



2008 National Performing Arts Convention:

Assessing the Field's Capacity for Collective Action

**Elizabeth Long Lingo, PhD & Andrew Taylor
with Caroline Lee, PhD**

The Curb Center at Vanderbilt
The Mike Curb Family Foundation
The National Performing Arts Convention



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Elizabeth Long Lingo, PhD, Assistant Director

The Curb Center for Art, Enterprise & Public Policy at Vanderbilt University

Andrew Taylor, Director

The Bolz Center for Arts Administration

Wisconsin School of Business

University of Wisconsin-Madison

with

Caroline Lee, PhD, Assistant Professor of Sociology

Lafayette College

2008 NPAC: Assessing the Field's Capacity for Collective Action

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This report was funded by the National Performing Arts Convention and the Mike Curb Family Foundation.

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Preface

In any environment, particularly in the dynamic economic and political climate we now face, leaders across all sectors must search for new ways to continue to shape our communities and our nation. Whether you are a seasoned CEO or an elected official, an emerging dance artist or an arts educator, a foundation president or artistic director, we hope this report will capture your imagination and provide pragmatic insight into the potential for coordinated and collective action in that essential endeavor.

Within, we present findings from research conducted around the 2008 National Performing Arts Convention (NPAC)—a gathering of a diverse and dynamic group of over 3700 professionals for the purpose of identifying a collective action agenda for the performing arts field.

For nearly a decade, I have studied creative ecosystems and the role of leaders who bring together experts to forge innovative products, policies, and practices. Integrating diverse voices toward a cohesive whole and eliciting ongoing commitment is difficult even when individuals share a common organization or community. NPAC's attempt to identify an action agenda and forge commitment on a national scale and across a variety of arts disciplines was particularly ambitious. But while the scope was bigger, the issues were similar to the creative puzzles I have studied in music studios and in communities—the critical role of catalysts, the tension between individual and collective interests, and the challenges of working together in the face of differing assumptions and language across groups.

My co-author, Andrew Taylor, Director of the Bolz Center for Arts Administration at University of Wisconsin-Madison, who documented and analyzed the first NPAC in Pittsburgh, brought his own seasoned perspective to this work. Together, and with a team of graduate students and scholars, we observed the 2008 convention as it unfolded and asked ourselves: What recommendations could we make for the field as it embarked on this ambitious agenda? Where could energies best be directed—at the individual, organizational, local, and national level?

The questions addressed in this report resonate deeply with the work of The Curb Center for Art, Enterprise & Public Policy at Vanderbilt—a cultural policy center focused on fostering dialogue and conducting research that examines the system of practices, laws, regulations and norms shaping America's cultural life. The Curb Center, like the organizers of NPAC, recognizes the strength in bringing different voices and perspectives together to identify the challenges and opportunities facing a healthy and vital arts system.

This report would not have been possible without the foresight of Marc Scorca and the other members of the NPAC steering committee, who commissioned this research. Andrew and I would like to acknowledge the support and contributions of our fabulous research team, including Steven Tepper, Bill Ivey, Caroline Lee and Alberta Arthurs. Finally, we extend our great appreciation to the arts leaders who shared their stories and perspectives with us—before, during and after the 2008 convention. Forward...

Elizabeth Long Lingo

The Curb Center for Art, Enterprise & Public Policy at Vanderbilt

January 2009

Table of Contents

Executive Summaryii
Introduction	1
Taking Action Together: A Framework for Analysis, Planning and Action	4
Community Building	7
Identifying Community Boundaries and Membership	8
Valuing Collaboration and Cooperation	12
Defining Shared Interests, Values, and Mission	13
Articulating Common Problems and Issues: AmericaSpeaks	16
Capacity Building	22
Accessing and Mobilizing Community Members and Allies	22
Acquiring, Deploying and Sharing Resources	25
Creating Effective Decision-Making and Implementation Processes for Action Plans	27
Ensuring Sustainable Leadership	29
Going Forward	29
Productive Responses	33
Appendix 1: The I-DOC Process	40
Appendix 2: IDOC Leadership Bios	43
Appendix 3: Denver Observation Team	47
Appendix 4: Kickoff IDOC Scholar Meeting	48
Appendix 5: Detail of Caucus Session Ideas and Strategies	50

Executive Summary

The National Performing Arts Convention in Denver was an extraordinary convening, designed specifically to build community and define collective goals for the performing arts field. Through its process, professionals from multiple performing arts disciplines and different organizational roles found meaningful time to connect, to share concerns, and to build a sense of shared purpose. But also through this process, participants and hosting partners had a unique opportunity to observe the nature of those interactions, and explore where connections and disconnections were most pronounced.

Before, during, and after the convention, a cross-disciplinary team of academic leaders and graduate students came together to make those observations, and to advance our understanding of the field’s capacity for collective action. Looking through the lens of social theory, we explored the *community building, capacity building, and opportunity structures* that inform effective collective action, to determine where the performing arts stood on the road to productive influence at the national, regional, and local scale.

This report outlines our discoveries throughout the process, which included:

Community Building

Shared sense of the field’s boundaries

Participants struggled to define the boundaries of the “performing arts field,” with many focusing on primarily professional, nonprofit organizations that present, produce, or promote live performance. Others wondered whether commercial, amateur, informal, community, or even mediated forms of performing arts—television, recordings, or on-line, for example—were part of the community or separate from it. This lack of a shared boundary may be limiting the field’s ability to mobilize, and to define allies for their collective work.

2008 NPAC: Assessing the Field’s Capacity for Collective Action

Value of collaboration: Eager and ready to explore

While participants predominantly focused on local and organizational issues in their discussions and future strategies, they were already engaged in partnerships with other disciplines and sectors—schools, social service agencies, learning initiatives. Further, they seemed ready for more. There seems to be real opportunity in fostering these connections on a smaller scale that would serve the dual purpose of building trust and the capacity to work collectively toward a larger goal.

Shared interests, values, and mission: Differences in language and meaning

For many, these were the first meaningful conversations with practitioners from other disciplines. A good portion of the AmericaSpeaks sessions (a public participation process used to generate a collective action agenda for the field), and other shared events, was spent defining the similarities and differences between disciplines, their operational challenges, and their policy connections. These were important conversations, but seemed to mark the beginning of a longer process of relationship building.

Shared goals and priorities

While the priorities emerging from the AmericaSpeaks process were ones that have been with the performing arts for some time, there still remains ambiguity around how these priorities are interpreted. While arts education provides a clear mandate, what is meant by the priorities related to diversity and advocacy requires further discussion and clarification. Further, in relation to advocacy, while respondents emphasize the importance of a unified, strong, “right” message, there does not seem to be consensus about what that message should be or whether “one message” is appropriate for all.

Capacity Building

Accessing and mobilizing community members and allies: Talking vs. listening

Survey responses and convention conversations showed a strong interest in inviting elected officials from local, state, and national government in future NPAC conversations. Yet respondents seemed largely disconnected from these officials in their decision processes and in their local engagement. There is much productive work to be done in building policy awareness, listening/facilitation skills, and other basic elements of effective policy action with these key actors.

Acquiring, deploying and sharing resources: Often unaware of the terrain

The primary focus on local and organizational issues also seems to influence a general lack of awareness or significant attention to national-level resources, policy details, and cross-disciplinary initiatives. Rather than creating more such national and cross-disciplinary initiatives, this suggests a larger effort to redefine and redeliver such existing initiatives in a way that connects to local and organizational needs. Examining and developing the extant systems for knowledge sharing across the field is a first and necessary step toward building capacity for collective action.

Creating action plans: Competing scope and scale

Even as they convened to explore national issues and overarching goals for the field, participants thought, spoke, and planned most effectively at the local or organizational level. Through this lens, national initiatives and collective action often lacked the same perceived benefit and impact as local action. A national initiative would be more successful if it leveraged and responded to the local/organizational interests of arts practitioners, rather than expecting them to naturally shift their focus to a larger scale.

2008 NPAC: Assessing the Field’s Capacity for Collective Action

*Creating effective decision-making and implementation processes for action plans:
Ready to help, but not sure how*

Finally, participants were energized by the convening in Denver, and willing to continue a more collaborative effort to advance collective goals. But many were unsure how to do so. They returned to their organizations prepared to take action on local or organizational levels, but were unsure who “owned” the larger agenda. Some were unsure if the National Performing Arts Convention was a separate organization that would continue, or if they would be coordinating work with their primary NSO, ad hoc action groups, or other entities.

The remainder of this report describes the source of these discoveries in greater detail, and concludes with recommendations for moving forward.

Introduction

Since the early 1990s, many cultural leaders have lamented the disaggregated and diffuse nature of their field in policy and in practice. Policy agendas and innovative practice have emerged in specific contexts, pushed along by actors and organizations that have particular interests. Foundations have influenced and advanced ideas, as have local and statewide arts agencies. National arts service organizations have also been important actors—identifying issues and then mobilizing or informing their constituent

What is the capacity of the performing arts field for collective action, or the ability to define, refine, develop, and advance consistent common issues together?

members. But these efforts have tended to focus on specific disciplines, regions, subgroups, or targeted issues, rather than the whole of the performing arts. As a result, the field has yet to find a consistent and powerful common agenda—or even a common set of ideas to focus dialogue in a cohesive way.

In short, the performing arts field seems to lack a capacity for *collective action*, or the ability to define, refine, develop, and advance consistent common issues together.

Facing a changing and increasingly competitive environment, leaders of the major performing arts national service organizations (NSOs) decided to address that challenge directly by co-convening their membership. The first National Performing Arts Convention (NPAC) in Pittsburgh in 2004 offered multiple separate conferences for NSO membership with a common opening event and one day of shared activities. Building on the sense of shared purpose fostered by the Pittsburgh experiment, the leaders of the NSOs embarked on a more ambitious collective program for the 2008 NPAC in Denver that integrated within-discipline annual conference programming and joint inter-disciplinary

2008 NPAC: Assessing the Field’s Capacity for Collective Action

programming over five days. With a rallying theme of “Taking Action Together,” the Denver convention brought together arts leaders across disciplines to learn from each other, identify common goals, and advance a field-wide agenda. At the core of the convention was an effort to forge a common agenda for all participants through AmericaSpeaks, a multi-day caucus process, where over 1500 attendees engaged in roundtable discussions and an electronic “town meeting” to define and select the issues that could be pursued collectively to advance the performing arts.

For the 2004 NPAC event, a cross-disciplinary team of practitioners, academics, and graduate students was established to observe the conversations and reflect back on the patterns and issues fostered by the new convention model. Called I-DOC (for Interview, Document, Observe, and Clarify), the team observed all aspects of the Pittsburgh convention, and noted both the promise and challenge of such cross-disciplinary conversation. By all accounts, insights and recommendations from the 2004 I-DOC report provided key insights for the revision and re-envisioning that forged the Denver convention in 2008.

Just as the scope and scale of the convention changed from Pittsburgh to Denver, the 2008 iteration of the I-DOC project returned with a different purpose and process. Rather than focusing on “big ideas” emerging in convention conversations, the cross-disciplinary team of scholars and graduate students were asked to observe and clarify the field’s capacity for collective action—the reflections, expectations, relationships, and interactions that inform the ability of the field to work as a cohesive whole.

2008 NPAC: Assessing the Field’s Capacity for Collective Action

To address this goal, the 2008 I-DOC team gathered leadership from arts administration, policy, and sociology, to guide a diverse team of graduate students from those various fields of study. Through analysis of pre- and post-convention survey data, in-depth observations at the Denver convention, and interviews with performing arts leaders, or “catalysts,” who are pushing the field in new directions, the team sought to capture and better understand the collective action potential and challenges of those convened in Denver.

We hope these findings and recommendations can be an effective resource to:

- Reflect on the implications and impact of the 2008 National Performing Arts Convention
- Identify challenges and opportunities for collective action at the local, regional, and national level that surfaced during the convention
- Articulate shared beliefs about the value of the arts and the role and mission of the nonprofit arts community in America
- Inform the actions of the NPAC steering committee as they move forward in building community and facilitating collective action

Details of the methods used in this research project and the members of the I-DOC team can be found in the Appendices of this report.

Taking Action Together: A Framework for Analysis, Planning and Action

At its core, the 2008 National Performing Arts Convention in Denver was an effort to forge and advance *collective action* within and across the field of the performing arts. While collective action by discipline, region, budget size, functional role, and other divisions has taken place on a smaller scale and has done much to advance the performing arts, a more collaborative and coherent approach seemed necessary in an increasingly complex and interconnected world. The gathering in Denver of thousands of diverse participants was, itself, a collective action. But coming together was just a first step in a more ambitious process to define and focus the collective needs and interests of the field.

Three key factors influence collective action: community building, capacity building, and opportunity structure.

Because many fields, industries, and social movements have had a similar interest in working together toward common goals, collective action has become a focus of significant study and discussion for many decades. Sociologists and civic activists have come to understand collective action as encompassing a broad range of organized activity intended to produce political and cultural change. Collective action takes many forms, including advocacy and lobbying, legal action and protest, research and education, strategic partnering and novel collaborations, and change and sharing of business practices. Further, these forms of collective action may be coordinated and enacted at the international, national, regional, local, and organizational/individual levels.

Current social theory suggests three key factors that in combination lead to productive collective action: *community building*, *capacity building*, and *opportunity structure*.

2008 NPAC: Assessing the Field’s Capacity for Collective Action

Community building. Collective action is rooted in individual motivation to take action, and a sense of connection to a larger community. As a result, collective action requires attention to both relationship building and framing processes that foster a sense of shared purpose and common problems, and a belief in the potential of the collective to address the needs of individuals. These relationship and meaning-centered processes must challenge skepticism and cynicism in addition to overcoming feelings of individualism, insularity, and competition, especially in a large, segmented field like the performing arts.

Capacity building addresses efforts to enhance the ability of a community or system to orchestrate and mobilize action once motivated to do so. Whether through grass-roots organizations, galvanizing leadership organizations, or complex networks at local, regional, national, or even international levels, institutional capacity defines a field’s ability to translate insight and opportunity into action.

Opportunity structure encompasses the broader social processes and conditions affecting any field as a whole. Collective action requires an ability to identify potential leverage points and translate them into strategies for action: Is the time ripe for action? Where and what are the points of leverage? For example, what opportunities are afforded by a presidential campaign year, the current economic crises affecting artists’ livelihoods and funding streams, the effects of new technologies on intellectual property, and demographic shifts in urban and rural audiences?

These factors became the foundation and frame for the I-DOC team as it observed the extraordinary convening in Denver, and provided the backbone for the organization of this report.

2008 NPAC: Assessing the Field’s Capacity for Collective Action

Following, we summarize findings drawn from a four-pronged research approach:

1. A pre-convention survey explored the expectations of attendees for the upcoming event, and sought to gauge the frames and perceptions they brought to the convening.
2. On-site observation and field notes by team members during the convention, and nightly debriefs, captured not only the content of the conversations, but also revealed the underlying values and assumptions of the disciplines convened in Denver.
3. A post-convention follow-up survey sought reaction and intended action from its participants, as well as their perceptions of the event.
4. In-depth phone interviews with innovative leaders—identified as “catalysts” by the NPAC partner organizations—captured the insights and perspectives of an important group within the performing arts field: those with a proven ability and a recognized capacity to enact positive change.

Each of these methods provided a piece of our critical observation of the Denver convening. All will be combined in the descriptions and recommendations that follow. To begin, we take on the factor that was at the heart of the Denver convention: community building.

Community Building

Any successful effort toward collective action requires a sense of community—a shared sense of purpose, goals, and a common understanding of language and meaning. *Community building* is a primary means by which a community constructs shared meaning and connection. While the participants attending the Denver convention certainly shared a sense of belonging to the “performing arts,” the quest for common language, boundaries, and goals consumed a large majority of their conversations.

One goal of this report is to shed light on where the field stands in terms of community building—and the challenges and opportunities specifically related to this effort. More specifically, we examine the state of community building along four core dimensions:

- Identifying community boundaries and membership
- Valuing collaboration and cooperation
- Defining shared interests, values, and mission
- Articulating common problems and opportunities

The I-DOC team observed for these activities in our pre- and post-convention survey data, our observations in Denver, and our catalyst interviews. We were particularly interested in the processes that challenge skepticism and cynicism around collective action and that help provide the framing—shared meaning, purpose, identities, vocabularies, and attributions regarding the issues facing the performing arts. These factors in turn underlie individuals’ motivations to take action.

Identifying Community Boundaries and Membership

A central requirement for collective action is a shared understanding of the boundaries of the community—who is “in” and who is “out.” While the National Performing Arts Convention, by its title and design, brought together many elements of the performing arts in Denver, defining the limits and extent of the field proved to be a core question underlying many of the sessions and caucuses—and one of critical importance to the field and its leaders as they assess the locus and scale of collective action.

“How are we defining the performing arts? There’s no ‘rock band’ caucus here.”

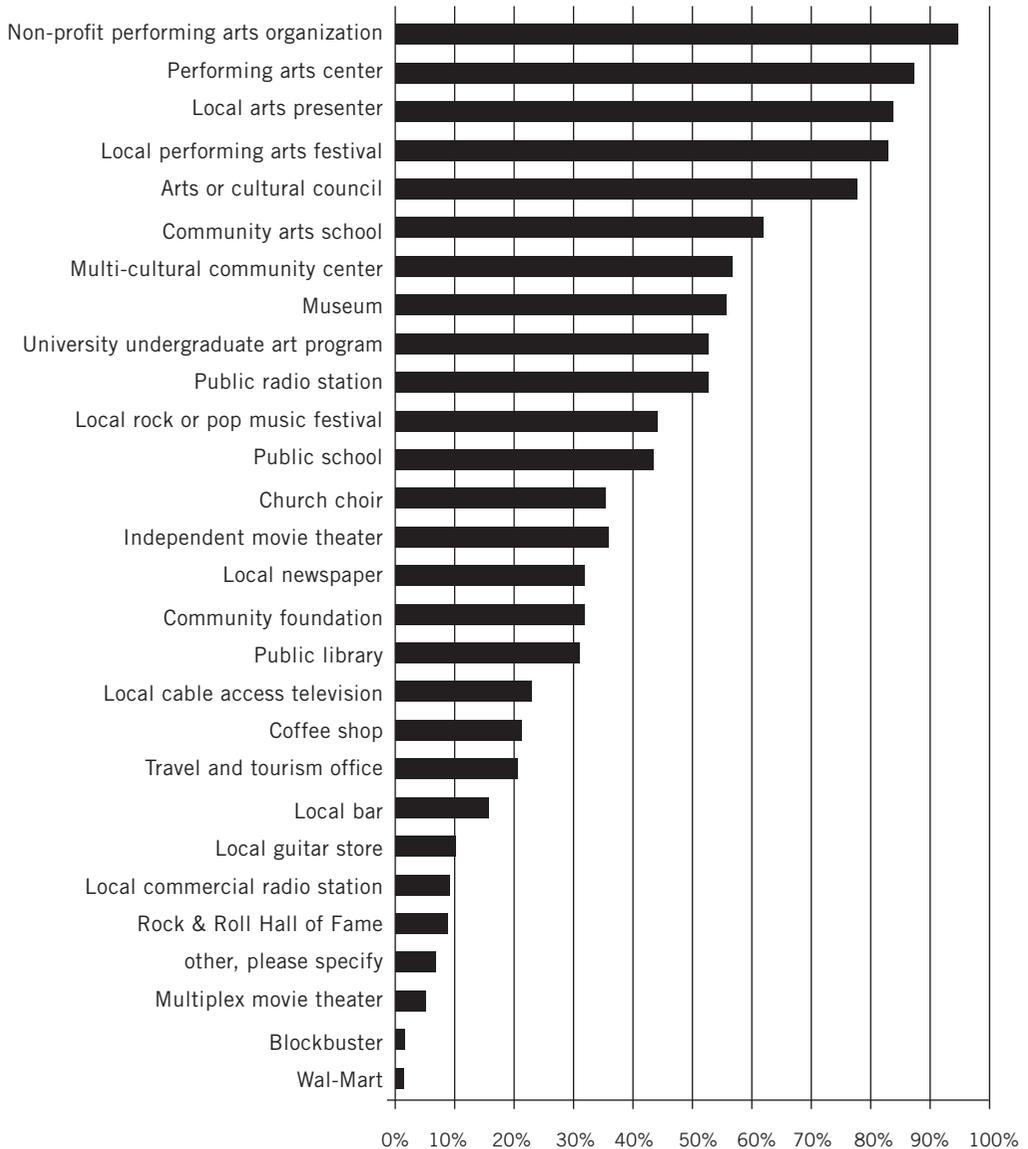
The perceived boundaries of who is “in” and who is “out” can have significant implications for how the performing arts are imagined by leaders and the range of individuals who can be mobilized for collective action. Notes one catalyst, “That’s something that is really critical I think, is that coming together of popular, avocational, which means doing things because you like it, and vocational which is the things that you do because you’re called, you’re paid for it. And then we can really make a case that in fact the arts are practiced by millions and millions of people that at this point are totally unrecognized or under-recognized.”

As a baseline, our pre-convention survey asked participants what types of organizations or activities met their definition of the “performing arts” in their region. The results are provided in Figure 1.

2008 NPAC: Assessing the Field's Capacity for Collective Action

Figure 1

Responses to the pre-convention question: *“When you think and talk about the ‘performing arts’ in your region, which of the following organizations do you include in your thinking (check all that apply)?”*



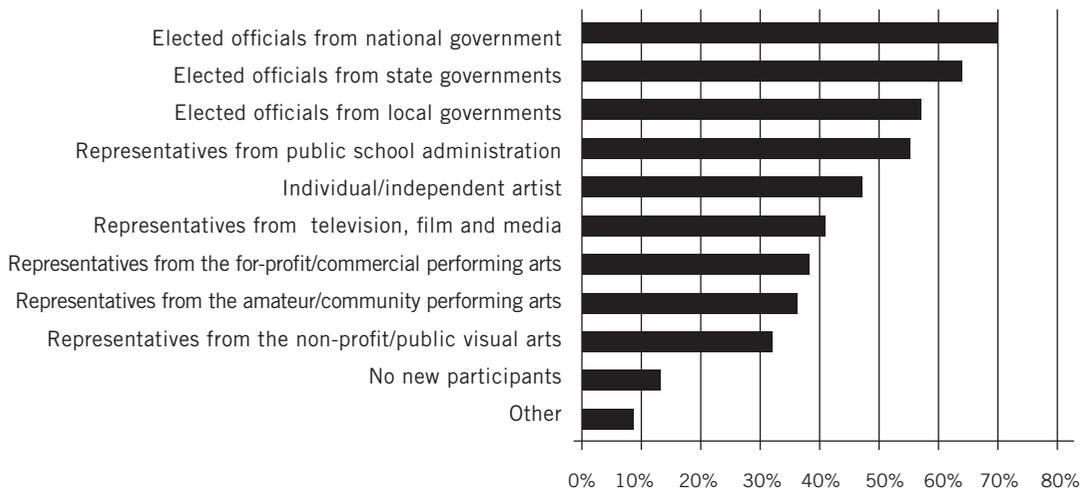
2008 NPAC: Assessing the Field’s Capacity for Collective Action

Organizations identified by more than 50 percent of respondents as within the performing arts were arts-focused and primarily organized as tax-exempt. Alternate venues and commercial enterprises were identified by fewer people as part of the performing arts—yet still showed up in significant numbers.

We also asked participants in our post-convention survey what *other* types of organizations or representatives should be invited to future national performing arts conventions. Here, national, state, and local government officials were suggested by more than half of the respondents (implying that they have an important role for the community, whether or not they’re perceived to be *in* the community). Commercial and amateur arts again drew fewer than 50 percent, although their numbers were still substantial.

Figure 2

Response to the post-convention question: *“Which of the following organizations/representatives should be invited to the next NPAC (check all that apply)?”*



2008 NPAC: Assessing the Field’s Capacity for Collective Action

In the convention discussions, particularly in the AmericaSpeaks caucuses, the boundaries of the “performing arts community” were a frequent topic of discussion and debate. Were schools inside the community or outside? Were commercial entertainment and mass media partners or competitors? Was this convening specifically for professional, live performing arts organizations, or did amateur or independent artists have a stake, as well?

One participant remarked half-jokingly in a caucus session: “How are we defining the performing arts? There’s no ‘rock band’ caucus here.”

Another wondered whether there was a community beyond her discipline at all, saying: “I’m not sure what a performing arts community is. I’m in a theater, and we just do theater.”

The definitions of boundaries is not just a semantic exercise—it is a critical assessment of where individuals can find resonance and motivation to act, where political opportunities lie, where resources can be shared and leveraged, and where meaningful action can take place. While there is clear agreement that nonprofit arts are at the core of how people define the field; there are strong differences in the peripheries—differences that could impede collective action unless they are dealt with and discussed head on. It may be that not all organizations need to embrace the same focus; but it will be difficult to get organizations or individuals to work together if they share fundamentally different conceptions of the performing arts field and its needs and interests.

Yet, what is promising for the performing arts is that perceptions of boundaries are ever-changing—as collaborations are embarked upon and understanding and learning grows across disciplines and sectors.

Valuing Collaboration and Cooperation

Despite the hazy boundaries between the “performing arts” field and the wider world, participants seemed eager and able to transcend traditionally defined boundaries with some frequency.

While 67 percent have formed a new collaboration within their art form or discipline in the past year, a majority (54 percent) have also developed a novel partnership *across* art forms or disciplines. A majority of respondents claim to have one or more

One participant was coming to Denver to find “cross-disciplinary discussion about challenges to the performing arts field where we can see practices in other fields that might apply to and solve problems in our own.”

collaborations with non-arts institutions (72 percent), other nonprofit arts organizations (85 percent), and performing arts organizations in other disciplines (87 percent). A smaller number (42 percent) claim to have one or more collaborations with for-profit performing arts organizations.

Many came to Denver specifically to learn about and from other disciplines. One participant captured the tone of these expectations, looking forward to the opportunity “to discuss and evaluate common systems or common challenges shared across fields, to learn ‘best practices’ from other practitioners, or to identify opportunities or obstacles as unique to any particular branch of the performing arts.”

Another was hoping to find “cross-disciplinary discussion about challenges to the performing arts field where we can see practices in other fields that might apply to and solve problems in our own.”

Finally, pre-convention respondents showed a broad and nuanced interest in dividing their learning groups by dimensions beyond artistic discipline. In determining a group to inform their own strategic planning, survey participants

placed almost equal weight on artistic discipline, budget size (regardless of discipline), artistic vision, and quality of work. A full 86 percent believed that the problems and opportunities faced by a small dance company are shared more with a small theater company than with a large dance company.

These preferences suggest that dividing learning groups on multiple dimensions (particularly budget size and the nature of the artistic vision) is a strong future opportunity for shared convenings. As one catalyst noted, “...we need to do more with organizations from the various disciplines that have things in common based on region, based on budget.”

Another catalyst echoed, “What would a cross-disciplinary set of meetings with, say, all the marketing directors from organizations that fit X characteristic, what would it look like, what questions would be asked, and what would the result be?”

Such cross-disciplinary meetings would certainly benefit from a sense of mutual *respect*. But mutual *trust* may need to grow. A full 81 and 82 percent of respondents believed leaders in the nonprofit performing arts *respect* each other at the national and regional/city level respectively. A lesser majority, 56 and 60 percent, believed that such leaders *trust* each other at the national and regional/city level. This distinction between respect and trust reinforces the distinction between acting for individual and organizational interests, and acting for the benefit of the larger community.

Defining Shared Interests, Values, and Mission

In order to understand individual motivation to take collective action, we asked a series of questions regarding participants’ sense of optimism and confidence around their work and art form. Our research revealed a confident, optimistic group, who see themselves as risk takers. While they often think that others (funders and audiences, particularly) are not ready to innovate, they see

2008 NPAC: Assessing the Field’s Capacity for Collective Action

themselves as open to innovation and new technologies. In pre-convention surveys, respondents report they are willing to try new things (69 percent), and that they are rewarded for such behavior (64 percent). A majority felt that they could confront tough issues with their boards (76 percent), although a lesser majority thought their boards *encouraged* them to take risks (54 percent). Respondents are motivated at many levels of interaction between art and audience. Says one respondent in describing what excites her the most about her work: “Doing something that makes a difference. Providing a service to my fellow citizens. Making the area where I live more interesting.” Says another: “The opportunity to take myself and others into a place more noble than the present.”

A large majority (84%) believes that the last three to five years have been an exciting and thriving time for their art form. In offering details, however, many describe developments for their organization, rather than for their discipline. Those who do not think recent history has been exciting and thriving for their art form refer back 20 or 30 years to the rise of their particular branch of the performing arts, when funding was more available and audiences had fewer options for their leisure time. One respondent looked back even farther, claiming: “Historically, my art form thrived in the late 19th century.”

Coming to Denver, a majority (57 percent) felt that the current environment was nothing new, and that the performing arts always face challenges. While 19 percent thought the field was facing bigger challenges but nothing requiring dramatic change, 24 percent of respondents believed that the performing arts were facing a crisis. These mixed perceptions about the need for change present a challenge to leaders attempting to make the case for collective action.

Despite the common ground of the nonprofit arts leaders attending the Denver convention, our team observed frequent and obvious disconnects between the language and culture of each discipline. The dress and demeanor of the different service organization membership was a continual point of discussion in

2008 NPAC: Assessing the Field’s Capacity for Collective Action

our evening debriefing sessions, and were often heard used as shorthand by one discipline to describe another (“take time to talk to the suits,” said one theater leader to a TCG convening, when referring to symphony professionals).

Some of the difference was in rites and rituals: from the morning sing-alongs of Chorus America to the jackets and ties of League members, to the frequent and genuine hugs among Dance/USA members, to the casual and collegial atmosphere of TCG sessions.

Other differences, which manifested in more subtle ways, shed light on the deep underlying assumptions and values held by the respective disciplines. The team noticed, for example, that the word “professional” was perceived in a variety of ways in mixed-discipline caucus sessions. For many participants, “professional” staff and leadership was an indicator of high-quality arts organizations, and an obvious goal for any arts institutions. Several members of Chorus America, however, bristled at the presumption that professional staff was a metric of artistic quality, as they held deep pride in their organizations, which were run by volunteers.

The observation team also saw many sessions peppered with misunderstandings and different interpretations of words and concepts that are fundamental to a collective action effort. Most of these went unnoticed by the group, and unresolved by facilitators of caucus sessions. Explicitly identifying and understanding these cultural and language differences are a critical part of laying a foundation of mutual cross-disciplinary respect and for recognizing the unique strengths and compatibilities that exist in the field. Many of these differences are rooted in the respective business models and structures of the disciplines.

Catalysts note the need for basic fluency in the business models and challenges of other disciplines. Says one leader, “Being an executive director is an incredibly lonely job because you’re the only person in your community who has this set of challenges. You build your network. I talk a lot with the heads of other performing

arts organizations here [from other disciplines], and it’s all right, but oftentimes when we talk I’m spending the whole time explaining the whole story so they can understand. As opposed to sitting with somebody who’s in a different community, you can start the sentence and oftentimes that person can finish your sentence for you.” Efforts to develop cross-disciplinary fluency can not only help provide a “warm start” to interdisciplinary conversations, but also lay bare the unique disciplinary assumptions, practices and constraints, (e.g., unions, risk tolerance, time horizons) that leaders must work around in order to work collectively.

Articulating Common Problems and Issues: AmericaSpeaks

At the center of the National Performing Arts Convention in Denver was a process designed to engage the challenge of community building by explicitly developing a shared set of common problems and an “action blueprint” for the performing arts community in America. Through a series of daily caucuses featuring small group dialogue, the AmericaSpeaks process engaged participants in cross-disciplinary discussion on a vision for the performing arts, on opportunities and challenges for the future, and on action steps for the three opportunities/challenges that came out of these discussions: arts advocacy, arts education, and diversity. At the 21st Century Town Meeting that capped off the convention, over 1200 convention participants discussed action items and voted by electronic keypads for priority actions at the national, local, and individual/organizational level.

As an ethnographic research team, I-DOC members observed the AmericaSpeaks process in action, informed by pre- and post-event survey data. This evidence provides more information on the relationship of the AmericaSpeaks process to the other inter-disciplinary convention activities, and the ways in which the process surfaced both shared beliefs and differences in language and assumptions across disciplines.

2008 NPAC: Assessing the Field’s Capacity for Collective Action

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The AmericaSpeaks experience received both rave and mixed reviews. Many participants appreciated the process—especially the opportunity to engage in dialogue with peers in other disciplines. One participant captured a commonly expressed tone and assessment: “I was surprised at how effectively the caucuses and town hall sessions went. I had been skeptical.” Another said, “The AmericaSpeaks planning sessions were much more useful and exciting than expected.” A majority (62 percent) agreed or strongly agreed that their voice was heard through the process.

“The big revelation was that we were all talking about the same thing. They are worrying about the same things we are. That was a very interesting thing for everybody.”

Yet some felt that the process design resulted in less innovative ideas than they had hoped. For example, many noted that the three priorities emerging from the process were “the same old” problems the performing arts had been discussing for decades: “Did we really need the AmericaSpeaks process to tell us that?” Another comment reflected another shared sentiment, “I was disappointed when many of the top strategies that were chosen on the last day were the least cutting-edge.” These comments capture the true intent of the AmericaSpeaks process—to articulate “common denominator” ideas through an explicitly democratic, participatory process. Arguably, that the “same old problems” emerged might be a good sign in terms of there being a common agenda.

While the priorities emerging through the AmericaSpeaks process did echo long-discussed issues for the field, our team observed a wealth of other issues generated during the conversation. These included: health care for artists; intellectual property rights; unions; technological change; innovative business models and marketing approaches; and knowledge sharing across disciplines. Further, many innovative strategies for action emerged during roundtable

2008 NPAC: Assessing the Field’s Capacity for Collective Action

discussions. While these ideas did not bubble up to the Town Meeting voting process, they were captured by the I-DOC team. A complete list of the strategies discussed is included in Appendix 5: Detail of Caucus Session Ideas and Strategies.

The AmericaSpeaks process ranked **advocacy** as the top priority emerging from the roundtable caucus sessions. Yet our research suggests that the “advocacy” priority had the least shared understanding regarding both the goal and the means to achieve it. Many respondents saw advocacy as a national issue, rather than local. Others felt that the declining economy would have a negative impact on an ability to advance this priority.

Observations and post-convention surveys also suggest that the final articulation of this priority actually conflated two perspectives on “value” debated by participants: convincing communities to value the arts, and understanding how arts can provide value to communities. Said one participant, “There is a difference between being a cultural asset, which means they come to us, and being a community resource, which means we go to them.”

Reconsidering how arts organizations provide value to their communities is a core theme among the field’s catalysts. One leader notes, “That’s been one thing that we’ve been most proud of. Our whole organization takes this community engagement approach. It’s not outreach. Outreach doesn’t take into consideration who you are, what your background is, what your context is, or why people should care. That’s the fault of the old outreach concept, is saying you should come hear us, maybe we’ll come to you so you’ll come hear us. That’s missing the point, saying, ‘Where do we connect?’”

Together, these findings reveal an important disconnect about the role and meaning of “advocacy” that requires clarification for forward motion on this priority. Some seem to equate advocacy with building *affirmation* that the arts

2008 NPAC: Assessing the Field’s Capacity for Collective Action

have importance, without changing the approach of their work. Others seek to align themselves with what constituents value, to increase the *relevance* of their organizations and their work to decision-makers and community members. The frequent references to developing a “Got Milk” campaign for the arts was evidence of the first definition. A more responsive and engaging approach to advocacy may require the second definition.

In the pre-convention survey, almost 80 percent of respondents claimed they worried a lot (41 percent) or somewhat (38 percent) about the “lack of alignment between politics and priorities of elected and appointed officials and the needs and interests of the creative community.” This was the second-highest percentage following the lack of arts education.

On this priority, participants are most excited about building relationships with non-arts partners, creating opportunities for active participation by audiences, and partnering with other sectors. While respondents emphasize the importance of a unified, strong, “right” message, there does not seem to be consensus about what that message should be. Further, they also recognize that the message might need to be adapted to fit the needs of a particular art organization and local environment.

Education was the most popular of the AmericaSpeaks priorities, and the one about which survey respondents are most optimistic in terms of achieving progress, and the most worried in terms of threats to the field. In survey responses, participants believe they can productively engage the issue of education and achieve results at the local level. Survey respondents favor collaboration with educational institutions as well as lifelong education programs as agenda items for the future. In terms of obstacles, respondents are concerned that arts education is not a priority either for their organizations or for educational institutions; they also worry about funding resources and making the connections

2008 NPAC: Assessing the Field’s Capacity for Collective Action

required to build long term support for reform, placing the arts at the core of learning. In field research observations, our team observed general confusion regarding *No Child Left Behind*, with many uninformed regarding arts-related aspects of NCLB, and unaware of local and state policy regarding how to integrate arts into the curriculum or partner with teachers.

Strategic action on education issues also seems motivated by genuine and direct concern. A full 85 percent of pre-convention survey respondents worry a lot (63 percent) or somewhat (22 percent) about insufficient arts education, the highest percentage of all issues listed in the survey question.

Diversity was the most polarizing priority in the AmericaSpeaks process, and the issue for which there is the most disconnect in language and priorities. Responses on the diversity questions on the survey and observations in table discussions revealed the largest differences in perspectives on the priority and the challenges it involved. Interestingly, participants seemed to acknowledge that these differences existed. Some flatly stated that they did not think diversity was a priority, and others noted that people in their organizations may claim to support diversity, but don’t really mean it. Many noted ambiguity in defining diversity: that diversity “means different things to different people—there is no common agenda for inclusion.”

This was revealed in the stark differences in responses ranging from the claim that minority arts groups don’t have to make any efforts at white inclusion (“Why is it that primarily Caucasian-based groups look to ‘diversify’ their audiences while minority-based groups do not?”), to people who thought diversity meant “Getting minorities to see the importance of what we do.” Still others rejected the audience development perspective and saw the need for more systemic change. Said one respondent, “most of our organizations are not ready—we want to talk about it, but we are not prepared to become ‘diverse’ and accept the changes

2008 NPAC: Assessing the Field’s Capacity for Collective Action

that may follow.” Some acknowledged that there were challenges in terms of comfort zones. Some noted that tying funding to diversity or pursuing diversity and losing money on such efforts might be counterproductive.

In summary, there was much trepidation about pursuing diversity and fear that such efforts might backfire. Respondents were more concerned with what they saw as others’ failure to address or understand diversity than with their own ability to effectively address the issue. As such, many did not envision opportunities for progress although they agreed that progress is needed.

In summary, while the AmericaSpeaks process identified clear majorities for selected action items, pre- and post-convention surveys and field observations reveal that there are assumptions and differences in perspectives that may hinder progress. Notably, despite the fact that advocacy was the first priority and diversity was the third priority in the AmericaSpeaks process, the meaning and purpose of these priorities requires clarification for the field to move forward. Further, in terms of galvanizing participants for change, 48 percent of our post-convention respondents want to be involved in leading efforts for collective action—a decline from 64 percent of pre-convention respondents. Additional research is needed to tease out whether this result is merely a methodological artifact, or whether it reflects the impact of the convention (and the AmericaSpeaks process and outcomes) on participants’ perceptions of their ability to lead these efforts.

As will be discussed in more detail, participants’ predominant orientation toward local and organizational action, rather than national, may continue to limit consistent national messaging and action without a centralized effort to forge it. We explicitly address the need to balance local-oriented action and national coordination in the next section: building capacity for collective action.

Capacity Building

While building community is essential for defining common interests and connections, *building institutional resources and capacity* enables a community to take positive action together. The Denver convention was designed primarily to build community and define the common set of opportunities and issues for first action. Yet the systems that would advance and coordinate that action were frequent topics of discussion. Even as participants confirmed key shared points of strategy during the AmericaSpeaks process, many wondered who would own those strategies, and coordinate/motivate their implementation.

While participants prefer to advance agendas at the organizational and local level, they seem disconnected from the decision and governing systems that inform local policy.

The process of building institutional resource capacity involves four factors:

- Accessing and mobilizing community members and allies
- Acquiring, deploying and sharing resources
- Creating effective decision-making and implementation processes for action plans
- Ensuring sustainable leadership

Accessing and Mobilizing Community Members and Allies

As the I-DOC team observed during the 2004 convention, participants perceived their challenges to be broad and external, but their primary responses to be focused and internal. A full 66 percent of pre-convention respondents believed that the problems facing the performing arts field were the result of external forces beyond their control.

2008 NPAC: Assessing the Field’s Capacity for Collective Action

Given this focus, the majority of survey respondents who plan to take action following the convention will do so through local and organizational community partners. In their post-convention survey, only 9 to 17 percent of respondents plan to take action on national-level agenda items in the coming year (depending on the agenda item). However, a much higher percentage plan to act on local or organizational/individual items. A full 80 percent plan to build relationships with non-arts groups within the coming year. The same percentage intend to mobilize and collaborate with K-12 and higher education institutions. A slightly lesser percentage (73 percent) seek to explore arts in their community offered by cultures other than their own.

When asked whose opinion would most likely influence if and how they took action, respondents listed board members (25 percent), audiences (22 percent) and local peer professionals (17 percent) in their top three. National service organization leadership (11 percent) and national peer professionals (10 percent) wield less influence.

These findings were reinforced during our convention observations, where the vast majority of actions and strategies discussed across the sessions were individual, organizational, or local in scope.

Finally, 77 percent believe that the most important problems facing the performing arts could be best addressed at the regional or city level (only 23 percent prefer the national level). Yet respondents are more equally split between the best method for addressing those problems, with 44 percent emphasizing advocacy and collective action, and 56 percent preferring help for individual leaders to resolve their own organizational needs.

The comment of one participant captures the tension between local efforts and national agendas: “I think individual institutions and organizations have been successful at administering art education. Where we have failed is making it a priority at the national level.”

2008 NPAC: Assessing the Field’s Capacity for Collective Action

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In one intriguing disconnect, respondents in the post-convention survey hope for future NPAC connections to include elected officials from local (57 percent), state (64 percent), and national (70 percent) government. Yet *not one* believe such officials would influence if and how they might take action on the selected agenda items. The disconnect suggests, as we will later discuss, that while participants see elected officials as potential focus of advocacy and engagement, they do not see them as a source of insight and knowledge—even though these actors drive the decision and governing systems that inform local policy. They are eager to *talk* to elected officials, but not inclined to *listen*.

Participants seemed eager to talk to elected officials, but not inclined to listen.

Survey respondents tended to agree on which constituents were the most knowledgeable about issues facing the performing arts (the most selections going to arts leaders, national service organizations, artists, the NEA and local and national advocacy organizations respectively). They showed lower consensus about the constituents with the most power to affect change (with arts leaders, donors, and foundations among the most selected). Interestingly, some constituents with relatively greater perceived power also had relatively lower perceived knowledge of the field and its challenges (political leaders at federal, state, and local levels, for example). A chart of the knowledge and power assessments is provided in Figure 3.

The assessment of knowledge and power reinforced the apparent disconnect between participants and their elected officials. Building effective engagement strategies with decision-makers outside leaders’ immediate circle of board, peers, and staff would be invaluable for bridging the knowledge and power gaps.

Acquiring, Deploying and Sharing Resources

Lack of funding and operational capacity was a common theme of convention conversations, which is likely no surprise. Yet many delegates also seemed to lack knowledge of what resources were available (research, money, advocacy, etc.). Further, there was a limited understanding of how larger policy issues influenced the flow and direction of resources throughout the system (*No Child Left Behind*, for example, or copyright law). As a result, considerable energy was spent deliberating ideas and evaluating options that would likely not have been on the table if participants were knowledgeable of the relevant policies and resources.

Said one respondent in the post-convention survey: “I was struck by how many individual artists in particular did not know about available resources and how to tap them.” Our observations also

“I was struck by how many individual artists in particular did not know about available resources and how to tap them.”

revealed a lack of awareness across disciplines regarding extant national arts advocacy campaigns. Particularly striking, a national arts marketing campaign emerged as the top strategy for pursuing advocacy at the national level, even though such marketing campaigns already exist.

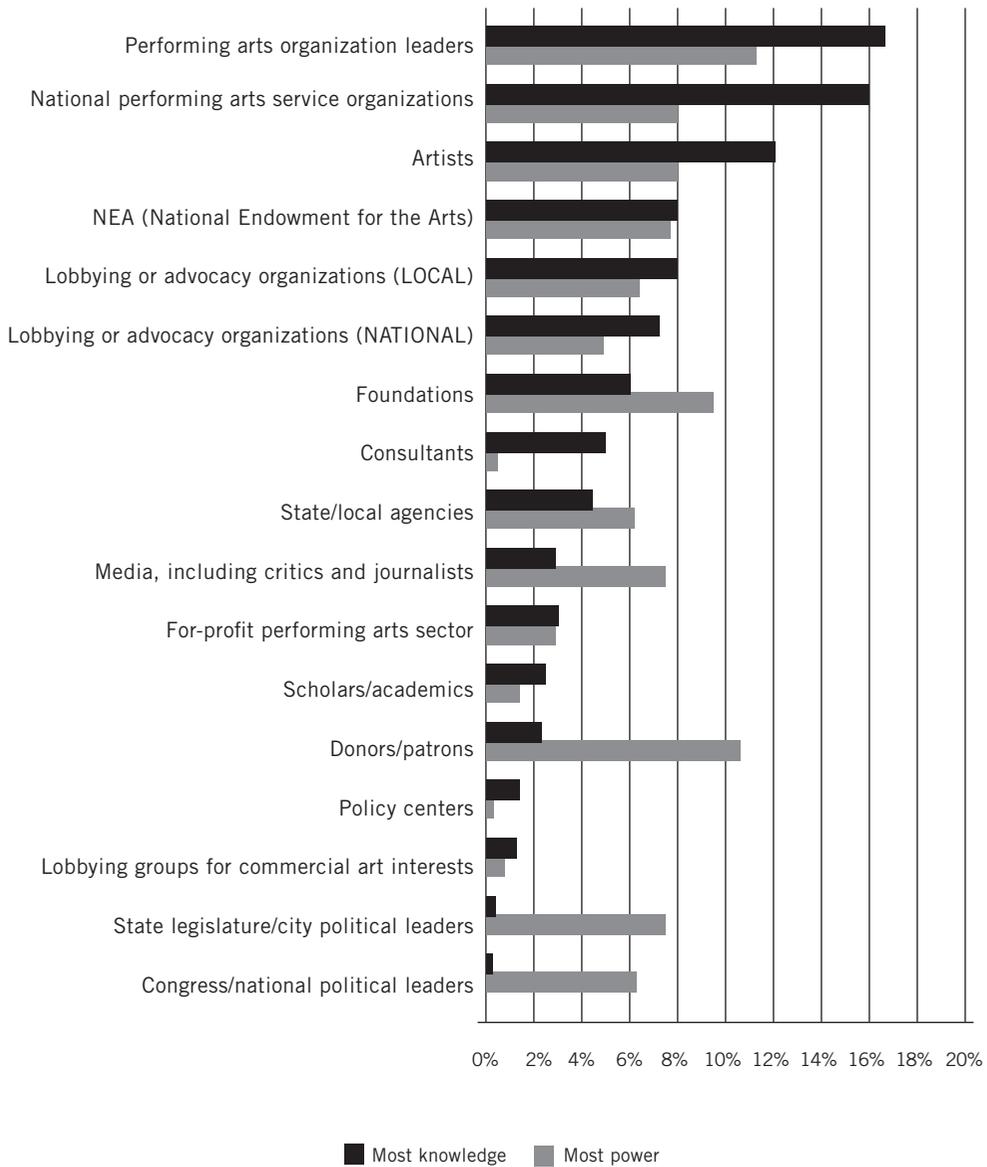
These indicators suggest a systematic issue around knowledge dissemination in the field. Arts leaders either lack time or incentive to discover and use existing knowledge resources, or effective knowledge dissemination mechanisms do not exist to get this information out. Examining and developing the extant systems for knowledge sharing across the field is a first and necessary step toward building capacity for collective action.

2008 NPAC: Assessing the Field's Capacity for Collective Action

Figure 3

Constituents with the most knowledge of performing arts challenges (black, top bar) and the most power to affect change (gray, lower bar).

Respondents could select their five top choices.



Creating Effective Decision-Making and Implementation

Processes for Action Plans

In their connections and disconnections during the convention, and in their reflections when it was over, participants were both energized by the collective conversation and concerned about the barriers to carrying that momentum forward.

One barrier relates back to the issue of community building. “There is an innate ‘separateness’ in our fields,” said one respondent. “People don’t see how the problems facing a theater could relate to the problems for an orchestra. I think this convention did a lot to show that we all face the same global issues but more acceptance is needed from all parties.”

Another suggests that the problem with implementing collective action also had to do with the nature of the work and its leaders: “We have a lot of passionate and highly productive people that all tend to over-extend themselves as it is ‘for the love of their art.’ I think it is difficult for many of these same people then to prioritize what they may have to *stop* doing in order to thoughtfully and actively participate in this ‘national dialogue’.”

When describing the greatest challenges to taking action together, respondents cite follow-through and maintaining momentum, coordination of efforts (who would do what), preoccupation with day-to-day organizational demands, and the different needs/interests of the many disciplines.

Catalysts note that meaningful collective action at the organizational and regional level requires patience, perspective and managerial savvy—to effectively make the case to bring people together, negotiate to find common ground, listen, translate across different approaches and ways of talking, engage in constructive conflict, and build the trust of respective stakeholders. One catalyst reflected, “You have to sell change ‘one person at a time’ because that’s the way it happens.

2008 NPAC: Assessing the Field’s Capacity for Collective Action

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You work in an organization which has a deep tradition, and you have people who knew the old way of doing things and change is difficult to accept.”

Catalysts find that being able to craft a narrative or case for collective action that raises dialogue beyond the needs of individual organizations or art forms is essential to their work. Catalysts consistently noted the deep, fundamental assumptions that can inhibit the performing arts field in its efforts toward collective action: “As an industry we are asking the wrong questions. So now the question is ‘what are the right questions?’

“My job is not to tell people what to do, my job is to make sure the organization is asking the right questions.”

To me the selling tickets and raising money is a byproduct of something deeper. Is the question: are we engaging with our community, are we relevant, are we relevant to enough people who don’t attend our concerts that people will want to attend the concerts? My job is not to tell people what to do, my job is to make sure the organization is asking the right questions.”

Catalysts also saw the need for leaders to be able to embrace data that is not consistent with “old” ways of thinking. For example, our research revealed many stories about transformative programming: Grateful Dead at the Baltimore Symphony, Grizzly Bear at the LA Philharmonic. While evidence continues to mount that innovative programming sells tickets, leaders often are not convinced that these results can be replicated. “There was all this buzz in the industry because the concert sold out, nobody over the age of 28 was there, it was a totally new audience.” But for some, older notions about quality or “high” and “low” art can undermine these success stories—creating cynicism that innovative programming is just a gimmick, or fad, or cheapened entertainment.

Ensuring Sustainable Leadership

In such a large conversation about future initiatives and challenges to the field, it was striking how little conversation focused on the discovery and development of future leaders, and the skills and abilities they might require. There were a few specific sessions that touched on the topic, but the issue received little traction or attention elsewhere. This was despite pre-convention surveys that showed 79 percent worrying a little to a lot about attracting/retaining qualified personnel, and the same percentage worrying a little to a lot about leadership succession in their organizations.

Going Forward

The National Performing Arts Convention in Denver was an extraordinary convening, designed specifically to build community and define collective goals for the performing arts field. Through its process, professionals from multiple performing arts disciplines and different organizational roles found meaningful time to connect, to share concerns, and to build a sense of shared purpose. But also through this process, participants and hosting partners had a unique opportunity to observe the nature of those interactions, and explore where connections and disconnections were most pronounced.

Throughout our surveys and observations, it was clear that participants valued the opportunity to convene together—both for the scope and scale the convening offered in its large plenaries, and for the professionals and practitioners to engage in meaningful conversation with peers from other disciplines (an opportunity many admitted was a first for them). That value was expressed in the significant turnout and retention of participants in the AmericaSpeaks caucus process, and in the passion and ownership those conversations helped create.

2008 NPAC: Assessing the Field’s Capacity for Collective Action

Measured against the metrics of *collective action*, the 2008 NPAC revealed a field with powerful enthusiasm and individual sense of purpose and resourcefulness. But it also exposed significant disconnects and missing elements that seem required for significant advancement on any collective action agenda. Specifically:

Community Building

Shared sense of the field’s boundaries

Participants struggled to define the boundaries of the “performing arts field,” with many focusing on primarily professional, nonprofit organizations that present, produce, or promote live performance. Others wondered whether commercial, amateur, informal, community, or even mediated forms of performing arts—television, recordings, or on-line, for example—were part of the community or separate from it. Perceived differences in boundaries could impede collective action unless they are dealt with and discussed head on. It may be that not all organizations need to embrace the same focus; but it will be difficult to get organizations or individuals to work together if they share fundamentally different conceptions of the performing arts field. Boundaries are important since they frame how individuals find resonance and motivation to act, where political opportunities lie, where resources can be shared and leveraged, where meaningful action can take place, and the range of individuals who can be mobilized for collective action.

Value of collaboration: Eager and ready to explore

While participants predominantly focused on their local and organizational issues, they were already engaged in partnerships with other disciplines and sectors—schools, social service agencies, learning initiatives. Further, they seemed ready for more. A significant number of survey respondents saw value in gathering not only by discipline, but also by other relevant dimensions such as

budget size, artistic mission, and organizational emphasis. Many perceived that they had more in common with others grouped along these dimensions than with members of their own national associations. There seems to be real opportunity in fostering connections along these dimensions—an approach that would serve the dual purpose of building trust and the capacity to work collectively toward a larger goal.

Shared interests, values, and mission: Differences in language and meaning

For many, these were the first meaningful conversations with practitioners from other disciplines. A good portion of the AmericaSpeaks sessions, and other shared events, was spent defining the similarities and differences between disciplines, their operational challenges, and their policy connections. Yet many sessions were peppered with misunderstandings and different interpretations of words and concepts that are fundamental to a collective action effort. Explicitly identifying and understanding these cultural and language differences—rooted in the respective business models and structures of the disciplines—is critical to laying a foundation of mutual cross-disciplinary respect and for recognizing the unique strengths and compatibilities that exist in the field.

Shared goals and priorities

While the priorities emerging from the AmericaSpeaks process were ones that have been with the performing arts for some time, there still remains considerable ambiguity around how these priorities are interpreted that may hinder progress. While arts education provides a clear mandate, what is meant by the priorities related to diversity and advocacy requires further discussion and clarification. Further, in relation to advocacy, while respondents emphasize the importance of a unified, strong, “right” message, there does not seem to be consensus about what that message should be or whether “one message” is appropriate for all.

Capacity Building

Accessing and mobilizing community members and allies: Talking vs. listening to elected officials

Survey responses and convention conversations showed a strong interest in inviting elected officials from local, state, and national government in future NPAC conversations. Yet respondents seemed largely disconnected from these officials in their decision processes and in their local engagement. Interestingly, these political leaders at the federal, state, and local levels actors, who are perceived to have relatively greater power to affect the field, are also perceived to have less knowledge of the field and its challenges. There is much productive work to be done in building policy awareness, listening/facilitation skills, and other basic elements of effective policy action with these key actors.

Acquiring, deploying and sharing resources: Often unaware of the terrain

Many delegates seemed to lack knowledge of the field's existing resources and initiatives (research, money, advocacy, etc.) and had only a limited understanding of how larger policy issues influenced the flow and direction of resources throughout the system. These indicators suggest a systematic issue around knowledge dissemination in the field. Examining and developing the extant systems for knowledge-sharing across the field is a first and necessary step toward building capacity for collective action.

Creating action plans: Competing scope and scale

Even as they convened to explore national issues and overarching goals for the field, participants thought, spoke, and planned most effectively at the local or organizational level. Through this lens, national initiatives and collective action often lacked the same perceived benefit and impact as local action. This local bias appeared at every level of our analysis—in pre- and post-convention surveys, field observation, and even catalyst interviews. That persistence suggests that any

national initiative would be more successful if it leveraged and responded to the local/organizational interests of arts practitioners, rather than expecting them to naturally shift their focus to a larger scale.

Creating effective decision-making and implementation processes for action plans:

Ready to help, but not sure how

Finally, participants were energized by the convening in Denver, and willing to continue a more collaborative effort to advance collective goals. But many were unsure how to do so. They returned to their organizations prepared to take action on local or organizational levels, but were unsure who “owned” the larger agenda. Some were unsure if the National Performing Arts Convention was a separate organization that would continue, or if they would be coordinating work with their primary NSO, ad hoc action groups, or other entities.

Productive Responses

Moving forward in response to these discoveries through the NPAC process, the hosting partner organizations have obvious challenges but true opportunities to continue the momentum of Denver, and work with the prevailing tides rather than against them.

The greatest opportunity to leverage the scarce time, energy and resources of the NSOs is for these organizations to focus their efforts on the macro processes of 1) building community and 2) building capacity for action at the individual and local level. Advancing these two fundamental building blocks of collective action requires action at the national and regional level to analyze the field’s existing systems, programs, resources and capacities and engage in ongoing coordination and integration of efforts across different initiatives, institutions and priorities.

We make specific suggestions for where the host organizations can target their energies for building community and capacity below. Where appropriate,

we mention steps that can be taken to advance a specific priority emerging from the AmericaSpeaks process. However, we sense that most of these suggestions will contribute to advancing the range of priorities of interest to the field and the NSOs.

Building Community

Define the terrain

A specific and explicit exploration of the boundaries of the performing arts field would help many clarify who's in and who's out of the proposed national agenda. While the host organizations primarily represent professional nonprofit cultural organizations and their commercial service partners, true potential and power might come from drawing a wider circle that includes commercial presenting and production, media companies, and related industries. For example, NAMM, the International Music Products Association, faces similar challenges and shares similar goals with those defined by performing arts participants in Denver.

One way to help clarify field boundaries is to either 1) identify shared concerns across sectors (or not, if there are no shared concerns) and 2) provide examples of collaborations across sectors. Without explicit ideas or examples from other sectors, individuals are often left to draw the boundary more narrowly than they might otherwise. If broadening the field is seen as an option that should be entertained, the NSOs might help by providing more opportunities, models, etc. that would highlight and establish potential commonalities.

Foster co-creation across disciplines

For many, the convention began a process of defining the similarities and differences between disciplines, their operational challenges, and their policy connections. While these interactions took place through conversations, the process of working together to co-create a festival or new production provides a

2008 NPAC: Assessing the Field’s Capacity for Collective Action

rich opportunity for community and capacity building at the local and organizational level. NSOs could provide a “warm start” to interdisciplinary conversations and jumpstart collective efforts by providing leaders with training on the unique cultural assumptions, practices and constraints, (e.g., unions, risk tolerance, time horizons) of the respective disciplines. Further, the NSOs could provide leadership training on how to negotiate cross-disciplinary co-creation.

Address cultural differences

Interactions and conversations at the convention revealed many subtle cultural differences across disciplines. However, the dynamics that arose around the “Radical Ideas from Beyond our Borders” session suggest that this may be an issue that needs to be dealt with explicitly in order for the field to move forward together.

Create the case for collective action

One obstacle to collective action in the performing arts may be that there is no clear “urgent” problem that helps mobilize and motivate individuals to take action. If issues are seen as non-urgent—there are no clear indicators of the problem—people easily return to routines and to day-to-day demands. The NSOs might want consider collecting information and conducting research to make the case that the field faces some urgent issues.

Assess the priorities

In order to create a comprehensive strategy going forward, the NSOs will need to focus attention on an expanded set of priorities that incorporate some that did not make it through the AmericaSpeaks process. Of the priorities identified through America Speaks, arts education seems to be the area where there is the most consensus and conceptual clarity. Focusing attention on arts

education seems to have the most potential for building community, capacity and belief that collective action can be effective.

In relation to advocacy, while respondents emphasize the importance of a unified, strong, “right” message, there does not seem to be consensus about what that message should be or whether “one message” is appropriate for all. The NSOs might want to consider mass customization of their message—by developing a portfolio of “messages” that can be adapted to the specific circumstances of the individual or organization.

There was much trepidation about pursuing the diversity priority, and fear that such efforts might backfire. Respondents were more concerned with what they saw as others’ failure to address or understand diversity than with their own ability to effectively address the issue. As such, many did not envision opportunities for progress although they agreed that progress is needed.

Building Capacity

Improve the players to advance the game

Instead of creating a national campaign with national action items, the NSOs could focus on developing the systems and capacity to train individual members and regional players to be more effective political actors. Shared capacity training initiatives among the many NSOs (potentially included in discipline-specific conferences) could provide essential facilitation, policy awareness, listening, and advocacy skills to improve the individual capacity of the performing arts leaders. Further, these initiatives could have direct and relevant impact on organizational success, and might help build a larger appreciation and awareness of advocacy as a core leadership skill.

2008 NPAC: Assessing the Field’s Capacity for Collective Action

Said one catalyst: “I think I would just say if I could have anything come out of this in four years or two years or something that all the big service organizations could say the strategic plan is this. It starts with you at the local level doing A. Every one of you go to your city council people and explain what it is you do and why it is important to your community, not just artistically, economically, sociologically, all those things. What are you doing that speaks to them in their district? How are you responding to them, and if you’re not, why should they give a damn about what you’re doing?”

Find and share compelling stories

There were dozens if not hundreds of compelling stories shared during the Denver convention—success stories, struggle stories, learning stories around change and cross-disciplinary co-creation and collaboration. Yet the field lacks a collective capacity to share those stores with each other and the larger world. Said one participant: “I think another thing the field really needs, and may be happening in spite of ourselves, is it needs some stunning examples of success. ‘We’re a little short on people going whoa, check that out, that is working, that is workable, that is adaptable.’ I was so interested in the energy that exploded around Abreu and El Systema in Denver because it was such a stunning example of success, and even though the translation to the U.S. is mind-bogglingly difficult, the tangibility of it and the fact that this was actually happening somewhere in the world and answered needs that we have, it was just an explosion around a real example.”

Leverage existing systems

There are many extant programs and systems that address the challenges and share similar goals with those defined in Denver. More direct and responsive connections with these initiatives would benefit the entire field—the National

2008 NPAC: Assessing the Field’s Capacity for Collective Action

Assembly of State Arts Agencies, Americans for the Arts, the American Association of School Administrators, and the National Guild of Community Schools of the Arts seem obvious places to start.

Build shared community and capacity between shared convenings

There is little doubt that large and collaborative gatherings like the NPAC events in Pittsburgh and Denver have unique power to bring people together and show collective strength. But there are equally powerful opportunities for the separate disciplines to engage the challenge through smaller, shared initiatives. Participants seemed eager and appreciative for the opportunity to gather with peers beyond discipline or geography. Working and learning groups across disciplines—by budget size, artistic mission, organizational structure, or other criteria—would build trust, a broader sense of community and bring new perspective to currently discipline-based initiatives.

The NSOs may want to focus their attention on fostering small-scale, high-impact gatherings such as: local cross-disciplinary arts summits to discuss challenges and opportunities specific to a city or region; an annual leadership meeting across the NSOs; and/or specific cross-disciplinary panels at individual service organization meetings. Such meetings would include a robust mix of artists and organizational leaders.

Learn to read and respond to the opportunity structure

Finally, part of building capacity involves being able to assess the opportunity structure—what is going on in the social, political and economic environment that can be leveraged for collective action? For example, the NSOs will want to think about how they schedule future convenings to take advantage of future presidential or congressional elections, or how they might take advantage of opportunities presented by a new president in the White House.

2008 NPAC: Assessing the Field’s Capacity for Collective Action

In conclusion, the Denver convention achieved many new milestones for the performing arts field by gathering record numbers of cross-disciplinary arts professionals, supporters, volunteers, and artists. It also provided a singular opportunity to observe and understand the current capacity of the performing arts for collective action. Our team saw a field of extraordinary individual and organizational resourcefulness, passion, and purpose. Yet we also saw a field faced with the important work of creating a shared vision and vocabulary, common boundaries, and sense of urgency that defines productive collective communities.

We hope that this report provides the insights and the tools to build on the successes of Denver, and define and deliver a more productive future for the field.

Appendix 1: The I-DOC Process

Pre-Convention and Post-Convention Surveys

We surveyed a random sample of convention participants via an anonymous on-line survey three to four weeks prior to the convention. Names of potential respondents were randomly selected from the convention registration list. We sent an email to 600 potential survey respondents via email, inviting participants to participate in the survey through an embedded link. Participants were informed that their responses would be kept anonymous. We offered potential respondents a copy of a newly released book of value to practitioners and leaders in the performing arts field entitled, *Engaging Art*, as a thank you for completing the surveys. Books were sent via mail to respondents after the convention. Two hundred and twenty-four participants completed the surveys, representing a cross-section of the disciplines attending the convention.

Six weeks after the convention, we sent an invitation to individuals who had participated in the first survey to participate in the post-convention survey. One hundred of these responded.

A complete list of pre- and post-convention survey questions is available upon request from Elizabeth Long Lingo (Elizabeth.l.lingo@vanderbilt.edu).

On-Site in Denver

Our IDOC efforts at the convention were incredibly intensive. Our thirteen person on-site team was able to cover almost all of the sessions open to us, and we were able to capture a diverse array of interactions and conversations through our in-depth field observation process. We observed and listened to participants in both formal and informal settings, and across the range of NPAC and discipline-specific programming. We were at 8:00 am sessions and nighttime events. Each day we debriefed as a team to discuss what we were hearing and learning, and to begin to draw out the main themes across our diverse observations. And every night, and at any opportunity, we wrote up our extensive field notes.

2008 NPAC: Assessing the Field’s Capacity for Collective Action

Qualitative field research in the form of observation and participant observation was conducted at the convention in order to complement quantitative information gathered from pre- and post-conference surveys. Qualitative methods of ethnography and interviewing are invaluable for inductive theory generation and data analysis, inasmuch as such research allows for the documentation of emergent themes and concerns that cannot be captured through deductive methods of survey research. In practice, inductive and deductive methods built from and strengthened each other, as when pre-convention survey responses focused researchers on particular concerns and dynamics to observe.

Field observations were conducted by the I-DOC research team for assigned events and informal encounters, at which all team members wore I-DOC badges and introduced themselves as appropriate. Assigned events included general sessions, AmericaSpeaks caucuses, panel sessions, and facilitator trainings, caucus debriefs, and nightly theming meetings. When research team coverage of all events was not possible, convention events were sampled using a purposive sampling method designed to capture representative breadth of discipline, sector, session content, and role. Research team members also conducted participant observation in informal encounters (parties and receptions, meals, performances, ArtsTown, and hallway or elevator conversations). All members of the research team received training in research responsibilities and protocols for social research, in addition to training in observation methods, theories of collective action, and field note collection.

During the convention, research team members transferred field jottings (direct observations of content, tone, attendance counts, session demographics, and quotes from participants) from their notebooks into a custom-designed online field note survey form as soon as possible following each observation. The team met daily to debrief, share insights or key quotes, workshop field note submissions, develop coding schemes for emerging themes, and troubleshoot problems. Team members also had the chance during these meeting to meet key individuals at the convention and ask questions regarding what they observed. Key quotes from convention participants captured by the research team were shared with convention leaders and displayed to convention attendees as they entered the final AmericaSpeaks session.

2008 NPAC: Assessing the Field’s Capacity for Collective Action

During the convention, the research team collected over 140 extended field note entries, which were imported into qualitative data analysis software for further study by I-DOC team leaders. This unique data source provides an exceptionally fine-grained perspective of on the ground-level development of collective action at the convention and the immediate experiences of convention participants. Secondary qualitative data sources collected by the team include raw table data from the AmericaSpeaks caucus sessions, convention session handouts and written materials, and convention coverage in the local and national press and blog postings from convention attendees. Convention observation data was an invaluable source for developing post-convention survey questions, and providing more detailed explanation of survey findings.

Catalyst Interviews

We conducted in-depth interviews with performing arts leaders who are pushing the limits of what is and is not possible—people whom we call “catalysts.” Our sampling of catalysts included organizational leaders and artists from the range of performing arts disciplines. Our catalysts worked in cities both large and small across the U.S. In total, twenty four one-on-one interviews were conducted, either over the phone or in person. Questions asked during the interviews, which ranged from a single one hour interview to multiple interviews over a series of time, are available upon request from the first author (Elizabeth.l.lingo@vanderbilt.edu).

Appendix 2: IDOC Leadership Bios

Elizabeth Long Lingo

Elizabeth Long Lingo is Assistant Director of The Curb Center for Art, Enterprise & Public Policy at Vanderbilt University. Elizabeth completed her Ph.D. in the joint program in Organizational Behavior and Sociology at Harvard University and Harvard Business School. Her research examines creative ecosystems, and how leaders manage the complexities of bringing others together to pursue change and/or make creative and innovative projects, policies and ventures happen. More specifically, she focuses on how differing interests, contributions and meaning systems are negotiated across networks, occupations, organizations and disciplines, and the outcomes that result. Elizabeth was a graduate fellow at the Program on Negotiation at Harvard Law School in 2003-2004. She currently is an adjunct assistant professor at the Owen Graduate School of Management at Vanderbilt University and teaches negotiations in the MBA program. She has consulted to Fortune 500 companies on issues of trust, risk taking, speaking up and customer loyalty. Elizabeth also holds an MA degree in Sociology from Harvard and a Bachelor degree in Finance from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

Andrew Taylor

Andrew Taylor is Director of the Bolz Center for Arts Administration (www.bolzcenter.org), an MBA degree program and research center in the University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Business. An author, lecturer, and researcher on a broad range of arts management issues, Andrew has also served as a consultant to arts organizations and cultural initiatives throughout the U.S. and Canada, including the International Society for the Performing Arts, American Ballet Theatre, the Center for Arts and Culture, and the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, among others. Closer to home, he helped develop the budget pro forma and operating plan for the \$205-million Overture Center for the Arts in Madison, Wisconsin. Andrew is currently the president of the Association of Arts Administration Educators (www.artsadministration.org), an international association of degree-granting programs in arts and cultural management, research, and policy, and is a consulting editor for *The Journal of Arts Management, Law, and Society*. Since July 2003, he has written a popular weblog on the business of arts and culture, "The Artful Manager," hosted by ArtsJournal.com (www.artfulmanager.com).

Caroline Lee

Caroline Lee is currently an assistant professor at Lafayette College, with interests in American political development, organizations and professions, and economic sociology. She got her Ph.D. in sociology from UC San Diego. Her research uses qualitative methods to explore the dynamic relationship between abstract ideals (such as transparency or inclusion) and local political cultures in communities, institutions, and organizations. Where are those ideals communicated and by whom? How do people use those ideals in everyday contexts? How does their meaning change over time and in different places? Her earlier research compared the challenges faced by collaborative partnerships for land conservation in three U.S. communities. Her current project examines the professionalization of public participation, with a special emphasis on the consolidation of “best practices” and the role of large national organizations like AmericaSpeaks.

Off-site Project Leaders and Affiliates

Alberta Arthurs

Alberta Arthurs is an independent contractor in the arts and humanities, and a frequent commentator and writer on cultural issues. Operating as Arthurs.US, she provides programming, planning and research services to foundations and non-profit cultural organizations in both the United States and abroad. Recent and current clients include the James Irvine, Henry Luce and Rockefeller Foundations, the Pew Charitable Trusts, J.P. Morgan Chase, the Cisneros Foundation, the National Music Leadership Coalition, the New Media Lab of The Graduate Center of the City University of New York. She was the Director for Arts and Humanities at the Rockefeller Foundation from 1982 to 1996. Until recently, she was affiliated with MEM Associates in New York City, and for a year—1996 to 1997—she directed a program on culture and development at the Council on Foreign Relations. She sits on the boards of the Salzburg Seminar, Yaddo, The PEN American Center, Exit Art, Aid to Artisans and National Video Resources (chair), and is recent past chairman of the Kenan Institute for the Arts and of the advisory board of Radcliffe’s Bunting Institute. She is on advisory boards currently for Princeton University,

2008 NPAC: Assessing the Field’s Capacity for Collective Action

New York University and UNESCO. She has taught and held administrative posts at Tufts, Rutgers and Harvard Universities, and was the President of Chatham College from 1977 to 1982. She holds the doctorate in English literature from Bryn Mawr College.

Bill Ivey

Bill Ivey is the Director of The Curb Center for Art, Enterprise & Public Policy at Vanderbilt University, an arts policy research center with offices in Nashville, Tennessee and Washington, DC. He also directs the Center’s program for senior government, the Arts Industries Policy Forum. Ivey served as Senior Consultant to Leadership Music, a music industry professional development program, and is past President of the American Folklore Society. His book about the public interest and America’s cultural system, *arts, inc: How Greed and Neglect Have Destroyed Our Cultural Rights*, published by the University of California Press (2008).

From May, 1998 through September, 2001, Ivey served as the seventh Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal cultural agency. Following years of controversy and significant reductions to the NEA budget, Ivey’s leadership is credited with restoring Congressional confidence in the work of the NEA. Ivey’s Challenge America Initiative, launched in 1999, has to date garnered more than \$20 million in new Congressional appropriations for the Arts Endowment. Prior to government service, Ivey was director of the Country Music Foundation in Nashville, Tennessee. He was twice elected board chairman of the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences (NARAS). Ivey holds degrees in History, Folklore, and Ethnomusicology, as well as honorary doctorates from the University of Michigan, Michigan Technological University, Wayne State University, and Indiana University. He is a four-time Grammy Award nominee (Best Album Notes category), and is the author of numerous articles on U.S. cultural policy, and folk and popular music.

Steven J. Tepper

Steven J. Tepper is associate director of The Curb Center for Art, Enterprise & Public Policy at Vanderbilt University and assistant professor in the department of sociology at Vanderbilt University. Previously Tepper served as the deputy director of the Princeton University Center for Arts and Cultural Policy Studies and lecturer at the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs and the Department of Sociology. He is the co-editor, with Bill Ivey, of *Engaging Art: The Next Great Transformation of America's Cultural Life* (Routledge, 2008). Tepper is currently working on a book which assesses 900 cases of struggles over art, education, and culture in 75 American cities during the 1990's. He has published articles on the sociology of art, cultural policy, and democracy in journals such as *Review of Policy Research*, *Journal of Arts Management, Law and Society*, and *International Journal of Cultural Policy*. Tepper holds a bachelor's degree in international relations and Latin America from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; a master's in public policy from Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government; and a Ph.D. in sociology from Princeton University. Additionally, he has served as a consultant to numerous institutions including the National Humanities Center, the American Academy of Arts and Science, the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies, and many foundations.

Appendix 3: Denver Observation Team

Project On-Site Leaders

Elizabeth Long Lingo, PhD, Vanderbilt University

Andrew Taylor, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Caroline Lee, PhD, Lafayette College

Graduate Student Team

Carrie Caine, University of Chicago

Jeffrey Collier, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Adrienne Corn, Vanderbilt University

Michal Fischer, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Marla Hahn, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Brea Heidelberg, Ohio State University

Sara Lee, Vanderbilt University

Owen Levin, Columbia University Teachers College

Elizabeth McClearn, Drexel University

Jennifer Novak, RAND

Appendix 4: Kickoff IDOC Scholar Meeting

In February 2008, we kicked off the I-DOC research project by bringing together a working group of academics and arts leaders to discuss how we might examine the capacity of the performing arts to advance collective action. In addition to the arts leaders listed below, we had a diverse group of scholars representing an array of disciplines: management and organization studies, sociology, anthropology, political science, and policy, planning and development.

Alberta Arthurs
Principal, Arthurs.US

Nina Eliasoph
Associate Professor of Sociology
USC College of Letter, Arts and Sciences

Florence Faucher-King
Associate Professor of European Studies and Political Science
Vanderbilt University

Bill Ivey
Director, The Curb Center for Art, Enterprise & Public Policy at Vanderbilt University

Siobhan O'Mahony
Assistant Professor of Management
University of California at Davis

Caroline Lee
Assistant Professor of Sociology
Lafayette College

Elizabeth Long Lingo
Assistant Director, The Curb Center for Art, Enterprise & Public Policy
at Vanderbilt University
Adjunct Assistant Professor of Management, Vanderbilt University

2008 NPAC: Assessing the Field's Capacity for Collective Action

Michael Lounsbury

Associate Professor, Strategic Management and Organization & National Institute for
Nanotechnology
University of Alberta School of Business

Michael Moody

Assistant Professor, School of Policy, Planning, and Development
University of Southern California

Jesse Rosen

President and CEO of the League of American Orchestras

Andrew Taylor

Director, Bolz Center for Arts Administration

Steven Tepper

Assistant Professor of Sociology, Vanderbilt University

Associate Director, The Curb Center for Art, Enterprise & Public Policy
at Vanderbilt University

Appendix 5: Detail of Caucus Session Ideas and Strategies

During the third day of the America Speaks caucuses, participants gathered at roundtables to brainstorm and evaluate potential actions that could be taken to advance the priorities of “communicating the value of the arts,” “arts education,” and “diversity.” Following is the full list of ideas generated by participants during these roundtable discussions.

Advocacy: National Level

Research

1. Proactive advocacy—sharing metrics and data supporting why art makes more informed, better citizens
2. Define and demonstrate the economic impact, then talk about artistic value—people respond to numbers and empirical values
3. Organize research on all topics (i.e., economic impact across all disciplines)
4. Develop assessment techniques for programming to get stats
5. Conduct the necessary research to support the essential nature of the arts to human development and societal impact at every level of engagement, particularly in the political sector through legislation
6. Create a national survey on what arts lovers value in the arts to reverse-engineer the process

Collaboration

1. Lower ticket prices—make art more affordable to everyone
2. Recognize champions for the arts
3. What if Americans for the Arts charged only \$5 for membership and became the AARP of the Arts?
4. Create a cultural department whose role is to advocate and lobby as well as be involved in public relations for the arts—build on AAA campaign
5. Use the NEA to unite in one global message by creating a national logo or slogan as an umbrella that each city or area can use
6. National service organizations need to provide better networks for the small organizations who are the foundation/grassroots for our entire community

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7. Partner with artists, arts organizations, parents, businesses, tourism and civic leaders to take a personal approach to advocating for the arts. Every day, share a personal story with another individual about how the arts have enhanced your life, or the lives of your family via conversation, email, blogs, etc.
8. Contact Google to create Google Arts

Events/Festivals/Venues

1. Create national "Live Arts" program similar to National Parks Department
2. Create a National Free Arts Day
3. Establish a Day Without Art—no whistling, dark theaters, no elevator music—"be very French about the strike"
4. Explore ways to present our arts in ways which are more interesting to younger people (15 minute operas, pizza in the hall)

Media/Marketing

1. Create an online resource of best practices in advocacy and outreach
2. Document local programs in a national database so we can show how much we give to communities
3. Use more modern media technology and mass media campaigns based on testimonials to promote the concept that arts are not an elitist pastime
4. Develop a news worthy P.R. campaign to generate coverage on the national media
5. Develop a national campaign with the message "we are obsessed with the arts" to orchestrate a paradigm shift
6. Launch a national branding campaign that effectively communicates the value of the arts
7. Recruit high profile artists to be visible spokespeople and share their inspirational stories, using technology, broadly to the general population
8. Create a national advertising campaign to promote a single concept like "the arts—just do it" or "a great nation deserves art" and get every national, regional, and local service organization to promote it and use it
9. Create a "this is your brain on art" campaign, something that provides more of a sound byte for people and gets it into the dialogue nationally

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10. Create a public service announcement showing art throughout our lives (walking down the street is dance, making a point at a meeting is drama) with links at local level and an action item. Create a national “art is everywhere!” campaign
11. Insist on a 24/7 media channel for performing arts, which is available to everyone and does not replace live performance, but creates better buzz for it
12. Educate a widely recognized personality to become a representative of the arts, and identify a slogan and logo that captures the experience that has occurred on the individual level to reinforce the grassroots campaign
13. Change the phrase “performing arts” to something like “lively arts” that implies engagement, and is supported by a national campaign
14. Create national pride in the an American “team” of artists, like the Olympics
15. Create a national awareness campaign that is similar to “got milk.” Use celebrity, the internet, TV, print ads
16. Launch a national campaign about “what the arts did for me”

Advocate Training

1. Strategic alignment with legislative influences through personal, facilitated arts participation that makes them art makers, not just static observers
2. Work with Americans for the Arts to develop a Young Americans for the Arts that involves youth in leadership roles

Government

1. Create a department of culture instead of the NEA to reduce swings in funding
2. Promote the arts at federal and national levels by electing people sensitive to the arts
3. Create a National Policy to create a visible and public way to feature live performance in all citizens' lives, similar to literary campaigns
4. Build a connection to key political/community influencers
5. Develop a 10-year plan to get the arts into the center of political discussions
6. Demand an arts policy/platform from our politicians and perhaps demand the appointment of a minister of culture

2008 NPAC: Assessing the Field's Capacity for Collective Action

Education

1. Create visitor kiosks with contact info for programs and artists at airports, travel locales, websites
2. Make art more participatory
3. Continue to educate different groups based on their specific needs: policy makers, parents, elderly, businesses, children
4. Collaboratively develop a set of talking points that use already available facts that prove the value and benefits of the arts. Articulate these points in accessible places like supermarkets; take the case in artistic demonstrations at City halls, Statehouses, and Congress
5. Create national communications (metrics and messages) and talking points to express the power of the arts, and use non-traditional messengers and media to get the word out
6. Change the language that we use—don't patronize, and emphasize that we are creative every day, and art is valuable on its own

Advocacy: Local Level

Research

1. Know a detailed explanation of the economic impact of the arts in your city
2. Gather data about the impact of arts—focus on research
3. Develop concrete data that paints pictures and tells stories more specifically—all states need to participate in a Cultural Data Plan
4. Conduct research to produce measurement data as well as anecdotal stories to “put a face on the art” and share with the appropriate identified leaders

Collaboration

1. Community partnerships between artists and between community leaders
2. Create a regional database of arts ticket buyers
3. Become leaders in your own community—serve on boards and government positions
4. Create regional organizations that strengthen the bond between the arts and the business community with the goal of having the arts more integrated into civic life

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5. Increase influence through contributing to the community through additions of jobs, tourist attractions, and education in public schools
6. Create partnerships and cultural collaborations with businesses and other arts organizations and community organizations (for example, chamber music in hospital)
7. Integrate with other community events that are outside your discipline—reinforce that your organization is part of the community
8. Ensure that the cultural landscape is part of the city's long term planning
9. Work with civic leaders to develop a cultural plan in order to identify community needs and how the arts can help solve problems
10. Build greater connections with local arts councils and all arts leaders—more inter-organization dialogue is needed
11. Engage local business community, including chambers of commerce and office of tourism, to promote the arts
12. Create a monthly meeting between arts groups—much like NPAC, and include local government to grow as strong local arts community
13. Use Denver's model of using a percentage of the sales tax to support the arts. This gives value to the arts because it affects everyone's personal pocketbook
14. Identify models of public funding, i.e. Denver: one cent of every dollar, and Broadway: one dollar addition

Events/Festivals/Venues

1. Create a grassroots campaign at all levels—free events at all venues and with all arts organizations
2. Make the arts more accessible by location—reach beyond downtown performances, and go into the suburbs where the people are
3. Build a broader coalition outside the traditional “artistic” communities—reach out to the suburbs
4. Use public spaces for more performances and tie performances with other activities (e.g., meals)
5. Showcase new works/artists through one-on-one talks/meetings with the community in common community spaces

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6. Create opportunities for meaningful, intimate experiences between artists and communities. Channel resources to artists creating participatory work in nontraditional spaces
7. Take the arts to audience—create an monthly or quarterly “Arts Day” sponsored by a recognizable public figure
8. Take performances outside (literally, and outside of normal performance venue) to bring new audiences in
9. Demystify arts experience by supporting more intimate art experiences that promote context through discussions, lectures, and panels
10. Create 24-hour marathon performances
11. Create a public community space that does not look or smell like a theater, and welcomes amateur performers
12. Organize malls, local spaces to let more art happen in public, unexpected places
13. Design arts activities that are participatory and take them to where the people gather: parks, churches, schools, etc.
14. Open up the process of creation—invite them in, and develop intensive partnerships with chambers of commerce, libraries, churches
15. Get out into the community—factories, bars, coffee shops

Media/Marketing

1. Show videos of programs done locally replayed on local channel
2. Have all the arts groups in the region pull the resources to create a campaign in the arts—provide free programming, buttons, t-shirts to promote a local arts day/week
3. Collaborate with local marketing campaigns in mass media and public venues
4. Endorse vanity plates for the arts—50% of fees go to the arts
5. Produce a series of 30 second video promotions that show the community and the arts
6. Use mass media—put a tag such as “Go to [your local symphony, for example] at the end of nightly news, films, etc.
7. Use national resources to link to local arts organizations—create an “art is everywhere” campaign that uses electronic media
8. Utilize new media/technology to educate the public about performances

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Advocate Training

1. Create state alliances to advocated for arts and to mentor to advocacy reps at specific organizations
2. Create a consortium with the artist as the central player (acting as a creative ideamaker and passionate advocate) partnered with a board of administrator, volunteers, funders to reinvent the business and financial models and speak on the behalf of the arts
3. Enlist small community based organizations to educate/advise larger organizations which are less in touch with the community

Education

1. Encourage the mayor to set priorities and standards (i.e. fifth grade will demonstrate xx, knowledge of music/dance/theater)
2. Work with schools to show importance of the arts for students because schools drive local government funding
3. Reframe how we talk about and market art work and who we assume it is for
4. Make the art process more transparent
5. Participation—if people can see themselves in the arts, they'll own it more
6. Create more education programs for adults so that they can understand better along with their children
7. Influence the mindset that arts are a core quality of life issue—when companies recruit new employees they demonstrate the quality/breadth/cross discipline diversity of the arts—make sure we are there to make our case

Advocacy: Individual/Organizational Level

Collaboration

1. Support the global/national agenda—mobilize with local leaders, orient the chamber of commerce with the art community
2. Become involved in your community in all aspects. Volunteer and run for public office
3. Use the community organizing model and new media to create grassroots movements that connect people on the local level that can work on a national scale. Share stories, be involved in community conversations (community developments, school boards, etc.) Identify allies, and use them

2008 NPAC: Assessing the Field's Capacity for Collective Action

4. Sponsor conferences and invite corporate government and commercial entertainment industry representatives whose voices must be a part of the interaction. Provide dialogue and experiences to build relationships and partnerships for success
5. Increase conversation by encouraging local arts groups to organize a comprehensive calendar of when and how they will engage with schools and community—i.e., the symphony is in the schools on the first Tuesday of each month, and the opera works with the schools during December
6. Integrate the arts into community development by having an arts organization work collaboratively with two other community organizations every year
7. Create goals with a common purpose that will unite the local arts community
8. Build organizational “best” and “worst” practices data to share amongst other organizations
9. Organizations can provide teaching artists to schools
10. Maximize the potential of everything that the organization has—real estate (bring other organizations into your space), artists, resources—make the walls of the organization pulse through outreach, education, technology, integration
11. Utilize leaders of national service organizations to speak to our organizations and local communities
12. Share resources across organizations (IT, payroll, marketing)

Events/Festivals/Venues

1. Select productions that are relevant to community cultures and current issues
2. Contextualize performances and art work—present as social, political, and aesthetic bridge makers, share knowledge and experience
3. Become an active participant at other events. Partner with fellow non-profits in mutually beneficial ways that benefit others beyond your normal scope
4. Intentionally program so that the context, history, and relevance of the program is appropriate for the community

2008 NPAC: Assessing the Field's Capacity for Collective Action

Media/Marketing

1. Use email, postcards, and letters to publicize the cause and let individuals act as advocates
2. Be creative in delivering the art to the people—take it to where the people are, connect via new technology and media, blogs, online dialogue, YouTube, Facebook
3. Challenge the local media to cover arts events, keep critics on staff, etc., “live interviews,” like the sports and celebrity models
4. Get in front of the public where they are—i.e., movie theaters
5. Grass roots campaign—have all people who have a connection to the arts wear something or somehow identify yourself as an artists, arts coordinator, arts educator, or arts aficionado
6. Infiltrate the blogging community to post art/art events, etc.
7. Provide free tickets to high school students and invite them to come experience and blog

Advocate Training

1. Elect one advocacy representative for each organization—they should meet across disciplines
2. Do a better job tracking and sharing stories of people in our communities whose lives have been positively affected by the arts (and turning them into ambassadors)
3. Make advocacy a priority, incorporating it into your organization on a regular basis through staff and board committees
4. Personalize the performers, their growth, accomplishments, etc.
5. Mobilize all artist and individuals involved in the grassroots event to communicate with neighbors, colleagues that they are involved and want them to attend
6. Use more creative marketing to advocate the arts such as utilizing advancing technology, get city council people to attend performances, create a partnership with local media (i.e., lunch conversations), build coalitions with other local organizations, and use a local to advocate to their own local council's district
7. Turn existing patrons into arts advocates through backstage tours, ads, arts careers info

2008 NPAC: Assessing the Field's Capacity for Collective Action

8. Artists need to also be able to say things that people don't want to hear; we underestimate audiences
9. Educate artists to shift from assigning blame to taking responsibility for shifting from poor mentality to sustainability and benefits of arts

Government

1. Require the arts to be a part of the electoral process at a local, state, and national levels
2. Collect hand written notes from your students about the arts and send them to your politician to alert them of the effect and immediacy of the issue

Education

1. Engage civic leaders on more than just an audience level
2. Tie the experience of art to people actually making it, above the product itself, by demonstrating it yourself to another individual and by mentoring/encouraging the other individual to experience it together (your neighbors and work colleagues)
3. Tell personal stories that will vibrantly reveal why art is valuable (the parent whose child gets a college scholarship because she was given a plastic flute to play in grade school) Be who we are: storytellers
4. Don't separate art from life—life is art, and art is life
5. Connect arts to pop culture
6. Don't speak "ArtSpeak"—too inclusive, corporate, and safe to relate to the individual artist experience
7. Show people how art is a part of their lives—if they have been to a movie, they have probably heard a symphony orchestra

2008 NPAC: Assessing the Field’s Capacity for Collective Action

Education Research and Models

National

1. Innovate financial models to fund arts; link to tax base throughout local sales tax, connect to corporate funds
2. Establish and share assessments that create empirical data to demonstrate the correlation between the arts and their educational impact
3. Emulate the Japanese treasure designation given to outstanding artists
4. Create an Arts Council like the President’s Council on Fitness
5. Do on-going coordinated research across all arts disciplines to give weight to our proposals—work with foundations to fund
6. Look at the Teach for America model to get teaching artists into the schools
7. Nationalize the Dallas Model for Arts Education in every school so that every school has one arts activity per year, or use the Chicago Public Affairs enrichment program.
8. Develop a measurement of how we are doing with our arts education nationally
9. Look at the American League of Orchestras as a model—they have a clear policy in place and work to implement it to each orchestra
10. Invest money into researching what arts education programs are effective (whether market driven or public school oriented) and eventually track long term results across all age levels
11. National data gathering and dissemination of current research (i.e., Stanford Study), then popular media (websites, Facebook, etc.)
12. Use game technology to excite art participation
13. Organize a national convention to collect, review, organize, and make recommendations for Best Practices of the Arts Groups

2008 NPAC: Assessing the Field's Capacity for Collective Action

Local

1. Work with PTA's, etc., to develop a program of standardized testing in the arts—on the national, state, or local level
2. Target collegiate and post-collegiate populations for engagement programs because many decisions on leisure time are being made at this age. Research how and why they want out of arts experiences and integrate research into programming. Create a wide range of access points!

Individual/Organizational

1. Educate ourselves on what work is currently being done in the arts and use those best practices to broaden audiences

Advocacy and Lobbying

National

1. A national, funded, arts policy will help bring local school districts into agreement
2. Bring performing arts to the national conversation of education policy. Emphasize teacher training that includes arts integration and uses arts to teach other subjects
3. Ensure that arts representatives participate in education conferences and meetings
4. Join efforts with overall education reform groups to make better arts education—make the arts part of the response to *No Child Left Behind*
5. Develop a program that puts artists back into the schools, funded by the Department of Education Affiliate Artists
6. Create a national initiative to have every arts organization partner with an institution of learning and vice versa
7. Advocate for a nationwide movement to raise the visibility of Americans for the Arts so that everyone involved in the performing arts community invests in being aware of who their politicians are and their voting records
8. Use the NEA to have more dialogue with the Department of Education
9. Create a national, managed endowment fund for arts education
10. Create a training center for arts docents—use the national association of public interpretation as funding (currently funds docents for national parks)
11. Plan and organize a Million Artists March
12. Stage a national strike for the arts

2008 NPAC: Assessing the Field’s Capacity for Collective Action

Local

1. Participate in local political process by lobbying city council and school board meetings
2. Build relationships with non-arts groups, including government, corporations, community development organizations
3. Find those who participate in the arts as amateurs and appreciate the lifelong value of the arts as part of a balanced life—have them advocate through their personal experience (ex. Condoleezza Rice plays piano)
4. Advocate boards of education to integrate art into other subject areas
5. Elect artists to local school boards and local governments
6. Reach out to the superintendants of public schools to create positions of “Office of Arts and Culture” to coordinate program established with schools and principals
7. Engage parents in advocacy and planning efforts to create more art in the schools
8. Implement a local sales tax to fund arts education
9. Run for local government and board positions

Individual/Organizational

1. Take 1% out of every arts organization’s budget to pay lobbyists in Washington to increase arts education
2. Voter registration drives at all arts organizations to create public dialogue
3. Engage non-arts teachers, parents, and administration in the discussion of arts advocacy
4. Bring policy-makers into the classroom to see students experiencing the arts

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Engaging and Training Artists and Teachers

National

1. Partner with teachers in order to lobby and co-promote the idea of the arts in public school life
2. Create a campaign to teach teachers the value of arts in their discipline
3. Collaborate with teachers' organizations at the national level to bring attention to the industry and create collaboration
4. Engage teachers' unions to partner and collaborate to advocate for the arts
5. Create a national network of teaching artists, implemented on a local, grass-roots level
6. Create an Ameri-Arts program—people who graduate in arts get loan breaks, etc. for volunteering to teach in arts disciplines in inner-city schools and other environments (build off of Americorps)

Local

1. Educate the educators of other disciplines in the arts
2. Teach all performing arts students how to be teachers/ambassadors of the arts
3. Develop more training for arts administration
4. Increase art-focused scholarship funds
5. Teach teachers how to use arts in their curriculum (ex. Dayton Ohio's Muse machine) and encourage them to implement young artist festivals even in their science or math classes—encourage young people to make art themselves
6. Provide professional development for teachers from Schools of Education by arts groups
7. Use artists as ambassadors and teachers for their art form
8. Degree programs for artists should include education
9. Create cross-discipline artist education to help artists become more appreciative of other artists
10. Establish teacher advisory committees to work with local arts organizations
11. Engage upper level college students to assist in the schools

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Curriculum

National

1. Develop a National Arts Curriculum integrated at the state and local level that demands that the arts be treated equally with the 3 “R’s”
2. Advocate for and create a performing arts appreciation curriculum for a specific age at specific times that is multi-discipline (ex. All 10th graders in first semester)

Local

1. Bring art into non-traditional spaces to create opportunities for education; parks, workplaces, rehearse in high schools
2. Foster cross-disciplinary conversations to share data and best practices, develop common goals, and create joint activities and performances
3. Fund arts specialists in all schools
4. Create programs that are brought into the schools repeatedly

Individual/Organizational

1. Instill the value of creativity as an inherent aspect of the learning process
2. Shift the focus to why arts education benefits the country in a way that other subjects cannot offer—it creates problem solvers, thinkers, and visionaries with discipline and perseverance

Engaging Community

National

1. Create an Art Corps, a federal organization that would enter communities on all levels to engage in local arts. This could be modeled after Peace Corps , and would use artists of all ages and levels of experience, and engage arts projects across all disciplines. Avoid elitism, avoid only focusing on distressed communities, and use artists who know their communities
2. Create a NEA-funded Artist in Residence program—through 2 or 3 years of funding, choreographers, and composers work with companies and schools

2008 NPAC: Assessing the Field's Capacity for Collective Action

Local

1. Strengthen community relationships through peer-to-peer board development across all areas (corporate, government, etc.)
2. Connect the stories and experiences of local residents to new and exciting artwork
3. Develop stronger relationships with school boards and policy makers, elect “arts friendly” officials
4. Strategic alliances with school superintendants, parents, principals, teachers, volunteers, corporate community, city, county, state governments, individual donors and arts and art organizations
5. Create a national free night of art (based on the national free night of Theater). Tickets should include the cost of the ticket marked out so that people know how much it would cost
6. Work through local government to have every tax payer have the money to attend one arts event for free each year
7. Require developers/corporations who want to increase density in neighborhood development to contribute 1% of budget to the performing arts
8. Develop artists-in-residence programs in an array of public organizations; schools, hospitals, prisons, nursing homes. Artists benefit by having rehearsal space, time, being supported. Audiences benefit by being a part of the creative process
9. Create a scholarship program for participation in the arts to all children
10. Create personal relationships with principals of schools
11. Create arts education programs for all ages and present them at non-arts institution events such as Rotary, Senior Centers, etc.

Individual/Organizational

1. Create opportunities for active participation in the arts for all ages (interactive websites, conversations, open rehearsals)
2. Encourage institutional changes to create inclusiveness and welcome newcomers to the arts, through initiatives such as allowing food and beverage in the theater
3. Invite people to match other people's donations in order to increase funding
4. Programming in non-traditional or non-conventional spaces
5. Combine social and arts programs in your community

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6. Create before- and after-performance experiences to draw the audience in and educate them through podcasts, lectures, blogs, etc.
7. Encourage parents to make art together with their children
8. Provide a docent program that makes a concert or event a more comfortable, educational experience
9. Create programs for multi-generations—kids, parents, grandparents—encourage the “kids eat/come for free” concept
10. Engage the family as a unit with family programming initiatives
11. Ask individuals what they like, don’t like, etc., about the arts, why they do/do not attend and respond to those answers through those practices
12. Educate the public and your patrons before they might go to a show about why artwork is important through email, lectures, mailers
13. Attend arts performances you are unfamiliar with, and bring someone who might not otherwise be inclined to attend

Marketing

National

1. Create multimedia marketing strategies, including YouTube, Facebook, etc. to communicate and demonstrate value and relevance
2. Engage the media to tell arts stories daily (similar to sports and weather reports)
3. Use a national website for the arts to share ideas
4. Broaden definitions of careers in the arts, and campaign with images of successful artists
5. Create a national ad campaign about the importance of arts to a developed society
6. Create free performance web access across the nation
7. Create American Idol-type competitions for singers, instrumentalists, and writers
8. Create an educational campaign to show that the arts are important both as a career path and for those people who go into other fields
9. Engage Oprah; she celebrates making art on the show, and use her celebrity to promote the visibility of the arts
10. Broaden the definition of arts activity to include technology focused activities (lighting, media) so as to not discourage kids who don’t think of themselves as “creative”

2008 NPAC: Assessing the Field's Capacity for Collective Action

Local

1. Help the community more fully understand why artists are involved in the arts, and help them discover the passion that brought the artists to the field
2. Bring arts to the people through after school and weekend programming
3. Combine performance series across organizations to increase audience (i.e., packages of symphony, ballet, and theater performances)

Individual/Organizational

1. Put masterpieces side by side with children's art in order to show potential progression
2. Increase public recognition of student art achievement on par with athletic counterparts
3. Artists should personally invite more audience members into the process

Diversity

National Level

1. Elect Barack Obama
2. Create a National Arts Day
3. Engage Oprah to advocate for the arts
4. Charge our national service organizations to build and share a database; create dialogue
5. Create training programs in diversity
6. Promote diverse art and artists
7. Partner grassroots organizations to reach their diverse communities
8. Mandate compulsory training programs for arts organizations (managers, staff, artists, etc.) in diversity
9. Make the artistic process more transparent.
10. Reach out to advocacy organizations representing ethnically and culturally diverse populations indicating a new NPAC initiative around audiences, programming, governance, and staffing that would increase diversity in all of these areas around the country

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11. Create a national media/marketing campaign with artists from diverse communities; create exposure to diverse art
12. Disseminate information on cultural literacy more effectively
13. Encourage the use of nationality in order to add to cultural diversity
14. Make advertising more exciting—keep up to speed with the diverse ways that people communicate in a high-tech world
15. Use celebrity advertisement to target demographics
16. Raise funds to support: internships/training, varied pricing models, free arts events, low price or free tickets, individual artists
17. Create more varied pricing models which allow for multiple entry points across all level of socioeconomic status
18. Restructure NEA funding to reach more diverse populations
19. Keep momentum from NPAC meeting going, take ideas back to home community
20. Create a national movement to support community festivals across the nation
21. Find funding to support more arts-appreciation/volunteer/amateur groups—help others see the value of this level of art-making
22. Encourage more colleges and universities to offer fellowships, internships, and scholarships in arts management specifically targeted to low income individuals and people of color
23. Create an “ROTC” for the arts
24. Have younger audiences “teach” us how to build a younger audience through outlets such as Facebook and YouTube
25. Create more programs that are attractive to these younger audiences
26. Use TCG’s model of a Free Night of Theater for all disciplines
27. Look for existing successful programs that can be replicated and supported nationally and locally to reach diverse populations
28. Establish a national website to use as a clearinghouse for finding information about each community
29. Open up conversations with performer unions to encourage cultural exchanges

2008 NPAC: Assessing the Field’s Capacity for Collective Action

30. Develop a national campaign for the arts; “Expose yourself”
31. Come to a consensus about what “diversity” means
32. Create a national office of cultural arts
33. Diversify boards, management, and staff in all arts organizations to reflect diversity of the country
34. Do a data-driven study that replicates the idea of *No Child Left Behind*
35. Stop promoting diversity—start promoting eclectic appreciation of the arts
36. Promote the idea that all people have the right to cultural expression/participation. Channel resources to poor/working class artists and organizations that serve these communities
37. Devise ways to remove the labels attached to programming and to remove barriers to entry (e.g., pops, serious, difficult)
38. Create a commissioning club
39. Increase color-blind casting and blind auditioning
40. Create scholarships for diverse members of NPA staffs to attend the conference
41. Encourage and help make it possible for young people to attend arts conferences
42. Develop a diversity certification for arts organizations
43. Collaborate with other artists across disciplines and within cultures
44. Create ongoing conversations with arts makers about supporting more diverse programming
45. Use the community demographic as a model for diversifying staff, artists, and arts
46. Develop an Arts Rights Constitution
47. Make sure more artists are in direct contact with people (let audiences know artists are real people and can relate to others)
48. Ask questions of the people who don’t come to arts performances and figure out why
49. Understand more specifically why there remains a racial/cultural/ethnic divide between mainstream/European performances and “cultural” performances

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50. Create smaller spaces for performances to make the atmosphere more intimate
51. Advocate for multi-disciplinary, equitable representation of art forms in education
52. Use technology to reach out internationally
53. Focus on new work—when people see themselves reflected in the work, they will turn themselves into audiences
54. Demonstrate it is possible to have a career in the arts at the college level
55. Strengthen community relationships through peer to peer board development across all areas (corporate, government, etc.), and involving locals in decision making
56. House Party—follow the OBAMA campaign strategy use of this model

Local Level

1. Find models and programs that show the financial benefit of reaching out to diverse groups, and have a national database of statistical data to support the need for information
2. Use local celebrities as a spokesperson for the local arts events, and make them role models for arts appreciation
3. Create ongoing relationships with local organizations to diverse groups currently in communities to perform commissions by professional artists that are relevant and use new technologies
4. Take performances into the local community and out of the black box
5. Expand internships to expose youth to the career opportunities. This will translate to board diversification
6. Identify and highlight role model artists of diverse ages, races, and cultural identity
7. Don’t always fund the same group of people
8. Present diverse repertoire on a single program
9. Identify indigenous art forms to diverse populations
10. Encourage support of locally based artists who work and live in your area—people come to see “themselves” on stage

2008 NPAC: Assessing the Field’s Capacity for Collective Action

11. Create arts education programs that are independent of school systems
12. Create an ambassador program comprised of audience members to be spokespeople—reflect the diversity of the audience
13. Have a diverse staff—“who does the inviting is as important as the invite”
14. Have open door days—invite people into your theaters/dance spaces/orchestra halls—then bridge the gap between those who come free and have them come back for regular performances or events
15. Have playwrights out in the community gathering their stories and making them into plays
16. Use technology to enhance the live performance experience
17. Investigate how to overcome transportation issues
18. Make bumper stickers to support your local artists

Individual/Organizational Level

1. Increase experience with the art form, provide action with the art to allow people to learn in a different way
2. Open the buildings of organizations to move groups into the community to welcome them in
3. Parents as arts advocates to children. Participate in PTA groups to identify the value of the arts
4. Find new skill sets to change the relationship with the community
5. Stop talking and start listening. Visit in small groups (lunches, coffees, etc.) others in your community on their turf and hear what they have to say so you can find the common ground where your values and theirs meet. Go to City council meetings and take your local officials to lunch. Make it personal!
6. Open “Arts Bars” to follow the model of Sports Bars
7. Meet with city and community leaders to develop a plan for the arts. Identify where arts intersect with community needs to determine how arts can solve community’s problems
8. Create/foster local champions (like the mayor of Denver) and involve them in visceral ways in the arts, making them better spokespeople

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9. Use art leaders, artists, and peer to peer board development to encourage corporate leaders to participate in the artistic life of a community
10. Make sure you provide paths for people to actively participate in your art form by attendance, interactive websites, feedback, conversation, open rehearsals
11. Build individual relationships with patrons that create awareness/investment
12. Know your audience stats well enough to be able to provide your stats to contribute on economic impact studies
13. Take pride in your organization—your art is as important and excellent as the big guys (small organizations)
14. Engage children and parents together in the arts, show parents the benefit of the arts
15. Look at US Armed Forces—a predominately white organization that has morphed into a very diverse group. How did they get there? Choice, education, and conscious effort
16. Have the courage to create partnerships with performing arts groups that are different
17. Create a “go outside” campaign—every arts institution gets out at least once a year to be visible at community gatherings, like student fairs
18. Encourage all performing arts institutions to do significant self-assessment of their customers' overall experiences
19. Each organization needs to broaden the definition of “audience” from just a ticket buying audience to an active audience who experiences our organization through many access points
20. Commission young, diverse artists
21. Create mentorship programs for advocacy
22. Make audience part of your process/programming which can be accomplished by communicating with people by their preferred method (i.e., web paper and etc.) and have personal conversations with social/cultural leaders to ask them what they need or desire
23. Look to the commercial sector for ideas
24. Email blasts for specialized programs—use of digital and new media
25. Expand opportunities for young people to serve in key stakeholder positions

2008 NPAC: Assessing the Field’s Capacity for Collective Action

26. Challenge each organization to deepen the relationship to 100 people off their mailing list (randomly picked) through personal notes and calls—regardless of how much they attend or grow
27. Provide pre-concert and concert information in different languages
28. Use new technological opportunities to reach a diverse community—twitter, iTunes, social network, Facebook, blogs, etc. Add a staff person who can do this
29. Market to men more frequently
30. Cross pollination among disciplines, artists, and institutions. The hip hop company can suggest that their audiences attend opera to see roots of the form and vice versa
31. Pair high school ushers with senior ushers to get community service and arts exposure
32. Send visiting artists to schools
33. Partner with social service agencies
34. Create a “LPAC”—a local performing arts convention
35. Organize more live presentations in local schools and senior and community centers
36. Mandate that every major institutional program must have a meaningful and mutually beneficial community partnership in order to proceed
37. Create templates for youth councils in arts organizations that create opportunities for youth to be involved in leadership roles
38. Do a better job of selling ourselves as a place to work, be a volunteer, learn



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at Vanderbilt

1207 18th Avenue South | Nashville, TN 37212

www.vanderbilt.edu/curbcenter



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