloomberg Philanthropies

► **The language and framework of evaluation that funders provide can create a narrative of value** that helps grantees contextualize and frame their work, understand contribution to impact, and improve practice and efficacy. Toward this end, there needs to be clarity and congruence between a funder’s evaluation requirements and its theory of change and stated values.

► **A shift in evaluation from a means to proving value and impact to improving practice and efficacy** is in evidence among funders and practitioners. Evaluation practices that: clarify and sharpen intent and improve planning, inform action and decisions during the unfolding of projects, identify success factors that improve practice, and help communicate impact were favored.

► **A shift from funder-driven evaluation approaches and measures to a shared, iterative learning process between grantees and funders** offers a productive opportunity for both. Shifting roles and power dynamics among funders, grantees, and evaluators can capitalize on the knowledge and observations of grantees and evaluators and build a culture of honest mutual learning and strategic work.

► **Developing knowledge and skills to evaluate cross-sector work is critical** to assess multiple and interrelated impacts of comprehensive strategies to community, civic, and social change.

► **An array of applicable measurement approaches and tools to assess social impact exists**; it is a matter of knowing the options and how to deploy the right approaches for the circumstance and desired assessment and learning. This counters the view that the arts need specialized tools.

► **Funders need to be more deliberate in sharing their varying and common interests, intentions, and results** to learn their collective impact. To know the full effect of their investments, individual funders may want to connect with others funding the same projects, organizations or artists.

► **Funders see value in embracing failure and experimentation and recalibrating to consider intermediate outcomes** as preconditions for other change to occur in their grantees work. Opening evaluation to these possibilities acknowledges the complexity of the work and what it takes for artists or cultural/social change agents to achieve impact over time.

HERE TO THERE: EVOLVING NOTIONS OF EVALUATION

I used to avoid evaluation and now I think of it as an internal discipline with myself before I engage with partners. **Michelle Coffey**, [Lambent Foundation](#)

I used to think of evaluation as a form of punishment, but now it's a means to refine our work. **Eddie Torres**, [Rockefeller Foundation](#)

I used to think of evaluation as something done to us from the outside. Now I'm doing it every day! **Ellen Schneider**, [Active Voice Story Lab](#)

I used to think of evaluation as a reductive process that couldn't capture everything. Now I see it as a value add for work moving forward. **Maurine Knighton**, [Nathan Cummings Foundation](#)

I used to think evaluation was something you did if you work in arts education. Now I see it as the cornerstone of an ethical theory of change. **Maribel Alvarez**, [Southwest Center, University of Arizona](#), Tucson

I used to think of evaluation as a way for arts and culture to prove its [value], but now I think of it as a way of communicating. **Jessica Garz**, [Surdna Foundation](#)

I used to think of evaluation as something forced upon communities and now think of it as a partnership. **Chris Peters**, [Seventh Generation Fund](#)

I used to think of evaluation like a colonoscopy; now I think of it as holistic maintenance and prevention. **Carlton Turner**, [Alternate ROOTS](#)

As participants introduced themselves by filling in the blanks, it became clear that, at least within this group, evaluation is no longer viewed as a necessary evil, or worse, an empty exercise. Instead, funders and practitioners alike see that evaluation can be a valuable process that identifies shared aspirations and sharpens intentions related to social change, helps stakeholders understand what difference is occurring as a result of their work, and feeds learning that moves future efforts toward more effective practices and greater potential for impact. Although still not fully integrated, participants are seeing that assessment is a dimension of healthy organizational and partnership work to be implemented internally and sometimes with the help of outside evaluation professionals.

RELATED TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Because the language of evaluation can get in the way of fruitful discussion, Chris Dwyer offered a set of terms with definitions. The intention was not to discuss and debate, but rather to acknowledge that evaluation, as a discipline, does have terms that reflect particular meanings, and that there are related practices—research, evaluation, technical assistance—that should be distinguished and considered.

Arts & Social Impact Evaluation

What's included under the evaluation umbrella?

The term *evaluation* encompasses a wide range of purposes and methods. While preparing for this session, we have been aware that participants use the terms below differently. While it isn't our intent to claim only one set of purposes for any one term, we do want to ensure that we aren't making assumptions about what a speaker may intend *ONLY* by the terminology used.

Evaluation: Purpose is to inform decision-making about the relative value of a specific Intervention

Summative Evaluation (outcomes, validation, cost-benefit, impact)

Meta-Analyses

Formative Evaluation (evaluability, needs assessments, process, implementation)

Research: Purpose is to develop and/or enhance knowledge base, usually to generalize

Theoretical/Inquiry

Descriptive/Ethnographic

Empirical/Experimental/Quasi-experimental

Reporting: Purpose is to provide/assure accountability

Performance Reports

Status on Indicators

Documentation

Other Related Improvement Efforts: Purpose is to improve initiative

Strategic Planning/Goal Setting

Targeted Support/Interventions

Technical Assistance

SHIFTING THE PARADIGM OF EVALUATING IMPACT

Creating a narrative of value

“We forget that when we speak the language of evaluation, we’re creating a narrative of value,” acknowledged anthropologist and social science researcher Maribel Alvarez. Pointing to the *domains of social transformation*—cultural, community, institutional, transformational—framed by the Crossroads Fund’s model, she and others agreed that **language and frameworks of evaluation that funders provide can help grantees to contextualize and assess their work against a set of values.** As Crossroads has found, some groups that didn’t previously see their relationship to a larger movement were helped by the model to do so in a new way. Such framing can be clarifying for groups already aligned with such values and catalytic for others who have a new way to imagine deeper or more connected outcomes of their work.

There needs to be clarity and congruence between a funder’s theory of change and stated values and evaluation requirements.

Participants noted the congruence between the Crossroads Fund’s theory of change, values, and evaluation requirements as a strong characteristic of its model. Alvarez cautioned that funders’ values can also be the “elephant in the room” if left unspoken or unclear.

Funder intention behind evaluation requirements needs to be well thought through.

In arts and social change work, equity is an intrinsic value. Maria Rosario Jackson, of the Kresge Foundation and an urban planner, asserted that equity must underpin goals and process in community revitalization if the intent is to improve conditions for low income and other disenfranchised communities. Arts and culture can provide a lens to view equity issues for places undergoing revitalization efforts. “Artists in community development strategies are not only the people to move in and make places hip and happening...but in addition, there is a role for artists and creatives to engage in the framing of issues. They are not just icing on the cake, they are the batter,” Jackson said. **How issues of equity are dealt with in community development initiatives and to what degree they are overcome needs to be considered in evaluating arts for change work.**

“When we talk equity, there is racial equity and economic equity, but do we think about artist equity?” Through a lens of cultural democracy, artist, cultural organizer, and director of [Culture Strike](#) [Favianna Rodriguez](#) underscored the need to ensure payment and insurance for artists, and that evaluation of arts and social change organizations and projects should consider ethics and equity to assess how artists are being treated.

Shifting from proving to improving

For evaluation practice to take hold among practitioners, it has to be useful and meaningful. A driving impetus for evaluation for both practitioners and funders alike has been casemaking—trying to “prove” the value and impact of arts and culture as a contributor to community, civic, and social change. Although the importance of casemaking was by no means dismissed, the myriad challenges of longitudinal evaluation of projects and proving causality shifted the conversation to the more **useful and meaning making roles of evaluation. Participants put stock in evaluation practices that: can clarify and sharpen intent and improve planning, serve as an iterative process that informs action and decisions during the unfolding of projects, identify success factors that improve practice, and help communicate impact.**

Angel Ysaguirre of the [City of Chicago’s Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events](#) pointed out that not all artists whose work in some way contributes to community, civic or social change think about never mind evaluate it in those terms. And the benefits of evaluation are not always obvious, as Steven Shewfelt, Office of Research & Analysis at the [National Endowment for the Arts](#) pointed out. “I

have concluded that people frequently need convincing that evaluation can add value to their work.” **Artists need help developing evaluative thinking and skills in order to recognize the social or civic dimension and potential of their work and to sharpen stated social outcomes and indicators.** Artists also need documentation and evaluation tools that enable them to track social media and do other analysis and communication about the impact of their work.

“I used to think of evaluation as a tool most important for those impacted by the work, and now I’m even more convinced that that’s the case.”

**Lisa Marie Pickens,
evaluation consultant**

Favianna Rodriguez added two questions to these concerns:

1. **How do you measure efforts that have to be small, flexible, and rapid** (which is often important in responding to crisis, an opportunity, or a sudden shift in conditions)?
2. **How do you assess the individual experience?**

She urged the development of **replicable frameworks and technology-based tools** that artists can use to collect and analyze data, for example, how to track social media.

Shifting roles and power dynamics in evaluation

Reverberating throughout the exchange was the acknowledgment that much can be gained by promoting a shared, iterative learning process between grantees and funders. As previously noted, while well conceived frameworks and language from funders can be useful, defining outcomes and indicators solely according to a funder’s or intermediary’s interests is problematic, potentially forcing a one-size-fits-all set of measures. In arts for change work, the potential for change is greater if funders and grantees engage together in defining outcomes they both value.



From YouthScape Initiative, J.W. McConnell Family Foundation

Both the Developmental Evaluation model used by the J.W. McConnell Foundation and Crossroads Fund’s Social Movements Development model (see Part 2 case study summaries) challenge the arm’s length evaluator who must remain the objective observer and **reconsider the evaluator in a more supportive and active role**. Developmental Evaluation, with evaluator serving as sounding board and even empowered to intervene, was both intriguing though somewhat troubling to participants. Acknowledging that any act of observing can alter the phenomenon being observed, Kelly Barsdate of the [National Assembly of State Arts Agencies](#) expressed caution about evaluator as influencer of a project. An objective lens is “important so as not to superimpose our views,” she said. Maurine Knighton of the Nathan Cummings Foundation expressed **concern for cultural competence among evaluators** working in culturally specific contexts. Others opened

up to the notion that an honest relationship based on an agreement to learn and that even promotes **“radical truthful failure,”** as Michelle Coffey of the Lambent Foundation suggested, supports critical thinking that serves everyone’s efficacy in the long run.

All of this suggests a necessary shift in power relationship between funders, grantees, and evaluators and especially for funders to **push beyond their norms and comfort zones**. Kevin

Chin engaged participants in an exercise to illuminate what this might mean. The exercise employed a stakeholder analysis matrix that helps **analyze stakeholders’ power** (as in power to influence the system you are trying to shift) and interest (as in level of engagement in the initiative). (See diagram showing YouthScape stakeholder analysis). The exercise, in

| | Low Power Stakeholders | High Power Stakeholders |
|----------------------------|---|---|
| High Interest Stakeholders | High Interest, Low Power Youth | High Interest, High Power National Advisory, Foundation, Community Organizations |
| Low Interest Stakeholders | Low Interest, Low Power General Public | Low Interest, High Power Government |

which participants considered real life examples in relation to the matrix, prompted issues of situational, perceived and actual power, current and future power; as Steven Shewfelt described, “the dynamics of who is involved in the project, how they relate to one another, how their perceptions can affect what happens.”

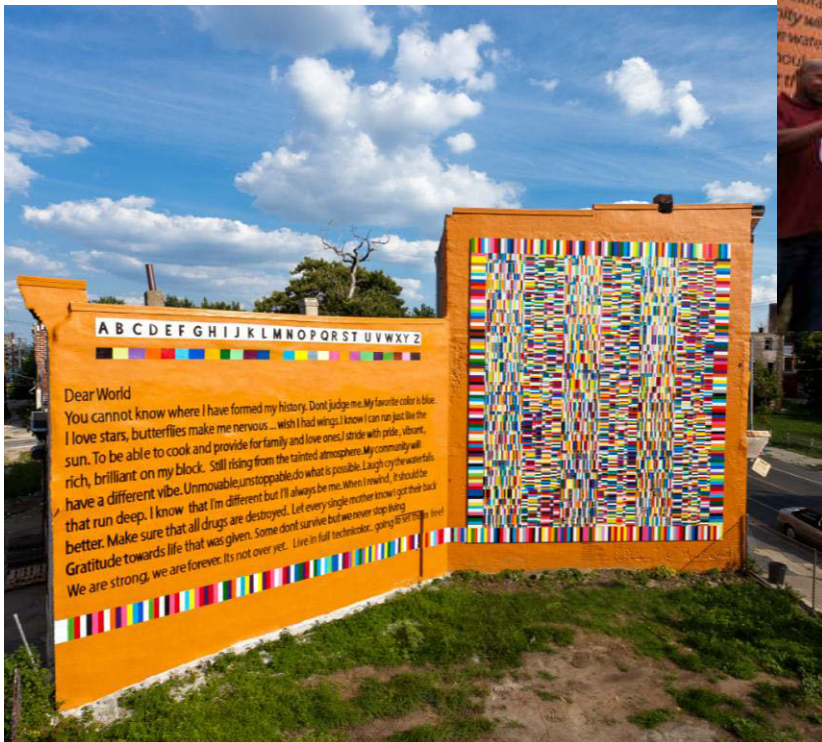
Developing prisms to evaluate cross-sector work

Leaders charged with making inroads on issues in all sectors, whether community development, government, immigration, health, the economy, the environment, or philanthropy, recognize that issues are interrelated and that strategies implemented collaboratively across sectors are fundamental to solving society’s intractable problems. Civic leaders, people working in social justice organizations, and federal government agencies are looking for innovative strategies to address issues and opportunities of place. Maria Rosario Jackson described the present as a “good moment for the arts to assert themselves in comprehensive strategies” in community revitalization efforts. Jackson underscored that **no single prism will suffice to evaluate cross sector work** where goals such as work force development, housing, and cultural development may co-exist.

“We need to complicate our thinking about this work that is neither fish nor fowl.”

Maria Rosario Jackson, Kresge Foundation

While appreciating the importance of striving for multidimensional information about impact, warranted by cross-sector work, Clay Lord of Americans for the Arts wondered, “if you’re getting more inputs, it makes it murkier. It allows for more interpretation. How do you deal with that?”



The Color of Your Voice, Ernel Martinez, Keir Johnston, and Nina "Lyraspect" Ball. Porch Light Initiative, Mural Arts Program, Philadelphia. Photo: Photo Steve Weinik

Bridge builders are needed who are effective at navigating the multiple perspectives, translating between different sectors, and making sense of what is changed. Not many people are poised to play that role and the challenge is finding those who are good at it. The Porch Light Initiative offered an example of an arts and behavioral health collaboration in which Sara Ansell, a social scientist embedded in an arts organization, is the bridge between the professional evaluators and practitioners. Developmental Evaluation specialists, in effect, can serve as bridge builders. However, Kevin Chin observed a similar lack of a ready pool of people with qualifications suited to Developmental Evaluation.

Observing that aesthetics and meaning are not typically evaluated in other sectors' efforts, Jackson urged that **practitioners need to articulate aesthetic outcomes and values (as well as community or social change outcomes) so that others don't do it for them.** This will help ensure that the "scorecard" reflects meaningful artistic outcomes within the community context. She added that deep description of what the work looks like and how it works (i.e. the unique capacities of arts and culture) can be a critical research step before asking what change has occurred.

ZOOMING IN & OUT TO UNDERSTAND IMPACT

Throughout the day, several questions emerged worthy of continued exploration. Two were isolated for "pop-up panels" in which volunteers offered their perspectives to kick off full group discussion.

Is the current array of evaluation practices up to assessing the ambitious goals of arts and social justice practice?

Kelly Barsdate of the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies initially raised this question, observing that the goals to which many arts/cultural ventures aspire—"improving health outcomes" or "transforming culture"—are almost always beyond the scope of a short-term project grant.

"Are expectations aligned with what we're invoking?"

Kelly Barsdate, National Assembly of State Arts Agencies

Barsdate sees, and others agreed, that **an array of applicable measurement approaches and tools exists. It is a matter of knowing the options and how to deploy the right approaches for the circumstance and desired assessment and learning.** Reinforcing a point made by Chris Dwyer and others, she differentiated research from evaluation and reminded that research might, in some cases, more appropriately support casemaking or other information needs. Others pointed to **clarity of purpose** underpinning evaluation and a **focused research or evaluation question** as critical to aligning appropriate

approaches. The Porch Light Initiative is exemplary in its clarity on these terms as well as applying standard methodologies with rigor.

“It would be productive,” said Kelly Barsdate, to **“untangle project versus operating support, and short versus long term support”** in the context of grantmaking strategies to **set reasonable expectations in terms of outcomes and evaluation.**

“How art makes change is still a foreign question for most people in the arts.” Arts practitioners need **accessible points of entry to tools and skill building** offered in language that “fits with artistic intuition,” added Sheila Leddy of the Fledgling Fund. The field would benefit from a menu of evaluation frameworks suited to different purposes, including sample indicators to measure change.

Finally, **more creative ways to communicate the power of arts for change work** are needed. Funders are investigating the possibilities and helping grantees. Crossroads Fund helps grantees “to sell social change without selling out,” i.e. to **find the best language to communicate impact to stakeholders who may not be attuned to the language of social justice.** The Sparkwise dashboard generated strong interest in data visualization strategies combined with images, video, and narrative to **convey impact through both story and numbers.** [Air Traffic Control](#) uses Sparkwise and, according to Erin Potts, has found that it has “changed how we’re thinking about what we’re grabbing.” She likes the widget that enables real time data capture from Google Analytics so that metrics automatically update online. Participants were able to imagine how Sparkwise (free and open source but customizable via widgets specific to a funder’s interests) could be used by other funders. Michelle Coffey appreciated the open source nature of the tool as an alternative for funders to consider, even if it pushes them beyond their comfort zone. The McConnell Foundation is exploring **innovative data visualization approaches.** Favianna Rodriguez and others urged that **the creative expertise of artists is a ready asset** to transform how impact is communicated.



Select segments of Sparkwise dashboard for the film, *Sin by Silence* by Quiet Little Place Productions. To see full dashboard, [click here](#).

The enormity and urgency of issues like climate change will require **deep transformation of public will, heart, and energy**, according to Chris Peters of the [Seventh Generation Fund](#). Artists and culture bearers play a fundamental role in inciting, informing, and sustaining a

spiritual movement that can expand thinking and stimulate cultural change needed to change behaviors and policies.

“How do we evaluate ourselves to be good ancestors?”

Chris Peters, Seventh Generation Fund

There can be a fear of doing evaluation because we may not have it perfect yet. “We just have to dirty our hands,” urged Jane Kimondo who pushed back on concern that change cannot be observed within the timeframe of short-term grant funded projects. She believes there are indicators that can be tracked, even if progress or wins are small. Many concurred. **It is better to take a step and do something to begin to move the needle on evaluation.**

How can funders who have supported the same projects, artists, and organizations better connect to know the collective impact of their investments?

Can evaluation help funders understand the complexity of the work and what it takes for artists or cultural/social agents of change to achieve impact over time?

These two questions were raised at once by Michelle Coffey of Lambent Foundation upon learning of Crossroads Fund’s initial support of Chicago-based artist-activist Laurie Jo Reynolds. Crossroads’ modest investment was followed by support from several national funders, including Lambent. Reynolds’ “Legislative Art” project contributed to the campaign that successfully led to closure of Tamms Super Max Prison in Illinois. Each funder, Coffey, observed, held up Reynolds’ work as a measure of success of their investments.

Seeing that this independent, but collective support effectively impacted legislation, advanced funders’ goals, and advanced the work of the artist, Coffey acknowledged an ecosystem of support at work, but one that is not fully understood or harnessed. “My work is so dependent on the success and failure of everyone else’s work.” **Tremendous learning could result from funders being more deliberate in sharing their varying and common interests and intentions** as they support particular artists, projects, and organizations, perhaps mobilizing money more strategically to help artists and cultural organizations achieve desired impact.

“You may not always get the story you want to tell,” reminded Steven Shewfelt. For evaluation to enable deeper understanding of the complexity of arts for change work will require **“radical truthful relationships”** between individual funders and grantees that encourage honesty and transparency and “the authentic telling of our work without claiming excellence at all times” according to Coffey. The notion of **embracing failure and experimentation** as part of advancing arts for change work and change itself was discussed regarding the relationship in social change work between funder and grantee. Jessica Garz of the [Surdna Foundation](#)

observed that failure is often tied to unreasonable expectations, particularly around short-term, e.g. typical 12-month grants. **Recalibrating to consider intermediate outcomes**, such as increased empathy or compassion, as preconditions for other change to occur should be legitimized in more modest or short-term projects. Nonprofit organizational consultant Lisa Yancey agreed, urging that honesty won't occur unless funders explicitly "build room for failure" and shift the conversation with grantees. Funders have to understand their own level of risk tolerance. Kevin Chin suggested the web site failforward.org as a resource.

MOVING FORWARD

The Funder Exchange on Evaluating Arts & Social Impact offered a temperature check on how funders, practitioners, and evaluators are feeling, thinking, and acting to better understand the social impact of their arts for change work and investments, just as others such as the Arts, Culture, and Social Justice Network and a joint effort by the Cummings and Ford Foundations are exploring similar ground, too.¹

"I have referred to the Crossroads Tool several times in helping to refine our Theory of Change and have done research into possible uses of Sparkwise. Maria Rosario's comments helped spark some conceptual breakthroughs that were inherent in the work but that she articulated incredibly well."

**Betsy Richards,
Opportunity Agenda**

As evaluation continues to be a concern, participants expressed several desires:

"Thank you so much for inviting Crossroads Fund to share our evaluation tool – it was an honor to present and get such positive feedback from peers in the field and folks steeped in evaluation."

**Jane Kimondo,
Crossroads Fund**

Hold more funder exchanges to learn from concrete efforts in evaluation.

Many felt the case study format was very effective in providing concrete models illuminating specific theory and practice but also allowing speculative discussion of evaluation issues, values, principles, and practices. Those presenting their models appreciated the opportunity to test them and receive feedback.

Promote this and other efforts in the field that are examining social impact of arts and culture.

These conversations need to be coordinated and disseminated in order to

¹ The Arts, Culture and Social Justice Network (ACSJN)—a network of people and organizations including arts and social change funders, practitioners, and intermediaries engaged in learning and action to create a more equitable and creative world—has an "evaluation node;" ACSJN steering committee members, Maurine Knighton, Carlton Turner, and Pam Korza will feed back key points of this exchange to this network. The Cummings and Ford Foundations are bringing together common grantees that represent networks to determine whether there is collective investigation and data gathering that can be done to advance mutual learning and impact analysis useful to both funders and grantees.

build knowledge and influence values and practices guiding evaluation among funders and practitioners.

Create specific opportunities for artists to build evaluative thinking and skills

and engage more artists to inform and contribute to conversations with funders and evaluators.

“Not only am I planning a potential workshop with Kevin Chin, but Favi Rodriguez’s contributions helped me name an Unbound-funded project I’m embarking on.”

Ellen Schneider,
Active Voice Lab for Story & Strategy

Animating Democracy and Americans for the Arts are committed to assessing and communicating the social impact value of the arts in partnership with others sharing common goals. Barbara Schaffer Bacon cited some of Animating Democracy’s related activities (added to here for completeness):

- Additional Funder Exchanges on Evaluating Arts & Social Impact (an exchange was held with Minnesota foundations in June and Animating Democracy will proceed to plan and resource others)
- Workshops and [webinars](#) to build skills among practitioners (the recent EVALUATION IN ACTION! webinar series is accessible in archive and will add new modules; live workshops and evaluation design studios can be booked)
- The new [Arts & Social Change Funder Portraits](#) and podcasts will continue to examine evaluation questions with each featured funder along with a broader array of topics regarding how, why, and to what effects funders are supporting arts for change.
- A next iteration of the 2010 report, [Trend or Tipping Point: Arts & Social Change Grantmaking](#) will continue to investigate how funders are addressing evaluation of social change.
- The [IMPACT](#) web site ongoingly expands resources, tools and frameworks, and basic entry point information for practitioners. We are refreshing our [Continuum of Impact](#) tool that maps the most common social outcomes and offers sample indicators.
- Animating Democracy would like to advance a next phase of the impact Field Lab which would bring evaluators and arts practitioners together in a collaborative inquiry about useful, practicable ways to advance practitioners’ evaluation practices.² A summary of the Field Labs related to Art At Work (artist Marty Pottenger) and the Hip Hop Mental Health project (artist Rha Goddess) evaluations as well as Impact web site resources can be found in [Evaluating Impact / Appreciating Evaluation](#).

Animating Democracy and Americans for the Arts are available to help advance common interests in these or other areas of interest.

² In the first phase Field Lab, Maribel Alvarez and Maria Rosario Jackson worked respectively with the Tucson Pima Arts Council and Los Angeles Poverty Dept. Chris Dwyer worked with Art At Work, a project of artist Marty Pottenger and the City of Portland, ME as well as Art & Soul, project of the Orton Family Foundation. These and other Field Lab efforts are documented in [case studies](#).

PART II – CASE STUDIES

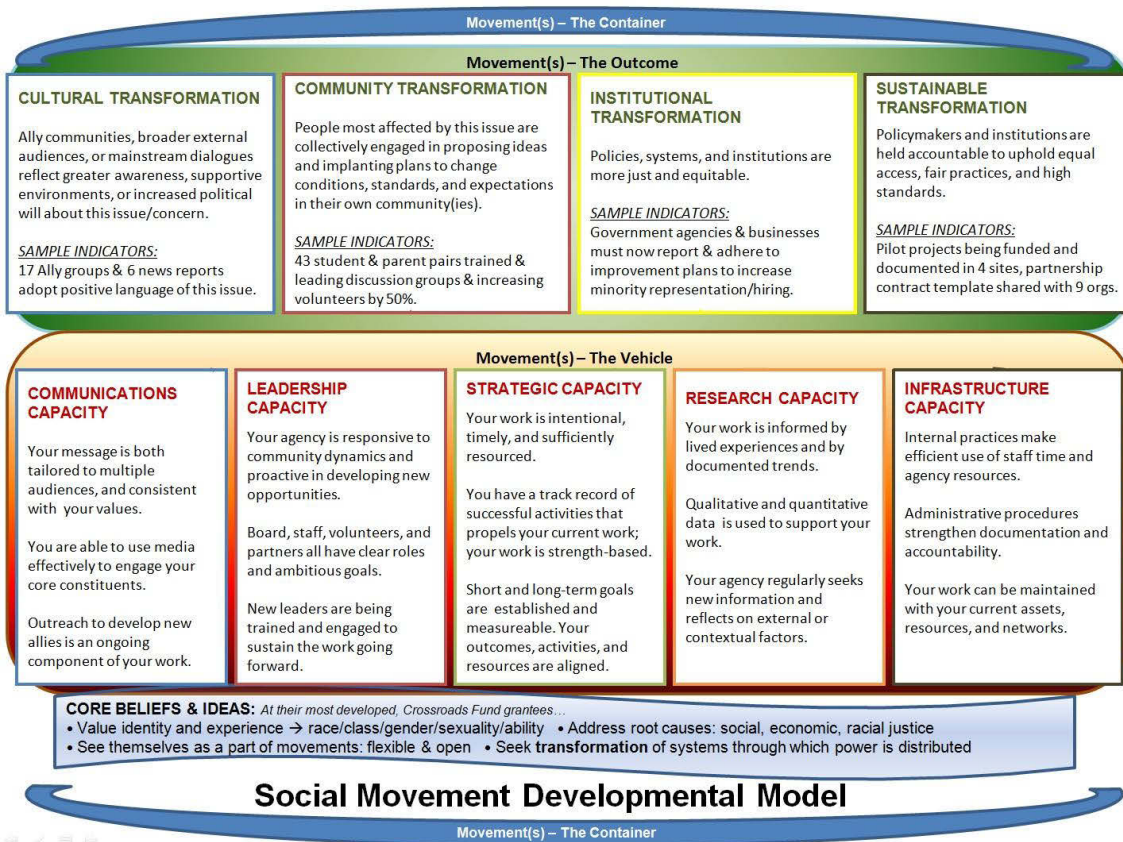


Crossroads Fund’s Social Movements Development Model

[Crossroads Fund](#), a public foundation, supports community organizations working on issues of racial, social and economic justice in the Chicago area. It provides organizational support through mainly general operating grants of up to \$10,000. In 2012, it granted close to \$304,000.

Crossroads Fund has always seen art as an integral part of movements and thus supports various forms of arts that have a call to action component attached; for example, it has funded the [Chicago Palestine Film Festival](#), and artist [Laurie Jo Reynolds’ Tamms Year Ten](#) photography project which was used in local campaigns to help end the use of long-term isolation in prison.

Jane Kimondo, program director, and Lisa Marie Pickens, evaluation consultant, presented Crossroads’ Social Movements Development Model. The model provides **a tool that articulates progress toward four types of social transformation—cultural, community, institutional, and sustainable**—made by grantees and by foundation investments. (See diagram.) It helps grantees **define indicators** of the effects of their organizational work in relation to the four domains of social transformation as well as to **pinpoint the capacities that may be required for these**



Excerpt from Crossroads Fund’s Social Movements Development Model. For complete tool, click [here](#).

transformations to occur in areas of: *communications, leadership, strategic, research, and infrastructure.*

The tool guides grantee planning, evaluation, and reporting; it is required in lieu of a progress report. Concretely, a quiz ([see page 6 of the full model](#)) and sample indicators that are weighted help grantees situate themselves in the social change domain area that is most important in their work. The Fund offers technical assistance to help grantees work productively with the tool. Crossroads observes that grantees find value in **thinking more strategically and in coalition with other groups** and pursue their goals with greater clarity and conviction. The tool also **enables the Fund to aggregate data** about the outcomes of grant investments.

Crossroads Fund is only too aware that large systemic change takes time and no one organization can bring about that change on its own. Given the dearth of tools to help grassroots organizations actually measure social change, the fund went through a highly collaborative process with grantees, professional evaluators, and Crossroads Fund staff and board to create and test **an evaluation tool that articulates progress toward systemic changes** on issues on which grantees are working.

The evaluation process, using a common tool across all grantees, is helping grantees and the Crossroads Fund to get a better handle on the status of social movements in Chicago and progress being made. Crossroads looks at what the range of organizations in Chicago are doing to address an issue and asks grantees about their own collaborations and connections to coalitions to characterize social movement.

Participants appreciated several aspects of the model:

- The model demonstrates congruence between theory of change, values, and what the Fund expects in terms of evaluation which aids grantee clarity on expectations.
- The tool requires grantees to consider their work in a broader context of movement building. The social change domains--*cultural, community, institutional, and sustainable*—help grantees to clarify challenging concepts (e.g. cultural transformation as changes in public, political will, attitude or sustainable transformation as preventing backsliding from “wins” through accountability measures) and find common language to define outcomes.
- Requiring reporting using the tool facilitates the fund’s aggregation and reporting.
- Participants pointed to the importance of engaging the various stakeholders in the collective analysis of a movement’s status. Angie Wang of the Asian Women’s Giving Circle, added that “sometimes it is important to operate outside of the movements in order to be heard.”
- The tool, taken as a whole, creates a narrative of value; a narrative of social justice.
- Crossroads Fund gained the confidence of grantees by involving them in developing and piloting the tool as well as in providing technical assistance in using it for planning and evaluation.

Related resources:

[Social Movements Development Model](#)

[Crossroads Fund PowerPoint presentation](#)



J.W. McConnell Family Foundation & Developmental Evaluation

The [J.W. McConnell Family Foundation](#) is a private philanthropic organization working nationally to fund programs that support Canadians to build a more innovative, inclusive, sustainable, and resilient society.

As context, Kevin Chin, Knowledge and Evaluation Officer, described the **J. W. McConnell Family Foundation's ethos as a learning and problem solving organization**. The use of developmental evaluation (DE) supports this orientation and has been applied across its programs focusing on youth, aboriginal issues, and poverty reduction among others. Chin focused primarily on [YouthScape](#), a four-year initiative that was part of the Foundation's larger inclusion strategy. YouthScape's theory of change was: **Engaging marginalized young people in local decision-making** develops and draws upon their knowledge, skills, and values, and in doing so, serves to enrich democracy in communities. While operating at a national scale in five communities, YouthScape (now concluded) worked through intermediaries to make small local grants to address opportunities or challenges of particular interest to youth.³ Arts and cultural strategies were employed by some of the initiative's grantees.

DE draws from a number of other evaluation processes and was well suited to YouthScape's objective to test and learn from promising approaches for engaging marginalized youth in their local communities. Borrowing from Michael Quinn Patton's work, Chin shared key features of DE:

- **DE "embraces the emergent" nature of social innovation work.** The goal of DE is learning. It allows goals and outcomes to evolve as learning occurs. Tracking of process, progress, and course shifts is continuous, not episodic in order to **support ongoing learning, inform decision making, and enhance potential for efficacy.**

³ The foundation invited coalitions of community partners, including youth, to address opportunities or challenges of particular interest to youth (e.g. improving recreation programs, reducing tension among racial groups, improving relations between homeless youth and the police, finding voice through art and music). Over four years, the foundation committed \$2.1 million to the initiative of which \$1.2 million was used to match more than \$1.5 million in local contributions to support young people in planning and carrying out local projects. (Each community partner received up to \$100,000 per year in matching funds to support youth-led projects, train young people, strengthen organizational capacity, and lead the community collaboration.) The balance was used to carry out national gatherings on an annual basis, provide support and training, undertake evaluations, harvest knowledge, and manage the project. (from YouthScape: A Funder's Perspective by John Cawley, J.W. McConnell Family Foundation, 2010)

- **DE works well within complex dynamic contexts that involve diverse stakeholders who need ongoing feedback from a critical, supportive observer** to help keep process issues in check. The developmental evaluator is “embedded” early and his/her role is to be engaged as opposed to detached, in order to collect and share information in real time. Developmental evaluators orient, watch, makes sense, and have authority to intervene. (A part-time developmental evaluator was paired with each of the five participating YouthScape communities while a lead developmental evaluator oversaw and connected all DEs for the purpose of coherence, peer exchange, troubleshooting, and providing a link to Foundation staff.)

DE was particularly valuable in terms of an evaluation approach, as its close-in and ongoing nature enabled a view of YouthScape’s outcomes of investments in areas of:

- attitude change among community members, local partners (e.g., a change in public opinion about aboriginal youth that helped build community);
- organizational change among partner organizations in terms of creating spaces for meaningful youth participation (new relationships, mindsets, practices); and
- influence on system change among local community partners.

Participants found value in DE:

- For new initiatives or pilots testing a hypothesis or approach, DE focuses appropriately on how things work, factors contributing to effective work and desired outcomes. It is generative. It has action research value.
- DE owns up to the fact that “all observation is intervention; there is no such thing as passive observation.”
- DE supports grantee learning and adjustment from learning in real time, helping grantees to improve and course correct and thereby increase potential for success. DE allows grantees and funders to hold the experience long enough to really learn from it.

Participants wanted to better understand the **authority vested in the evaluator**. Chin explained that in YouthScape, for example, they had authority on **behalf of the youth, the local organizations, as well as the foundation**. Some questioned the evaluator’s role to intervene. Chin offered the example of another project in which tensions around Indigenous peoples were surfaced and shared by the evaluator with the working group and addressed in order to enable the project to move productively forward.

There was acknowledgment that **DE requires sensitive evaluators with the right mix of skills in facilitation, power dynamics, technical assistance, and evaluation** (there is no established training per se to become a developmental evaluator; McConnell held coaching session for YouthScape’s developmental evaluators); as well as the cost of embedding a developmental evaluator in the work of grantees.

Related resources:

[PowerPoint – Developmental Evaluation: An Overview](#)

[Youthscape Guidebook](#) (See the Measuring Impact section, p. 93-103; also note that examples/case studies throughout illuminate the nature of the youth development and social change projects supported by McConnell’s YouthScape initiative, as well as how evaluation was conducted, outcomes of the projects, and learning.)

[DE 201: A Practitioner’s Guide to Developmental Evaluation](#) and [A Developmental Evaluation Primer](#)

[Evaluating Social Innovation](#), by Hallie Preskill and Tanya Beer



Porch Light Initiative – Assessing Impact Over Time & Across Sectors

The [Porch Light Initiative](#) is a partnership between the City of Philadelphia [Mural Arts Program](#) (MAP) and the Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual disAbility Services (DBHIDS) aimed at **improving individual and community health through human connection and art**. Teams of individuals receiving treatment for behavioral health challenges, health service providers, artists, and community residents collaborate on transformative public art projects to address issues of drug addiction, mental illness, and other behavioral health issues in Philadelphia’s most underserved neighborhoods. The initiative’s goals are to:

- **stimulate community engagement** by connecting individuals with behavioral health challenges to each other, service providers, and the larger community;
- **shed light on challenges faced** by those with behavioral health issues,
- **reduce stigma** and encourage empathy among fellow community members; and
- **encourage community ownership and pride** and catalyze positive neighborhood changes.

Sara Ansell, program director of the Porch Light Initiative, presented how this \$1.5 million cross-sector initiative is being evaluated on both individual and community levels using a health lens. The Yale School of Medicine designed and is conducting the **community-based participatory research study** with the help of local university students and sees this as “an innovative public health initiative.” The rigorous evaluation design, based on a logic model (see slide 6 in the PowerPoint presentation) “takes our hunch and turns it into something concrete,” said Ansell. It includes: careful tracking of program activities, use of **comparison sites, community surveys on street corners, systematic observation** of mural sites, pre/post/and follow-up interviews, and case studies (methods detailed below). The evaluation is already (after the first of a three-year design) informing what makes a successful partnership at a provider agency and how to select other communities to work with. Final results will be available in summer 2014.

“Working on individual and community level outcome measures is a huge step for MAP.”

Sara Ansell, Porch Light Initiative

To achieve the degree of rigor and credibility is costly; the price tag \$325,000. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, along with the Dept. of Behavioral Health is funding the overall initiative as well the three-year evaluation process. Ansell is quick to say that it is MAP staff, not the funders, who are driving the evaluation.

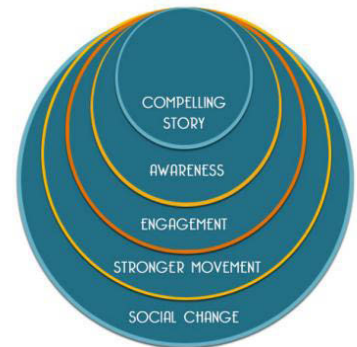
Related resources:

[PowerPoint - Porch Light Initiative](#)

The Fledgling Fund and Sparkwise Dashboard – Telling a Compelling Story of Impact

The Fledgling Fund is a private foundation that believes in the power of film to: engage communities in timely issues; allow people to explore complicated issues and understand how seemingly distant policies affect individuals, families and communities; strengthen social movements; and inspire action. Committed to advancing both projects and the field, Fledgling supports **social issue documentary** filmmakers to design and execute thoughtful outreach and audience engagement toward these ends. It also shares its knowledge, experience and the lessons learned to **help grantees build the capacity to educate, engage, and to track and share the impact of social issue documentary film.**

CREATIVE MEDIA DIMENSIONS OF IMPACT



From [Assessing Creative Media’s Social Impact](#), The Fledgling Fund, 2009

In this spirit, Fledgling executive director Sheila Leddy detailed how it supports grantees in their efforts to document and assess the **quantitative and qualitative** impact of their projects. Specifically, Fledgling was one of the funders that invested in the development of

Tracking the right metrics in the right context can help us gain a deeper understanding of the communities we serve, so we can make a lasting impact.

[Sparkwise website](#)

[Sparkwise](#), an online dashboard “designed to **put data to good use.**” It is an **open source platform** that not only enables collection and comparison of metrics, but to combine raw numbers with video, audio, text feeds, and PDFs to **tell a story of impact.** Fledgling has incorporated Sparkwise as a dimension of its grantmaking so that filmmakers can tell the story of impact of their films combining data visualizations and narrative and image-based story customized to the goals of the film. The

dashboards of funded films live on Fledgling’s own web site, but grantees are also encouraged to use them to track their impact and deepen their engagement work.

According to Leddy, Fledgling’s impetus for this approach was **to tell the story of the impact of social documentary films in a more dynamic way** and with greater reach than the “static, one page per film on our web site” that didn’t evolve with the film project. Fledgling offers grantees tutorials and technical assistance on how to use and maximize the tool to best meet their needs and information and communication goals. Fledgling has also launched [Impact Grants](#), available to its grantees, which support short videos or other media that captures, explains and communicates impact (up to \$10K) and the design or implementation of a structured evaluation effort (up to \$20K).

At the same time that Fledgling focuses on using the tool to highlight the work of individual film projects, it sees potential for telling a larger story about the impact of social documentary media in the context of its own field advancement goal.

Related resources: [Sparkwise dashboards of Fledgling Fund’s grantees](#)