

# **Stirring Up Arts Participation: Thirteen Projects**

## ArtsWA INNOVATIONS Grants 2012

Washington State Arts Commission  
with support from The Wallace Foundation

Documentation Report  
Prepared March 2013  
by AdvisArts Consulting, Claudia Bach and  
Shannon Stewart, with Alan Brown, WolfBrown

**advisarts**  
consulting

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## NOTE FROM THE WASHINGTON STATE ARTS COMMISSION

Dear Friends,

We are pleased to share this report by AdvisArts Consulting, documenting the work of the Innovations Grant projects and supported through the Washington State Arts Commission's four-year Arts Participation Leadership Initiative (APLI).

Receiving Innovation Grants were 13 arts organizations in King and Pierce counties. Each implemented a "quick turnaround" innovation to build arts participation, particularly to engage teens and young adults and/or to diversify audiences from specific ethnic communities. Their work also shines a spotlight on social media and technology tools arts organizations can use to boost participation by these key demographic groups.

With the support of The Wallace Foundation, the APLI has since 2009 enabled us to host a series of forums bringing together nationally recognized thought-leaders and local experts for discussions about changing demographics, arts participation trends, and approaches for engaging new audiences. Related workshops provided opportunities for arts leaders to examine their practices and work on new solutions to arts participation challenges. Five networks of arts managers formed as "Communities of Practice" to work on arts participation projects, and to share insights and challenges. Additionally, nine of Seattle's largest arts institutions received direct funding from the Wallace Foundation to pioneer effective practices to engage more people in meaningful experience in the arts – and to pursue audience research efforts.

This report contributes to the documentation of the APLI. Also available are videos and/or written responses to each forum; a summary of audience research insights; an overview of the Communities of Practice. A video will offer an overview of the four-year APLI. A new web portal will allow easy online access to all these materials. (See [www.arts.wa.gov](http://www.arts.wa.gov) for future updates.)

We are deeply grateful to The Wallace Foundation for their generosity, vision and commitment to the arts. Thanks to the APLI Advisory Committee; our funding partners in these activities and events; and, especially, all the arts organizations that worked so hard over four years to help us present a multi-faceted and thoughtful exploration of arts participation.

Sincerely,

Kris Tucker, Executive Director  
Mayumi Tsutakawa, Manager of Grants to Organizations  
Washington State Arts Commission  
March 2013



# Stirring Up Arts Participation: Thirteen Projects

## ArtsWA INNOVATIONS Grants 2012

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Report prepared by AdvisArts Consulting, Seattle, Washington, March 2013  
Claudia Bach and Shannon Stewart, with Alan Brown, WolfBrown  
[www.advisarts.com](http://www.advisarts.com)

AdvisArts wishes to acknowledge the staff members of the participating ArtsWA INNOVATIONS grantee organizations for documenting and generously sharing their experiences. We also wish to thank the community partners and volunteers involved in the documentation process. The insights of the staff of the Washington State Arts Commission and the APLI Advisory Committee contributed to this project, as did the valuable work of Amanda Smart and Susan Kunimatsu.

## INTRODUCTION and BACKGROUND

Innovation is the buzzword of the 21st Century, used with great frequency in the arts and in myriad other settings. Communities seek to be at the forefront of cultural innovation. Artists and arts organizations embrace innovation in creative practice and undertake innovative strategies to bring artwork to audiences. Arts funders strive to support innovation in the field. The word is used so often that its meaning is hard to discern.

The dictionary defines two forms of innovation: the introduction of something new; or a new idea, method, or device.<sup>1</sup> We see both these forms of innovation in the stories of thirteen projects of arts organizations in the Puget Sound area.

As part of its Arts Participation Leadership Initiative (APLI), the Washington State Arts Commission (ArtsWA) awarded thirteen INNOVATIONS Grants. With support from The Wallace Foundation, APLI made one-time grants of up to \$30,000 for short-term projects to stimulate innovative practices in building arts participation. Awarded for the final year of the four-year APLI initiative in the Seattle-Tacoma area, these grants built on the foundation of arts participation learning provided to the Puget Sound community through eight forums and workshops and other aspects of the APLI since 2010.

The ArtWA INNOVATIONS grantees included a cross-section of arts organizations in the Seattle-Tacoma area, representing a variety of artistic disciplines, audiences, approaches and infrastructures:

- A Contemporary Theatre, Seattle
- Bellevue Arts Museum, Bellevue
- Book-it Repertory Theatre, Seattle
- Campus MLK, Tacoma
- Frye Art Museum, Seattle
- Museum of Glass, Tacoma
- Northwest Folklife, Seattle
- Seattle Symphony Orchestra, Seattle
- Seattle Theatre Group, Seattle
- TeenTix, Seattle
- Theatre Puget Sound, Seattle
- Town Hall Seattle, Seattle
- Wing Luke Museum of the Asian Pacific American Experience, Seattle

Their projects ranged from singular experiments to jump-starts for stalled initiatives, from creating new working methods within an organization to building new relationships beyond its walls. All were either short-term stand-alone projects or core elements of more extended projects. They had to be completed, or significantly advanced during the INNOVATIONS grant period, six months between June and December 2012. One goal of these grants was to explore the impact and value of funding intensive, but time-limited, arts participation endeavors.

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<sup>1</sup> Frederick C. Mish, ed., Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, Eleventh Edition (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Inc., 2003), 645.

The projects exemplify two distinct, sometimes overlapping, approaches to innovation for arts organizations:

- Exploration of practices that are new or just emerging in the cultural sector, venturing into fairly uncharted territory; and/or
- Exploration, development or implementation of practices that are known to have value in the field, but are new for the grantee organization.

ArtsWA shepherded the Puget Sound APLI with the goals of building arts participation especially among young adult and/or culturally diverse participants, and expanding access to the arts through new technology. The rapidly changing demographic landscape of the United States and the Northwest was an important focus of APLI forums and presentations and served as a compelling backdrop to explorations of arts participation overall.

For the INNOVATIONS grants, organizations were asked to strategically address one or more of four challenges to participation in the arts: engaging teens and young adults; diversifying audiences from specific ethnic communities; integrating communications and marketing techniques including the burgeoning digital universe; creating new opportunities for social engagement or social connections. The INNOVATIONS program sought to expand the list of ingredients and the range of skills that organizations bring to participation efforts, creating a more expansive feast of arts participation in the region.

An element of risk was inherent in these projects. ArtsWA and The Wallace Foundation acknowledged the value of organizations stretching in unfamiliar or even uncomfortable ways. Grantees were encouraged to venture into areas that were experimental. Failure was seen as a viable and informative learning experience. A fallen soufflé can lead to better skills for future efforts in the kitchen, and INNOVATIONS grantees were seen as adventurous cooks expanding their own, and their community's palate. These grants were not intended to support business as usual.

## **Documentation of Innovative Practice**

ArtsWA INNOVATIONS grants included a core element of documentation, and the requirement that there be intentional reflection and learning from the projects undertaken. This aligned with a primary component of the Arts Participation Leadership Initiative: the sharing of knowledge and information regionally and nationally.

ArtsWA contracted with AdvisArts Consulting to work with the grantees to develop meaningful documentation for sharing the lessons learned through their projects. This documentation was the basis of each grantee's presentation of their INNOVATIONS story at a March 2013 APLI Forum at Seattle Center, and was key in the development of this report by the consultants. Representatives of each organization participated in two documentation interviews with the consultant team during and shortly after completion of their project. (Appendix A.) The consultants developed documentation guidelines to ensure that the grantee organizations would have written and visual material at hand to document their INNOVATIONS journey. (Appendix B). All the grantees met in early 2013 to share progress in advance of their Forum presentations.

The thirteen INNOVATIONS grantees' projects are summarized by the consultants in this report. Each organization's stated INNOVATIONS goals are followed by a profile of its project and a "recipe" to guide other organizations interested in undertaking similar work. We observe what changed for each organization as a result of the project, and note online links to more information about the project and the organization.

These brief but intense INNOVATIONS projects provided an opportunity to consider broader lessons for arts participation in the early 21st Century. The consultant team, with Alan Brown, principal of WolfBrown, as an advisor and thought partner, distilled these into six areas of practice, explored in greater depth in this report. These innovation practices are:

1. Embedding the work of the organization within a community
2. Broadening curatorial methods
3. Experimenting with setting
4. Cabling opportunities together
5. Integrating digital technology with strategy and programming
6. Combining arts content with socializing

The practices investigated in these projects were examined in relation to the work of other arts organizations and researchers. The consultant team considered the insights and lessons gleaned from these thirteen grantees within the national context of cultural participation today. This documentation report concludes with a list of Key Ingredients to stimulate other organizations as they create a recipe for their own approach to innovation.

## **INNOVATIONS Grants and Wallace Excellence Awards**

The ArtsWA INNOVATIONS projects can be viewed in light of the largest funded element of the Seattle APLI: the nine organizations that received the four-year Wallace Excellence Awards grants. These organizations undertook multi-year approaches to building arts participation, developing long-term initiatives between 2009 and 2012. Slover Linett Audience Research did extensive research and analysis of these nine projects over the four-year grant period. An in-depth comparative analysis of these two grant programs is beyond the scope of this report, however, there is much to consider. In December 2012 Slover Linett presented a summary of their research at an APLI forum in Seattle and identified 10 Audience Engagement Takeaways. (For more information on the nine WEA grantees and Slover Linett's research visit [arts.wa.gov](http://arts.wa.gov)) Four of their ten points appear to align directly with what emerged through the INNOVATIONS grants and suggest their relevance to both shorter and longer term efforts:

- Humanize the institution, the art and the artists;
- Programs or activities that are social in nature should also be art-and/or content-focused;
- Bring audiences behind-the-scenes to make the artistic process more accessible, familiar and relatable;
- Go beyond opening your doors to newcomers—actively invite them and then welcome, orient, and listen to them.

It is the final point that resonates most strongly in the context of the INNOVATIONS grants. In virtually all the projects there is evidence of efforts to invite in voices beyond a usual circle of input and influence. These may be the voices of newcomers, or may simply be more permeable and transparent processes created to generate a flow of communication between current or potential audience members and the organization. Through resources provided by APLI, INNOVATION grantees introduced new ingredients, mixed new combinations and explored the outcomes with increasing openness.

## **FINDINGS and INNOVATION PRACTICES**

The thirteen ArtsWA INNOVATIONS grantee projects reveal trends and directions in the ways that arts organizations approach arts participation today. These projects remind us of the vague and overlapping terminology applied to building participation in the arts. Concepts of audience development, audience engagement, community outreach and marketing swirl together in various combinations in these projects. Their definitions can be disputed and the terms are used in a variety of ways by these Seattle-Tacoma area organizations, and across the country. However, these projects all share the impulse to go beyond the current status of audience participation in arts organizations.

An earlier Wallace Foundation initiative, the Arts Participation Initiative of 2001 to 2005, with additional funding from the Paul G. Allen Family Foundation, had an impact that is still visible in the Seattle area. The initiative was grounded in RAND Corporation research that articulated concepts of broadening, deepening and diversifying arts participation.<sup>2</sup> Terminology and ideas from this research are evident in these INNOVATIONS projects, especially in conversations with grantees who have been active in the field for more than a decade. The projects undertaken in 2012 built on this history while forging forward in ways that are attentive to our increasingly pluralistic and technology-imbued society, and with the energies and inclinations of a new generation of arts administrators.

The consultant team identified six practices from the ArtsWA INNOVATIONS projects that characterize evolving approaches to participation in the arts sector:

1. Embedding the work of the organization within a community
2. Broadening curatorial methods
3. Experimenting with setting
4. Cabling opportunities together
5. Integrating digital technology with strategy and programming
6. Combining arts content with socializing

While these practices are not entirely new, they explain or expand on current approaches and suggest more significant changes that may lie ahead. Many converge with current research in the field, including an emerging body of work on building demand for performing arts experiences, championed by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation.<sup>3</sup> They address many of the same issues and approaches as the

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2 McCarthy, K.F. & Jinnett, K. (2001). A new framework for building participation in the arts. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation.

3 Brown, A. (2012). Building demand for the performing arts: A working paper for applicants to the Doris Duke Artist Residency Program, available at:

[http://ddcf.org/Global/Building%20Demand%20for%20the%20Performing%20Arts\\_FINAL.pdf](http://ddcf.org/Global/Building%20Demand%20for%20the%20Performing%20Arts_FINAL.pdf)

four-year Seattle APLI Wallace Excellence Awardee projects. This can provide us with a way to consider the relative merits and challenges of shorter term (six month) and longer term (four year) audience participation initiatives, though an in-depth comparison is beyond the scope of this documentation report.

Examples from the INNOVATIONS grantees are noted here. More complete stories of the thirteen projects can be found in the Project Profiles section of this report. The order in which these practices are listed does not imply importance.

## **Innovation Practice 1**

### **Embedding the work of the organization within a community**

Reciprocity between arts organizations and audiences, especially audiences of young adults or specific ethnic groups, is taking shape through embedded relationships. The word “embed” is used to signify an evolution beyond the field’s ubiquitous use of “engage”. To truly serve their missions, arts organizations are seeking deeper, more nuanced and bi-directional relationships with targeted communities. These relationships accrue over a period of time, as trust and respect build. In some cases this takes place where the community is situated, while in other cases the organization welcomes the community or demographic group into the organization. To bring the community into the organization it must strategically place the welcome mat to demonstrate the value of the relationship, often through new programming.

Grantees focused on communities or demographic groups that were not well engaged with the organization’s work. They used a variety of methods to enhance the arts experiences of the target audience. The organizations sharpened their understanding of the ways that particular audiences experience and value the arts, and gained a sense of how that audience could enrich the organization’s art-making, as well as its methods of communication.

The INNOVATIONS Grants projects were intensive and targeted due to the six-month focus of the grant. The most successful examples of this practice dedicated significant time and effort towards building relationships in specific communities with the work of an individual representative – primarily paid staff but sometimes dedicated volunteers – as a cornerstone component. Such focused work was made possible primarily by the financial resources available through the grant, since these efforts yield little short-term income. Sustainability of such relationships and programs was an issue raised by all grantees.

Embedded relationships can have a significant impact within the organization even when the relationships themselves do not endure in the same form. The experience of working directly with a community or demographic group appears to change the “DNA” of the arts organization, heightening awareness of cultural biases, improving understanding of the unique characteristics and needs of specific audiences, and expanding the organization’s ability to apply these lessons in other situations.

**Strategy: Establishing designated staff or contract positions to carry out and link the work of the organization directly in the targeted community.** Individuals very likely to build bridges with the identified community due to their own cultural background or connections filled these positions.

#### **SPOTLIGHT**

**Northwest Folklife** immediately gained community knowledge and networks when they hired a Somali-born Project Coordinator to develop a performing arts showcase with the **Somali immigrant community** in Renton, Washington. Working in partnership with a respected grassroots organization, Somali Youth and Family Club, the Project Coordinator was able to build interest and credibility for the project and Northwest Folklife. The Coordinator's understanding of cultural norms, expectations and the community's challenges and dreams was central to developing an initial performance which then expanded to a final project showcase just two months later involving many more community members.

**Strategy: Using advisory groups that include individuals from the targeted community, to connect the work of the organization and the participation of the community.** While often initially seen as a marketing tool, these groups took on more dimensions and roles including acting as organizational surrogates within the community and serving as conduits for programs and activities in the community and in the organization.

#### **SPOTLIGHT**

To support its production of the Ramayana epic, **A Contemporary Theatre (ACT)** created a portal to Asian communities in the Northwest through the **Ramayana Ambassadors**. Representatives from Cambodian, Indonesian, Indian, Thai, Vietnamese and other Asian communities worked with ACT's staff to create a new model for staging a major work. They influenced the organization's artistic process, supporting programs, and outreach initiatives. Armed with ACT credentials and empowered to act on the organization's behalf, the Ambassadors helped ACT reimagine its historic building as a marketplace showcasing Seattle's vibrant Asian-immigrant communities in tandem with the Ramayana performances, and created ancillary programs, ultimately attracting hundreds of new patrons to the theatre. ACT approached the Ambassadors with genuine humility and a desire to improve the organization's cultural competence while providing parallel opportunities for growth to the Ambassadors.

**Strategy: Creating a group made up of the target audience to provide ongoing input and insights on their views and values.** Functioning like a de facto standing research panel or long-term focus group, these groups can effectively shape program content and delivery as well as create marketing messages within the context of a social relationship among group members.

#### **SPOTLIGHT**

**Theatre Puget Sound (TPS)** gained valuable knowledge about individuals interested but not actively participating in the arts, especially young adults, by creating **The Crush Crew** in conjunction with its month-long Arts Crush festival. Crew members were invited to gather regularly before, during and after the festival to attend performances, Crew-specific immersive arts activities and social gatherings. They played a role in festival marketing and outreach by documenting and sharing their experiences online and through word of mouth. TPS learned lessons about attracting and engaging meaningfully with young audiences using the right blend of fun and challenge, and without being overly structured. The Crew served as a participation laboratory for both the Crew members and for TPS, opening doors and creating connections.

## **Innovation Practice 2**

### **Broadening curatorial methods**

Collaborative and community-based approaches to curating increase community relevance along with other risks and demands. INNOVATIONS grantees explored ways to open or shift the curatorial function to make it more permeable. In some cases, selected community members (professional or not) became equal or primary voices in shaping artistic content, as well as influencing its form of delivery. In other cases, the input was even broader so that the curatorial response was focused on whatever was offered up by audiences, limited only by the scope of an event, an online opportunity or a time frame. The fundamental aspect is the sharing of curatorial power with outside stakeholders, and the co-creation of artistic content.

**Strategy: Shifting the curatorial voice of the organization to include programming driven by the knowledge, interest and expertise of individuals or groups beyond staff.** This may involve presenting artistic media beyond the organization's usual purview, untried formats, more inclusive participation or combinations that mix multiple curatorial concepts together.

#### **SPOTLIGHT**

The **Frye Art Museum** invited noted local performing artists and visual arts curators to join the museum's director in co-curating four months of programs showcasing Seattle's contemporary art scene. This **Curatorial Collective** was asked to think across disciplinary boundaries and to create diverse participatory experiences for artists and audiences. The Frye actively welcomed the opportunity to change -- to become a rehearsal space, a live music venue, a neighborhood resource, and a public forum for discussions about and experiences in local arts practices. Quickening the pulse and conflating media, the Curatorial Collective pushed the Frye to adapt the museum infrastructure to the multi-modal, fast paced way contemporary artists create and present work. This offered audiences multiple layers of experiences. The Collective brought a perspective unencumbered by standard museum practice that stretched the organization to develop new flexibility.

**Strategy: Blurring the line between being an audience member, participant and creator.** This approach makes use of individual community members, either professional or volunteer, to animate opportunities for audiences by engaging them in programs, and actively inviting them into the experience, including opportunities to participate in the co-creation of artistic content.

### Innovation Practice 3

#### Experimenting with setting

The range of physical spaces in which arts organizations pursue their missions continues to become more expansive. More arts organizations are taking their work directly to the targeted audience in sites and venues that are community-affiliated, and sometimes more unexpected places.<sup>4</sup> The motivation is tied to audience access and experience, as well as stretching the creative and curatorial muscles of the organization. Grantees are well aware that existing venues and modes of doing business present barriers and limitations both to attendees and to their own creative thinking and action.

INNOVATION grantees considered physical space as an asset and a constraint requiring creative adaptation. The arts sector has seen a continued widening of views regarding where artistic work is offered, from plays staged on subway platforms to jazz concerts in abandoned breweries. Siting art in unexpected places re-contextualizes the experience and attracts audiences that might not attend a conventional venue. Moreover, a new generation of artists is creating work for spaces that are free from historical expectations of what can, or should, appear. The significant financial burdens of operating arts facilities require imaginative approaches to maximize their use, while the abundance of spaces that can be adapted to arts use offers tantalizing opportunities.

**Strategy: Using offsite venues and spaces to interact with the audience on its own ground.** The site is selected to reflect the target audience, be it an immigrant community centered in a suburb, university students on campus, or young urbanites who are more comfortable in a bar or restaurant than a theater.

#### SPOTLIGHT

**Book-It Theatre's** newest literature-based theatre program, **Circumbendibus**, focused on young adult audiences and worked with venues that met three criteria: a connection to the artistic content of the work being adapted; alcohol had to be readily available; and there was opportunity to draw on the venue's existing customer base. The literary works and the venues -- a bar, a restaurant, and black box theatre in a hip neighborhood—were selected with new patrons and younger audiences in mind. The project allowed Book-It to take on written works, such as graphic novels and food writing, outside of their normal programming purview and that were appropriate to less polished production values. The logistics proved challenging but being in venues where they could not control all the environmental elements added a level of spontaneity and excitement that the staff, artists, and patrons found refreshing.

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<sup>4</sup> Brown, A. (2012). "[All the World's a Stage: Venues and settings, and the role they play in shaping patterns of arts participation.](#)" San Francisco, CA: WolfBrown.

**Strategy: Collaborating with others in a more public place, permitting new relationships to take root.** This approach often has an underlying motive of changing public perception of an urban space or neighborhood through arts activity, while linking audiences to the arts organization. The arts organization may be less concerned with gaining recognition for its brand and identity than in engaging a community and improving its health over time.

#### **SPOTLIGHT**

During its summer festival, the Wing Luke Museum of the Asian Pacific American Experience brought Canton Alley to life with fun and participatory cultural experiences outside of the museum's regular programming. In the historically significant alley adjacent to the museum, the staff tried out new approaches and lighthearted entertainment, working with artists and musicians, neighborhood restaurants and social service organizations. Together they made the Alley a destination for audiences to experience the arts and culture of the district, whether or not they entered the museum. The festivities drew a mix of residents and newcomers and furthered the organization's mission of increasing the vitality and visibility of Seattle's Chinatown/International District.

**Strategy: Changing the use of the organization's existing venue.** This can take the form of repurposing museum exhibition galleries for performing arts, holding interactive programs in staid presentation spaces, or turning spaces traditionally used for front-facing presentations into informal café-like environments.

## **Innovation Practice 4**

### **Cabling opportunities together**

Arts organizations with a strong social justice mission and ties to grassroots organizing were willing to bring together the resources of multiple players, be they fellow arts organizations, businesses, education or social service agencies. Bringing together multiple sources of activity and binding them together in some fashion can create new opportunities for engagement and participation. This differs from collaboration in that it is less about creating a new program through combining efforts and more about ecological synergy —an additive process where each organization provides its own contribution, extending the length and breadth of opportunity. This concept was explored by several grantees.

**Strategy: Creating a loose collective function bringing together leaders and participants from multiple entities around a shared constituency or audience.**

The element of democratic leadership and shared responsibility is both the backbone and challenge of this approach.

#### **SPOTLIGHT**

Five arts organizations that work with young people in Tacoma's Hilltop Neighborhood came together with a common goal to better serve the youth of this urban area through increased knowledge about and access to opportunities for arts participation. A grassroots effort, **Campus MLK** connected residents age 5 to 21 with arts opportunities through inter-organizational staff collaboration as well as online and print catalogues. Organizations involved with Campus MLK pooled their resources and networks to do outreach, marketing and community organizing that would be too costly, time intensive, and less effective if done by each organization individually. Working together they reimagined the area as a "campus" with a variety of opportunities to meet the differing needs and interests of young community members.

## Innovation Practice 5

### Integrating digital technology with strategy and programming

Grantee projects included a broad spectrum of digital technology elements from major web site redesign and social media marketing to online arts content development and video as an integral program element. Arts organizations are working to stay responsive to an ever-changing multi-platform digital environment and consumer expectations for visual information.

In the larger cultural sector we see a plethora of examples of organizations using digital tools to build participation and engage audiences. From the use of mobile devices during live events, to crowdsourcing the pieces to be played at a concert, and major programmatic initiatives such as On the Boards TV (its WEA project), arts organizations are considering how technology augments, or even drives audience participation. The INNOVATIONS projects indicate that there is ample room for more strategic thinking about the role of digital content in mission-based programming, along with continued opportunities to hone digital communication and marketing methods.

The financial and human resource demands are considerable when creating highly functional and appropriate digital tools, whether for marketing or program content. To design a website with flawless ticketing function, to collect meaningful program input, or to document a program for educational use, the necessary investment must be made to ensure full realization.

**Strategy: Instigating two-way social exchange via digital media, rather than broadcasting organizational messaging.** The marketing adage of speaking with one consistent organizational voice is being replaced by a chorus of individuals, influencers and stakeholders singing the organization's name. The line between co-creation of program content and simple information dissemination may blur.

#### SPOTLIGHT

As part of an inaugural creative residency program at **Town Hall Seattle**, a scholar and an artist became key players in the organization's online media presence. The **In Residence** program encouraged them to deepen their participation in Town Hall's multi-faceted offerings, to use these experiences to shape the content of their engagement, and to actively use social media throughout the three-month residency. This was intended to permit the two residents to use their creative and charismatic voices to establish narrative arcs and conversational threads connecting program to program, and feeding their individual creative processes during the residency period. The residents and the staff found that they needed to be proactive in generating meaningful online conversation to move beyond program information and promotion, eventually creating a fledgling virtual space where ideas percolated.

**Strategy: Seeding social media activity beyond the organization.** This may include hiring social media consultants, using artist influencers, stakeholders or event attendees to spark threads of conversation. This acknowledges the enduring value of editorial coverage over paid advertising, while wrestling with issues of control. Strategies such as posting hashtags at events provide a simple prompt with traceable threads of participation.

**Strategy: Improving and maximizing online tools.** Arts organizations increasingly create and conduct audience relationships via the web. Far beyond communicating information, the web becomes the locus of relationship building, from navigating logistics to experiencing artistic content and opening social opportunities.

#### **SPOTLIGHT**

**TeenTix** provides ticketing access to local arts events for teens but its website has to do more than serve as a box office. TeenTix conducted months of research and design to calibrate the multiple dimensions of a new website that would resonate – and function smoothly – as an enticing place for teen audiences to explore the arts. They worked with a young up-and-coming research and design firm to gather input from teens on every aspect from aesthetics to navigation. This research provided critical insights into changing patterns of online technology use by this age group.

**Strategy: Embracing video as a critical tool.** Grantees used video in both informal and highly structured ways: to document as well as to introduce, to engage and to extend relationships with participants. Arts organizations are finding video to be an increasingly powerful and essential tool in building relationships. While it is possible to record videos on myriad devices, it is still challenging for arts organizations to create high quality video that reflects the integrity of artistic work and connects with new audiences. A cell phone video can record a community encounter with an artist or an audience member’s post-play comment, but is unlikely to capture context or personal stories without the careful scripting and editing of a professional. Organizations are being more attentive to matching video quality with the intent of its use.

#### **SPOTLIGHT**

**Seattle Theatre Group** devised a strategy to use video before, during and after **Bear Witness: Voices of Strength**, a touring showcase of contemporary choreographers from four African nations. Personal narratives about the artists and background on the dances, produced by MAPP Fund International, allowed STG to build interest and connections with targeted communities of women of African heritage in the Seattle area long before the artists arrived. STG then produced high quality video capturing the breadth of the program’s impact on communities as the choreographers traveled around the city, teaching classes and workshops, participating in community dinners and panel discussions. The completed video is an episode of STGtv on the organization’s website and allows the communities involved, as well as new audiences, to experience Voices of Strength again and again.

## **Innovation Practice 6**

### **Combining arts content with socializing**

Grantees experimented with enhancing the social aspect of live events, creating events where art-making is a dynamic element that sparks dialogue and exchange between attendees. This builds on the larger growth of a DIY (do it yourself) culture in which audiences, especially younger audiences, are eager to engage in more interactive ways.<sup>5</sup> For years, arts organizations have experimented with adding social

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<sup>5</sup> Gilbride, S., Brown, A., Novak-Leonard, J. (2011). “Getting In On the Act: How arts groups are creating opportunities for active engagement.” The James Irvine Foundation.

value to arts experiences as a way to attract less knowledgeable audiences, and to enrich the experience of committed audiences.<sup>6</sup> Grantee practices align closely with the Slover Linett identified theme “Programs or activities that are social in nature should also be art-and/or content-focused,” and the work of the WEA grantees including Seattle Art Museum’s REMIX events.

**Strategy: Providing opportunities for hands-on creative activities with skilled professional artists as guides and catalysts.** Parties are a focus, especially for young adult audiences, where art-making joins entertainment and alcohol as social lubricants.

#### SPOTLIGHT

When **Bellevue Arts Museum** wanted to improve and expand the organization’s quarterly after-hours event, **BAMignite**, they matched entertainment with mission-related, hands on activities. Attendees were invited to participate in DIY crafting related to the exhibit on view. Guided by an accomplished artist, guests produced artworks they could wear as they continued to party. Likewise, the **Museum of Glass** in Tacoma gave university students an opportunity to try glass bead-making, flameworking, and fusing glass, while professional artists demonstrated glass blowing--to a soundtrack of DJs and live music, enhanced by libations. **University Night** was a party that allowed students to become viscerally familiar with the glass arts in a relaxed participatory environment.

**Strategy: Offering access to artists at pre- or post-performance social gatherings.** This may be coupled with a performance outside of a traditional venue, such as the theater lobby (rather than the stage), or a bar or restaurant.

#### SPOTLIGHT

**Seattle Symphony** gathered feedback on ways to meet the needs and interests of younger patrons in designing **MySymphony**, a discounted ticket initiative for 20 to 29 year olds. The program was intentionally kept simple to avoid competing with the already established WolfGang program targeting a slightly older and more committed audience. Instead, the Symphony added a missing rung in the ladder of patronage opportunities for young adults: discounted tickets available in advance for the young patron and a date (regardless of their age); and importantly, invitations to a selection of already occurring Symphony happy hours and special lobby events that included social access to musicians, conductors and composers.

**Strategy: Exploring how artistic content can be spontaneously developed or shaped during an arts presentation in an informal setting, encouraging interchange between audiences and artists.** Asking audience members to speak up or jot down input in the moment reduces the barrier between performer and audience, while emphasizing the social dimension.

## The True Cost and Value of Innovation

An important issue that emerged in the stories of all the INNOVATIONS projects was the price paid, especially by staff, for these projects. This does not refer to actual dollars expended by staff, but rather the effort required to advance these innovation experiments while meeting the already overextended demands of nonprofit arts organizations. Staff members expressed deep appreciation for the opportunity to have new ideas funded, yet many noted that grant funding did not cover the time demanded to add these projects on top of essential core activities.

<sup>6</sup> Harlow, B., et al. (2011) “More than just a party: How the Isabella Steward Gardner Museum boosted participation by young adults.” New York, NY: The Wallace Foundation

In *Innovation Is Not the Holy Grail*, Steelos and Mair note the complexity and demands on scarce organizational resources when pursuing innovation, compared to the more measured pace of creating incremental change to routine activities.<sup>7</sup> The siren song of innovation needs to be considered in the context of core services, and outcome expectations need to be set appropriately. Steelos and Mair also point out that “...if we evaluate innovation primarily by its outcome in the form of external impact, we may undervalue the positive internal organizational impact that comes from learning from failed innovation.” The INNOVATIONS projects certainly were not failures, and all can point to external outcomes such as attendance or enthusiastic participation. Yet, this reminds us that the greatest outcomes may be the more subtle internal shifts that allow artists and arts administrators to see new possibilities and re-imagine the future.

## PROJECT PROFILES

The following section provides a deeper look at the thirteen ArtsWA INNOVATIONS grants. The story of each organization’s experience is based on the information gathered by the consultants through two meetings held at the organization with individuals associated with the project (listed in Appendix A), the documentation materials submitted, and additional review and input by members of that organization’s project team.

Each profile starts with the list of Project Goals as stated by the organization to ArtsWA. This is followed by a Snapshot that provides an overview of the organization’s intent and process, as well as some of the challenges encountered in carrying out the project. The section titled Project Recipe offers a listing of key elements that can inform other organizations that may wish to undertake a similar project. Each organization reflected on the project experience and the lessons learned over the six-month period. The What Changed section describes where the organization felt it was at the end of the grant period, and indicated possible future efforts or directions to carry this work forward. Links to the organization’s website and project-related URLs are included at the end of each profile.

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<sup>7</sup> Christian Steelos and Johanna Mair, “Innovation Is Not the Holy Grail,” *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, vol. 10, no. 4 (2012)

## Organization: A Contemporary Theatre (ACT)

### Project: The Ramayana Ambassadors

#### Project Goals

1. Deepen understanding of a single art work or series by working collaboratively with creators, facilitators and observers in shared experience.
2. Build a new model for producing theater that integrates multiple collaborative and relevant programs that relate to the Ramayana performance.
3. Develop and activate the Ambassadorship program to build relationships in the target communities.
4. Plan for retaining relationships with new audiences from Southeast Asian communities.

#### Snapshot

Seattle's A Contemporary Theatre (ACT) wanted to approach the ancient and revered story of the Ramayana not only as a way to tell a fabulous tale in a new production, but also as an opportunity to stretch and interact in new ways with the community, especially Seattle area residents of Asian and Southeast Asian descent. ACT's goal was a vibrant manifestation of their mission "to raise consciousness through theatre." The first step on this journey was the creation of the Ramayana Ambassadors, a group of community members for whom the Ramayana is an iconic story. Representatives of the Indian, Vietnamese, Cambodian, Thai, and Indonesian communities in Seattle joined with members of the ACT Affiliate Artist Working Group, the ensemble charged with the task of creating ACT's Ramayana production. This collaborative team of Ramayana Ambassadors de-compartmentalized the traditional roles of artist, patron, and community supporter in the theatre process. Community members with intimate knowledge of the story played integral roles in the creation of a new theatrical production and an array of attendant activities, partnerships and relationships.

The seeds for this project and the birth of the Ambassadors predated the INNOVATIONS Grant . This grant allowed a small group of artists, board and community volunteers and ACT staff to nurture the Ambassadors concept more intensively, to grow ACT's relationships with South and Southeast Asian communities, and to bring members of those communities into the circle of Ambassadors where their knowledge and viewpoints informed the evolving production. Initially, the Ambassadors were expected to focus primarily on marketing and audience outreach. Their roles broadened as contributors to the overall Ramayana

project, sharing suggestions, opinions and insights directly with the director, actors and technical staff during the production process. As the Ambassadors group coalesced and grew, it generated significant and dynamic ideas that enriched the production in ways that would not have been possible without their participation.

In bringing such diverse individuals and communities together, the ACT staff sometimes struggled to find the best way forward. Following the departure of a staff member there was confusion and some mixed messages that led ACT to set up roundtable discussions and training in fundraising for all participating communities — something that, in the end, proved a valuable experience for all involved.



*At the Ramayana Rally at ACT. Greg Dwidjaya, Seattle-Surabaya Sister City Association; Rally guest; Carlo Scandiuzzi, ACT Executive Director; Rally guest. Photo courtesy of Greg Dwidjaya.*

The Ambassadors developed auxiliary programs to complement the Ramayana production including “Eye On” weeks focusing on different South and Southeast Asian cultures. Each week, performers and vendors from the featured community created a “marketplace” in the theatre lobby. In the months leading up to the production, performances by the 20-member Ramayana Youth Ensemble and other artists, lectures and other events were offered in partnership with arts, education and cultural organizations both onsite at ACT and elsewhere in the community. These programs were introduced at “The Ramayana Rally,” the first official event put on by the Ambassadors, five months before the production opened. More than 70 guests attended this event, which helped to build participation and anticipation.

As the opening night of Ramayana approached, the Ambassadors continued to work together, fanning out to meet one-on-one with the natural liaisons in each community. During this period of high anticipation they were uncertain if the light at the end of the tunnel was a shining conclusion or an oncoming train.

By the time the production closed in November 2012, ACT and the Ambassadors could point to some clear outcomes: a more expansive work of theatre; expanded audience reach and engagement; more press than any ACT show in 2012; overwhelming audience response resulting in the third biggest box office success in ACT’s 47-year history; and positive audience reaction to the “Eye On” weeks. However, the role of the Ambassadors was not specifically described in the printed program so the attending public probably did not appreciate the depth of this relationship and its influence on the production and larger project.

At the conclusion of the INNOVATIONS Grant period ACT counted over 1,000 new households that attended the Ramayana, exceeding their projections. More importantly, they felt that the overall project and the Ambassadors had created a rich artistic and social journey for all involved. ACT has made meaningful headway in creating their own model for making powerful works of theatre built on inclusivity.

## Project Recipe

1. Embrace the value of collective brainstorming with open eyes; prepare to allocate significantly more time when many voices are at the table. Acknowledge the fact that your organization has much to learn about specific cultural communities, their stories and their perspectives.
2. Acknowledge the fact that your organization has much to learn about specific cultural communities, their stories and their perspectives.
3. Break a large production concept (and daunting budget total) into phases and workshops so that the costs are incremental, and build elements of the project over time.
4. Identify and encourage a few key individuals who “get it” to build a group of ambassadors.
5. Stay the course in gaining trust with different communities, and enjoy the ride when building relationships that take unexpected paths. Identify a point person from your staff who flourishes in that role and who is empowered to make decisions and take action.
6. Be prepared to handle language barriers. Find timely and respectful ways to communicate.
7. Be willing to turn timelines and the whole building into something elastic – standard theater processes are not likely to be appropriate.

## What Changed

ACT staff and the Ambassadors expressed a sense of a complex and rewarding journey of discovery through the many facets of the Ramayana project. The benefits of having a committed set of Ambassadors were acknowledged as key to bridging and building lasting relationships with the region's South and Southeast Asian communities, especially recent immigrants.

A core group of Ambassadors are eager to continue an active role and plan to meet every three to four months in support of ACT's commitment to build on this experience. ACT is weighing a number of ways to work closely with the Ambassadors to maintain their newly established relationships with South and Southeast Asian communities. These may include expanding on the Ramayana story, strengthening ACT's commitment to present contemporary works by playwrights from these communities, and/or exploring other pan-Asian epics for future production. The Ramayana Ambassadors will become "ACT Theatre Ambassadors" and will have a new, ongoing role.

Both the larger Ramayana project and the Ambassadors' roles fundamentally changed the rhythm of theatrical production and internal organization for ACT. The staff sees this as a welcome, if challenging, direction that they are committed to exploring more fully in the coming years.



*Eye On Indonesia Table, ACT Theatre lobby. Photo by Greg Dwidjaya.*

## More Information

A Contemporary Theatre: [www.acttheatre.org](http://www.acttheatre.org)

Ramayana production: [www.acttheatre.org/Tickets/OnStage/Ramayana](http://www.acttheatre.org/Tickets/OnStage/Ramayana)

Video featuring some of the Ramayana Ambassadors: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=QYsvP\\_hGvZk](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QYsvP_hGvZk)

## Organization: Bellevue Arts Museum

### Project: BAMignite

#### Project Goals

1. Create engaging and meaningful cross-disciplinary experiences for ethnically diverse and young audiences.
2. Strengthen BAM's perception as a vibrant cultural institution that values community, creativity and participation.
3. Expand BAM's reach on social media platforms and in the blogosphere.
4. Build long-term relationships with new audiences and entice repeat visitation and membership.
5. Build internal buy-in and collaboration.

#### Snapshot

Bellevue is often assumed to be a white suburban oasis. In reality, more than 30 percent of Bellevue residents are foreign born, representing a panoply of ethnicities, and a burgeoning high tech work force that includes young people of many races in a rapidly urbanizing downtown. Bellevue Arts Museum is determined to engage with this population. The museum has developed a strong reputation for high quality exhibitions that embrace the worlds of craft and design. BAM staff needed to find new ways to communicate, to introduce and to welcome newcomers to the museum, especially non-whites among the young professionals living in Bellevue. BAMignite was launched in 2008 to attract young professionals and people interested in sharing experiences in a creative environment. While not rigidly focused on an age range or ethnicity, the event was designed with younger adults in mind. With the support of the INNOVATIONS Grant, the museum was in position to test new event content and communication tools, as they built BAMignite into an ongoing event.

The November 2012 BAMignite event was a late-night party infusing the museum's exhibitions with music, performance art and interactive experiences. Approximately 475 guests enjoyed music by well-known KEXP DJs, a rising indie band, circus arts spectacles, spoken word performances, hands on art making, as well as a cash bar and tasty bites from a food truck. The crowd was decidedly more diverse than BAM's general attendance.

A key strategy was intensive use of social media communication before, during and after the event, to reach a younger demographic less familiar with the museum.

With the grant support, BAM's staff worked with a social media consultant; that relationship was essential since staff time, fluency and expertise would have been difficult to ramp up adequately. Twitter, Storify, Facebook, YouTube and other tools were used. Live Tweets by attendees during the event underscored the centrality of these modes with this audience. Social media also extended the life of the event. A sample blog post: "I walked through the doors of BAM into a chic, open gallery, with the KEXP DJ's pumping out techno. I was immediately back in a European disco on a cold winter's night, feeling very inspired. Bonus: I wasn't the only one in sequins and feathers." Comments like this demonstrated the event's success in shifting the museum's identity.



Guests at the August BAMignite enjoy local groove band Marmalade. The event celebrated BAM's exhibition of *Bold Expressions: African American Quilts from the Collection of Corrine Riley*. Photo By Derya San Phot



*November BAMignite attendees participate in an art-making activity inspired by the dress code “Put a Bird On It,” a tie-in to current exhibitions. Guests wore their felt creations throughout the evening. Photo by Derya San Photography*

This event put a spotlight on strengths and challenges within BAM. Staff time is a precious commodity, and the pressures for marketing, events and development staff were twofold: to create a memorable and vibrant event; and to engage other museum departments including education and curatorial so that they also “owned” the event, for the short term and for the future. The INNOVATIONS Grant helped to raise the profile of BAMignite within the museum, and to legitimize the initiative. Immediate benefits of were the success of the event and the simultaneous exposure for the exhibitions. The long-term benefits were less clear. Staff changes shortly after the November event left the museum with less institutional experience to build future BAMignite events. There is potential for building a new event leadership team since a wider cross section of staff was involved in the planning and execution than with previous events. Performers, vendors and attendees were excited and proud to be a part of the evening and this bodes well for expanding the event’s reputation.

## Project Recipe

1. Distribute event creation and production responsibilities beyond marketing and development staff to engage the entire organization right from the beginning. It is hard to gain that traction retroactively.
2. Contract with outside social media expertise to expand your communications reach, and to jump-start and augment internal staff skills.
3. Anticipate how you’ll carry forward any social media efforts put in place by contract experts. Identify which staff or volunteer positions can appropriately take on such roles.
4. Be realistic about staff viewpoints while stretching internal engagement in audience participation initiatives.
5. Never undervalue word-of-mouth (even if virtual) among audiences.
6. Carefully select your artistic presenters and vendors to embody the quality, image and tone you hope to convey, and nurture those relationships for mutual success

## What Changed

BAM experienced growth in interdepartmental collaboration through the process of planning and implementing this project. The INNOVATIONS Grant allowed them to expand marketing and programming efforts over the course of two events, which brought together more key players from other departments in the planning and execution stages. This, however, did not translate into top-level support for the continuation of the project, as evidenced by the move to cut BAMignite out of the 2013 budget. The data from the August and November events created enough support to reinstate BAMignite for April 2013 but its future will depend on how the new Director of Marketing and PR decides to allocate budget resources.

By expanding outreach through social media and engaging high caliber artists in the event programming, the project increased BAM's visibility among the targeted community. The event has a rising reputation and there is potential for continued growth by prioritizing partnership with other organizations and sponsorships. The BAM presence in social media was increased around the time of the event but it is too early to say whether these were long-term gains in terms of the relationships and attention that such activity may promise.

## More Information

Bellevue Arts Museum: [www.bellevuearts.org](http://www.bellevuearts.org)

BAMignite Promotional Video: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=wsWu1BPu83M](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wsWu1BPu83M)



Screenshot of August 2012 BAMignite promotional video on BAM's YouTube channel, posted on the website and sent out in e-blasts. Video by A Real Grip

## Organization: Book-It Repertory Theatre

## Project: Circumbendibus, Book-It Takes a Detour

### Project Goals

1. Expand Book-It's core audience to include more young adults, defined as 18-35 year olds.
2. Produce three 90-minute multi-media events off-site.
3. Internal impact: evaluate if/how the work done in this experimental series influences our other artistic and administrative work.
4. Select content through young adult participation in the form of focus groups.
5. Market and communicate with young adult audiences, using social media.
6. Incorporate real-time audience feedback.

### Snapshot

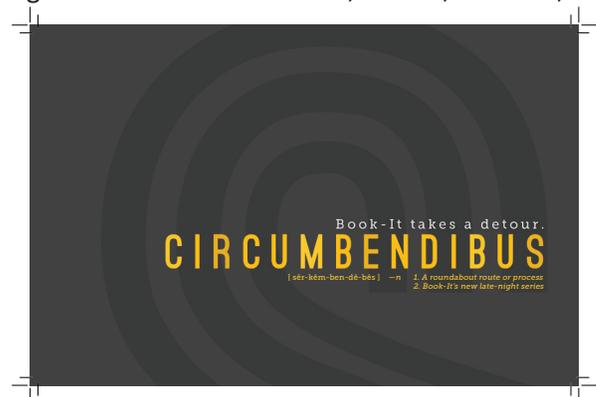
The titles of the three volumes of Book-It Repertory Theatre's Circumbendibus program—Junkies, Foodies, and Geeks— signaled the organization's intent to go beyond their usual sphere of producing theater closely based on noted works of literature. For their INNOVATIONS Grant Book-It selected current fiction, food writing, new media and graphic novels as the literary genres to create site-specific theatrical interpretations and advance the 23-year old organization's goal of reaching a new audience of young adults. The organization's staff saw this effort as a type of detour and was curious to push the boundaries in terms of literary content as well as to create productions that took them outside of their usual modes and physical location. As a theatre specializing in the medium of literature, the organization felt an urgency to explore emerging forms of the written word as books become digitalized, reformatted and replaced.

Book-It's staff had these issues in mind when they put the wheels in motion to produce three late night literary theatre events under the program title Circumbendibus (a word meaning a roundabout route or process, a detour). They convened focus groups of young adults to gauge interest and sharpen their focus. Based on the feedback from these focus groups the organization selected three topics and put production teams in place to present two-night productions. The three productions, Jesus's Son, The Hunger Lounge, and Geek Out targeted a young adult audience and were slated to take place in a bar, a restaurant, and an all-ages venue.

When looking for off-site venues to host the events, Book-It looked to places that attracted the targeted demographic but also connected to the artistic content of the productions.

For the Hunger Lounge, for example, Book-It partnered with renowned Seattle chef Tom Douglas to produce the event in his flagship restaurant, the Dahlia Lounge. Finding venues that could accommodate two nights of theater, and offer workable space and logistics proved much more challenging than expected. Securing licenses to use the copyrighted material and getting the best artists, casts and crew was hard to accomplish in the six month INNOVATIONS Grant period. This project demanded great flexibility as well as artistic and logistical compromise. Producing three entirely distinct productions in the time frame proved to be an ambitious plan.

Book-It created a Circumbendibus brand and debated marketing strategies that would be edgy enough to reach new audiences without alienating their long time supporters. Aside from one postcard that introduced the series to its base and a couple of posters at each performance venue, the staff eschewed analog marketing in favor of a digital and social media campaign targeting a younger audience. Postings were made on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and



Circumbendibus logo. Design by Shannon Erickson



*Geek Out Rehearsal. Photo by Truman Buffett*

Book-It's website about each installment of the series. Blog posts, project photos and promotional videos were used to generate buzz.

Book-It sold out nearly every performance of *Circumbendibus*. The crowd reflected a mixture of the younger audience they hoped to reach and Book-It veterans. The strong interest and enthusiasm of regular audiences members and subscribers was not anticipated. With the help of their partners' marketing, social media, and simple things like sidewalk sandwich boards, Book-It attracted people who knew little or nothing about the organization in advance. In their bar and restaurant productions, Book-It's reach extended beyond the theatrical audience to the

regular venue patrons, giving the organization a rare opportunity to put their work in front of completely new people. Though it is hard to measure the tangible impact of this informal contact on audience numbers, Book-It is interested in the value of such encounters as a tool in building awareness and possible future arts participation.

In venues that provided lively interactive opportunities, Book-It had ambitions of using real-time feedback from the audience during the shows, but the tight timeframe didn't allow for the creative teams to develop those opportunities. The staff and artists realized that to successfully incorporate live feedback, it had to be woven into the artistic fabric. In the short project period they were unable to develop mechanisms that were fully integrated via technology or even simpler methods. They were reluctant to introduce anything that might come off as cliché, or might make such participation appear to be a trite marketing hook. They experimented with feedback during one of the productions by asking audience members to write down and share a six-word toast as part of *The Hunger Lounge*; it was an intriguing start. Book-It is motivated to keep working with the idea.

Though Book-It established the program as a series, each event was truly a discreet production complete with its own content, artists, production team, and marketing. The organization pushed itself to let the performances be a little rough around the edges, to work with new artists, and to give them more autonomy. The amount of administrative work and resources that each show required was taxing for such a short run. For Book-It staff, pulling off *Circumbendibus* demanded more than they expected and they are now acutely aware of the funding and staff resources required, yet are determined to keep *Circumbendibus* going.

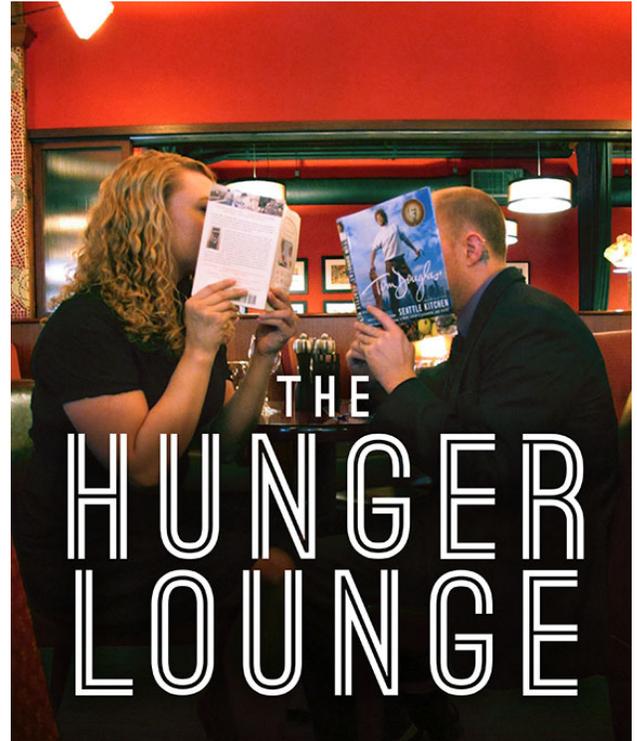
## Project Recipe

1. Bring your team together. It will be most successful and rewarding if the entire staff is invested and curious about the journey, and willing to pitch in.
2. Solicit input from your target audience in advance so it helps shape your programming.
3. Make sure the program content and promotional materials are aligned and reflect the target audience demographic.
4. Work with enthusiastic and willing artists who are passionate about the work.
5. Choose venues and partners that have a direct connection to the artistic content of the program and can bring in their own audiences.
6. Create layers of marketing that can find their way to a variety of possible audiences as well as your core audience (e.g. video trailers, flyers, ads in local publications with arts listings and reviews.)
7. Think carefully about how you might sustain these efforts, and how they can influence your regular programming, marketing or planning.

## What Changed

Book-It's staff believe they have found a dynamic way to respond to the evolution of literature and literacy. The project gave them a framework to go out of bounds and let their more playful side emerge, which harkened back to the organization's early days—something they were seeking to recapture. In experimenting with venue and real-time participation, Book-It staff let the artistic content be their guidepost and realized they have keys into a new and exciting participatory process—one that will take time and development to function as they envision.

The productions not only reached new audience members but also provided something fresh and exciting to its committed patrons. Book-It's staff was reminded that taking artistic risks is incredibly rewarding and a key part of their mission. In creating a program for younger audiences, the organization was also able to create opportunities for younger artists and leadership opportunities for younger staff members. Producing shows off-site highlighted the organization's long-standing questions around venue, while helping them understand the significant demands of short-term non-theatrical performance spaces. In making Circumbendibus, Book-It created a new program model that the organization is committed to exploring more fully.



*Hunger Lounge promotional image: pictured Amalia Larson and Nick Chamberlain. Photo and design by Shannon Erickson*

## More Information

**Book-it Repertory Theatre:** [www.book-it.org](http://www.book-it.org)

**Circumbendibus:** [book-it.org/circumbendibus/](http://book-it.org/circumbendibus/)

**Book-It Blog:** [book-it.org/2012/10/making-the-detour/](http://book-it.org/2012/10/making-the-detour/) -

**Circumbendibus Promotional Video:**

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=h03cK0l7mec&list=UUhrZ1CL6\\_V7Pqrgd5s23nvg&index=5&feature=plcp](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h03cK0l7mec&list=UUhrZ1CL6_V7Pqrgd5s23nvg&index=5&feature=plcp)

## Organization: Campus MLK

### Project: Campus MLK

#### Project Goals

1. Build program access for youth 13 to 18 in the Hilltop area across arts organizations.
2. Build and strengthen relationships between participating arts organizations.
3. Youth and Campus MLK team members work together to create a campus “course catalog” and communications across media.
4. Participating organizations increase knowledge and tools for reaching youth and community populations.
5. Youth 13 to 18 are more aware of arts resources in the neighborhood.

#### Snapshot

A group of mostly unpaid arts organizers and nonprofit directors met weekly in a small storefront on Martin Luther King Jr Way in Tacoma’s Hilltop neighborhood to look for ways to cable together cultural offerings for youth living in the area. The Hilltop Neighborhood, entered in the National Register of Historic Places, has a rich cultural fabric and bears characteristics of many urban neighborhoods. It is touted for its diversity and its plethora of social, educational, and cultural services. It is home to many of the city’s economically disadvantaged families and has historically struggled with significant crime and gang related violence. A core group of Hilltop organizations provide youth with diverse cultural programs including writing, dance, performing arts, popular music, street art, and journalism. Leaders from these organizations saw an opportunity to strengthen their collective impact on area youth.

The INNOVATIONS Grant was an opportunity to take an emerging idea and give it more concrete shape and form as Campus MLK. The project was sponsored by Shunpike (as fiscal agent), and was an outgrowth of Shunpike’s work in Tacoma under a previous Arts Participation Leadership Initiative grant under the Communities of Practice program. The goal was for neighborhood residents ages 5 to 21, and their caretakers, to become more aware of and connected to the art resources in their community. Two main strategies were envisioned: 1) creating a printed “course catalog” of neighborhood organizations and their program offerings, and 2) hosting and supporting free local events bringing the organizations and their audiences together through collaborative programming and marketing.



*A young breakdancer from Fab-5 performs at the Campus MLK Stage at Tacoma’s First Night New Years celebration. Photo by Scott Haydon*

gets, Campus MLK depended heavily on the INNOVATIONS Grant funds. When grant funding was delayed it had a direct impact on certain aspects of the project including the capacity to commit to a printed catalog. However, the grant was a catalyst for the collective to build new and powerful connections and it spurred ongoing meetings among the service providers. They continue to identify projects that can be undertaken at a low-resource level, and to know each other better and create stronger bonds.

Using in-person outreach and an online survey, the collective identified 27 Hilltop community and greater Tacoma area arts organizations interested in participating in the

course catalog. Campus MLK formed a youth advisory group of students representing the core organizations. Campus MLK also participated in and promoted free community events that attracted hundreds of attendees such as “Hip Hop in the Park” and the “First Night” New Year’s Eve celebration. Additionally, core Campus MLK organizations like the DASH Center for the Performing Arts, Fab-5 and Write@253 held open houses and used the network to spread the word and expand their reach. Though Campus MLK used social media for promotion and tracked their organizing progress publicly on a blog, they made inroads into the community primarily through word-of-mouth information sharing and in-person relationship building.

A community forum held part way through the grant period provided illuminating feedback. Though attendees suggested plenty of improvements, overall they felt that Campus MLK was a networking service that was necessary and did not exist elsewhere. People who had been part of prior initiatives to create coalitions of arts and social services in the neighborhood felt that Campus MLK was getting better traction and momentum. The collective leadership felt taxed and recognized that six-months was not enough time to get a new initiative fully off the ground. Perceiving the benefits of a democratic leadership structure, they resisted folding Campus MLK into an existing organization but acknowledged the need for infrastructure and a paid staff liaison. Though the collective stayed focused on their

primary goal to create, print, and distribute a course catalogue, the members realized that there was equal if not more value in acting as a neighborhood conduit, bringing organizations together through forums and events. Because the unifying element was the youth of the neighborhood and not one particular organization, art form or program, the collective leadership has developed a new perspective. They were able to think about and support participating youth in a more multidimensional fashion, almost like school advisors. They found new opportunities to encourage youth in important ways, through the arts, to identify other needs, and to direct young people towards appropriate community resources.

As the grant period came to a close, Campus MLK was behind on its print deadline but still moving steadily forward with the creation and distribution of the course catalog. The collective created mini-profiles of the featured organizations and secured a local printing partner to help them release the catalogue in the spring of 2013. Campus MLK plans to host an “Orientation Day” to launch the catalog, and to invite the neighborhood into the organizations and share with them the programs available in their area. Promotional outreach will be primarily door-to-door and face-to-face as all the organizations involved see this tried and true organizing method as key to making arts participation in the area more viable and welcoming.

## Project Recipe

1. Think locally. Campus MLK leaders realized that though there were many cultural organizations in, or serving, the Hilltop area, they often functioned in silos. They came together with the goal of making their organizations visible and accessible to youth in their immediate neighborhood.
2. Strive for consistency. Meeting in person as a leadership team on a consistent basis provided the foundation for new levels of trust and support.
3. Bring the youth you seek to serve into the mix. Give them an active role in shaping the programs for themselves and their peers. They know their community in essential ways. Both formal and informal roles are valuable.
4. Explore the power of shared leadership, resources and responsibility across organizations to build meaningful relationships. Even if a project proves to be short term, the relationships are a foundation for important future opportunities



Representatives of 14 local arts organizations gathered for the November 2012 Campus MLK Neighborhood Forum at Write@523.  
Photo by Katy Evans

## What Changed

Through the Campus MLK collective's organizing efforts, leaders of individual organizations have new connections to like-minded colleagues serving the area. The new relationships provide support and resources that are enlivening programming through cross-pollination. Young people served through Campus MLK organizations are tracked and served more holistically. Community members in the area are more aware of the activities that are available to them and their families.

As a start-up, Campus MLK must address many infrastructure issues if the program is to match the interests and resources available in the community. Whether the group becomes a full-blown nonprofit or stays an informal network, it has established a foundation for strong working relationships that can better serve the neighborhood and invite the community, especially youth, to be active participants in the area's cultural happenings.

## More Information

Campus MLK Blog: [campusmlk.wordpress.com](http://campusmlk.wordpress.com)

DASH Center for the Arts: [www.thedashcenter.org/](http://www.thedashcenter.org/)

Write@253: [write253.wordpress.com/](http://write253.wordpress.com/)

Fab-5: [www.fab-5.org/](http://www.fab-5.org/)

post defiance (online magazine): [postdefiance.com/](http://postdefiance.com/)

## Organization: Frye Art Museum

### Project: Mw[Moment Magnitude]

#### Project Goals

1. Employ a collective curatorial model with contemporary local artists among the collective.
2. Welcome targeted communities into the Frye's creative process – especially artists across disciplines, youth, and young adults.
3. Stretch the internal capacity of organization to support a new curatorial practice.
4. Value the process as highly as the product, opening up the range of artistic possibilities among the participating artists, and their audiences.

#### Snapshot

The Frye Art Museum, Seattle's only free art museum, was established in 1952 to provide access to the collections of Seattle philanthropists Charles and Emma Frye and to present exhibitions of local, national, and international art. Located in Seattle's First Hill neighborhood, the museum is situated between sprawling hospital and research complexes to the north and a 22-acre model public housing development, Yesler Terrace, to the south. Known until recently primarily for its collection of 19th and early 20th century paintings from Germany, France, and America, the Frye has changed direction in the last few years. It has opened itself to its immediate neighborhood through community engagement programs. It has presented international exhibitions based on the museum's collections, bringing new perspectives to them, and has developed a renewed attention to contemporary exhibitions and local artists. The INNOVATIONS Grant provided an opportunity for the museum to further explore the realm of post-disciplinary, performance and installation-driven programming with a new curatorial approach, and to stretch its reach beyond

the museum's walls and the confines of traditional visual art practices.

With the Curatorial Collective the Frye chose to give over the conventional singular curatorial authority to an intergenerational and multidisciplinary collective consisting of a poet, performance artist, composer, and two visual arts curators based in Seattle. The museum asked them to reach out to upcoming and well-established artists in all disciplines working in Seattle; to commission new work and present iconic works of the past; and to bring the community, including Yesler Terrace youth, into the fold. In planning and presenting an exhibition and related programs, the Frye was open to breaking every rule in the museum book and any barrier to entry and participation. What is visual art? Why is process hidden? What makes people feel a part of art? Why can't the resource of museum space serve a multitude of art processes that offer rich visual and experiential events? The organizing principles were three-fold: 1) Diversify the disciplines exhibited in the museum (and audiences reached) by diversifying the curators—the fields they represent, and the communities to which they are connected. 2) Invert the practice of a temporary exhibition that doesn't change. Erase long preparation and decision-making times and embrace a constant state of flux and the extreme complexities of conflating different disciplines and working practices. 3) Stay true to the museum's core obligation of being responsible for the objects in the galleries. Place the processes and events in the galleries and treat them with the same regard as any other object or collection being exhibited.

The ensuing assemblage of activities, events and presentations at the Frye was titled Mw [Moment Magnitude], mirroring the name of the seismological



*The Curatorial Collective: Jo-Ann Birnie Danzker, Doug Nufer, Ryan Mitchell, Joshua Kohl, and Yoko Ott. Photo by John Ulman*

scale that measures the size of earthquakes in terms of energy released. Visual art experienced as “performance, production, rehearsals, specially commissioned artworks, music, dance, literary events, design, and arts engagement programs showcasing exceptional artistic practice in Seattle” created an almost overwhelming assortment of opportunities to engage with the Frye in a four-month period. One curatorial collective member compared the scale of Mw to that of a biennial.

Twenty-three events and 70 event days of Mw took place within the INNOVATIONS Grant period, from October 12 to December 31, attracting approximately 17,400 visitors and participants, of whom an estimated 47% were under the age of 30. (There were a total of 33 events, 93 event days and 22,445 visitors for the entire exhibition period October 12 to January 20.) Mw included such spectacles as rehearsals by a 35-person orchestra, a multimedia contemporary dance company, a commissioned light installation, and concerts by upcoming solo and group pop artists. Beyond these performances, objects and installations in the galleries, Mw offered talks, demonstrations and participatory activities with local multi- and cross-disciplinary artists, many with national and international reputations. Each event was complete with its own title, marketing thrust, unique production demands (many that were unusual and outside of the museum’s normal capability), and complex organizational issues calling on the complete involvement of every department of the museum. This required staff members to often work extended hours; to transform the Museum’s infrastructure to meet technical challenges; to troubleshoot problems and sidestep “normal” procedures and communication channels; in short, to rise to the challenge.

To engage young people in the neighboring community, the Curatorial Collective initiated a participatory teen program in collaboration with the RecTech program at the Yesler Terrace Community Center. Nine teens were recruited to co-create a sound installation exhibited during Mw called Intangible Effects (No.1). Through weekly meetings led by an educator and artist, Intangible Effects (No. 1) engaged the participants to record, edit and shape the sounds of the Yesler Terrace community. When the work was installed, the Frye hosted an opening and community celebration, providing a chance for Intangible Effects (No.1) to be in dialogue with other programming in Mw. Through follow up interviews, the Frye staff was encouraged to learn that the program had made the museum visible and accessible to young people who lived nearby but who had no prior relationship to it. The community celebration also offered an opportunity for Yesler residents and the families of the youth to meet with Museum staff and to state their express desire for the project to continue in some form.

Throughout Mw the museum attracted robust audience numbers, intergenerational audiences and many repeat visitors, some staying for long periods of time. The museum’s director and her co-curators in the Collective emphasized that they felt able to undertake such a large-scale project with ambitions to engage highly diverse audiences and communities deeply and repeatedly because the museum itself is free. This made it possible for people to come and go—to see part of a rehearsal or performance, to take in the process and product. It let the audience control the depth



*Zoe Scofield in rehearsal with company members of zoe | juniper at the Frye. photo by Malcolm Smith*

of engagement they wanted and offered them the unique opportunity to participate in an ongoing dialogue around an ever-shifting collection of objects, performances, events, and installations.

Mw [Moment Magnitude] captured an important slice of time in Seattle’s contemporary art scene and provided a laboratory for the community to see and learn from itself. Though the logistical elements of producing time-based work in a museum are challenging, simply placing multidisciplinary artists of various generations inside the museum gave them an opportunity to consider their work in a different light and – according to the artists themselves – for the work itself to be re-contextualized as “art” rather than “entertainment” which is often viewed at a distance on a proscenium stage or in bars and theaters. In doing this, the museum attracted new attention from music and performance press and experienced exceptional coverage throughout the program.

The staff is well aware that with the success of this project come new expectations. Moving forward, they have to address how the Frye can continue to engage their new audiences. Their challenge now is how to incorporate the skills, learning and excitement of Mw in their ongoing programs, and how to take long-term care of the valuable relationships they have created.

## Project Recipe

1. Select exceptional artists and curators to work together as a collective to create a shared vision and to initiate new curatorial practices. Have complete trust in their expertise and competence.
2. Bring together the supposedly incompatible systems of different disciplines and upset the stability of the usual museum experience.
3. Provide support and infrastructure to the curatorial collective to bring their vision to life while maintaining all financial, legal, and production responsibility. If possible, do this through additional staff (project and production managers).
4. Focus staff energy on optimism and stamina. Encourage each member to be quick and independent-minded about problem solving while staying in communication with all affected parties.
5. Create highly flexible infrastructure and establish clear communication channels.

## What Changed

With its intense burst of energy, action, and creation, Mw [Moment Magnitude] shifted the Frye's operations toward greater flexibility. This change was based on a newfound deep sense of trust among the staff in their abilities to effectively support an extremely wide range of artistic production. Calling on the highest caliber of work from the curators, artists and staff involved, coupled with its non-stop demands on time, Mw increased the metabolism of the museum, literally building the endurance and stamina of staff and creating new skill sets around hybrid exhibit/event based production.

The project proved the viability of a curatorial model which features multiple voices and perspectives in selecting and producing programming. Connections between disciplines and organizations within the Seattle contemporary arts community were established and reinforced through the constant opportunities for sharing and cross-pollination during the program. An ongoing rapport with new inter-generational audiences was established along with new expectations and commitments that the Frye will continue to serve both the arts community and its neighborhood in a meaningful way. Though the staff at the Frye was stretched

thin, Mw created an opportunity to see what is possible when a series of experiments collide simultaneously. Since the rewards and accomplishments were exceptional, this has strengthened the desire to do more – to continue to expand and learn new skills and to create stronger bonds between the creators, producers, supporters and participants in contemporary art making.



*Intangible Effects (No. 1) lead artist Tad Hirsch making sound boxes with student. photo by Laura O'Quin*

## More Information

**Frye Art Museum:** [fryemuseum.org/momentmagnitude](http://fryemuseum.org/momentmagnitude)

**RecTech, Seattle Parks Department:** [rectech.seattle.gov/](http://rectech.seattle.gov/)

**Yesler Community Center:** [www.seattle.gov/parks/centers/yeslercc.htm](http://www.seattle.gov/parks/centers/yeslercc.htm)

## Organization: Museum of Glass, Tacoma

### Project: College Connections

#### Project Goals

1. Bring mobile glass hot-shop to young people where they live and study through University campuses.
2. Engage student advisors to determine related programming and social media strategies.
3. Create and hold a University Night art and social event at the Museum.
4. Rejuvenate and strengthen university/college faculty and staff ties.
5. Cultivate lasting communication pathways to colleges and universities.

#### Snapshot

Where are the university students? Many museums, like the Museum of Glass (MOG,) have built dynamic education and engagement strategies focused on K- 12 students and additional adult education offerings often drawing those with graying hair. MOG offers an educational element compelling for all ages: live glass blowing by noted artists, with a highly trained studio crew as well as docents explaining the awe-inspiring process. They have both an amphitheater style onsite hot shop and a mobile working hot shop. Although the museum is situated within ten miles of three universities, college age audiences remain elusive.

The two-person education department at MOG wanted to take action to fill what they felt was an audience hole for MOG today, and in the future. They felt strongly that it was time to look further than one-time events to revitalize and strengthen connections between MOG and universities in and around Tacoma. Not only did they want university students to experience glass art, they believed that there was much they and other museum departments needed to hear and learn from these students to fulfill the museum's mission. The INNOVATIONS Grant provided a way to bring the voices and fresh perspectives of young adults into MOG.

A first and integral step was the creation of a University Student Museum Advisory Committee (USMAC.) Two initial projects were identified to enlist student committee members' support and help in shaping: 1) bringing MOG's Mobile Hot Shop to at least two university campuses, and 2) creating a University Night event at MOG that would include hands-on glass experiences. MOG staff was well aware of the "wow" factor in seeing glass blown, but had never taken the mobile glass studio to higher education sites. On reflection, they felt MOG had become more of



*Mobile Hot Shop at University of Puget Sound. Photo by Rebecca Jones, courtesy of Museum of Glass*

an island outpost to older students who were expected to make their way to MOG using standard incentives such as reduced tickets prices. With excitement and interest from the Executive Director, and strategically targeted resources from other departments, the education staff began to try to revive or forge relationships at area universities.

The challenges of working with universities were immediately evident as staff sought to find institutional point persons who were willing and able to take the initiative to their colleagues, administration and students. Some existing contacts proved to be great conduits but many were total dead ends. Enthusiastic feedback from some studio professors and a few initial student contacts helped them persevere. Setting dates with universities is always challenging, especially for this initiative since the INNOVATIONS Grant period started during the summer



*College night participants flame-working with glass. Photo By Alice de Certo, courtesy of Museum of Glass*

break. Despite some setbacks, a nine-person USMAC was assembled and worked with the museum staff through the end of 2012.

Within the museum, the project staff asked other departments for questions or ideas they might have for the committee members, but received minimal response. College Connections was intended to be a rich, immersive and long-lasting audience development program, yet some museum staff viewed it as mere marketing. This view seemed short-sighted to the education staff.

The USMAC proved key to the success and turnout for the University Night held at the museum. For two thirds of the 150 attendees it was their first visit to the museum. They were very engaged and more than one hundred enthusiastically participated in hands on activities like bead making, flame-working and fusing glass in the museum hot shop. They also spent considerable time in the galleries, looking and talking. The staff credits the USMAC in helping them effectively design the evening and reach out to the various college communities in the area.

## Project Recipe

1. Start with a deep passion to educate and excite others about the world of your art form.
2. Understand the difference in the impact of special events, even reoccurring ones, versus more reciprocal types of relationships with a community.
3. Prioritize and allocate the precious resource of time carefully. Allow enough time to research, handle logistics, communicate consistently and document your progress. These efforts will help build support for future projects internally and externally.
4. Mix patience, hope and perseverance in equal measure when working with higher education systems. A healthy dose of flexibility is essential. Keep in mind that colleges and universities are complex bureaucracies.
5. Make ongoing efforts to enfranchise—or at least inform-- your institution's other staff and board, even if they are not immediate cheerleaders or participants.
6. Think carefully about advisory group continuity over time, especially with students who will “age out”. Make sure you have clarity of focus for young advisors so they know what it is you want them to do.
7. Offer a variety of online communication pathways (Facebook, Wiggio, e-mail, Twitter) to make your program accessible to young advisors and audiences.

## What Changed

The museum now has an active advisory group of college and university students who have proven capable of providing valuable insight and support in reaching their peers. Their assistance helped MOG craft a replicable format for future University Nights at the museum. Working with this group also taught MOG that this audience appreciates the museum and is interested in engaging. It helped the staff recognize things that would facilitate that relationship: better information on internships, better website information specifically for college students, and new programming reflecting their interests.

The benefits and challenges of taking the MOG mobile hot shop to college campuses are now well understood. Future efforts can build on what has been learned about navigating the bureaucracy, logistics and scheduling concerns of higher education institutions and meld that with the insights from their youth advisors.



*Artist Educator Conor McClellan speaks to a group of college students at the Museum's College Night event. Photo by Alice Di Certo, courtesy of Museum of Glass*

## More Information

**Museum of Glass:** [museumofglass.org/](http://museumofglass.org/)

**MOG Facebook page:** [www.facebook.com/museumofglass](http://www.facebook.com/museumofglass)

**Mobile glass studio page (Mobile Hot Shop):** [museumofglass.org/mobile-hot-shop](http://museumofglass.org/mobile-hot-shop)

**College Night event page:** [www.facebook.com/events/406810346046965/](http://www.facebook.com/events/406810346046965/)

## Organization: Northwest Folklife

## Project: Community Arts Engagement Mentorship Project

### Project Goals

1. Create, document and broadcast two community art showcases via video and web.
2. Work with the Somali Youth and Family Club to showcase traditional and emerging Somali arts with emphasis on ages 21 to 35.
3. Identify and learn strategies for engaging fringe ethnic communities.
4. Build a year round program model.
5. Build pathways for long-term engagement of the Somali community in regional arts programming.

### Snapshot

The annual Folklife festival on Memorial Day weekend at Seattle Center is an eagerly awaited 42-year tradition in the Northwest, a sweeping celebration of Americana, folk and other traditions of music and dance attended by as many as 250,000. Northwest Folklife works year round to produce this touchstone cultural event, and has increased outreach to new communities to share their traditions at the festival. The Community Arts Engagement Mentorship Project (CAEMP) grew from Folklife's interest in engaging cultural groups in the region who were not participating in the festival, and in particular, to respond to the interest of the growing Somali community in the Northwest.

The ambition and desire of the Somali community was to create a showcase to share within their community and to eventually present at the Folklife festival. They wished to tell the story of what it means to come to America as an immigrant from Somalia and to pass on their art and cultural traditions. Like many immigrants, the struggles they have encountered since immigration make it difficult for them to devote time to explore and create art within their community. This project was an avenue to do those things with the assistance of Folklife. This meshed well with Folklife's interests and the INNOVATIONS Grant gave them the means to develop a model for offering the resources and expertise necessary to build and present a showcase, and to document the process with audio and video recordings. Working with a new community for an intense extended amount of time was new territory for Folklife.

Key to this project was the Somali community's expressed interest, and Folklife's ability to hire a Project Coordinator from within the Somali community. Folklife was able to work with an established leader connected with

the Somali Youth and Family Club (SYFC) in Renton. This leadership role proved vital in developing the creative work and, perhaps more importantly, in building cultural bridges and communication. Early on it became clear that there were differing ideas about the vision for the showcase. Folklife was adamant about letting the community decide upon and shape the content of its showcase yet wrestled with how to convey a shared understanding of a finished product. Folklife staff learned to adapt quickly as the performance evolved, and found new ways to support the Program Coordinator and the community. Mid-way through the program a Project Committee was formed to help with the delegation of project tasks within the Somali community. In hindsight, it would have been very helpful to have this committee up and running from the start of



*Performers and community Project Coordinator Shirwa Aden rehearse their showcase, Jaleecadii Muxubada at the Somali Youth & Family Club. Photo by Kelli Faryar*

the project to, spread the work, and to broaden engagement with more community members to create a greater sense of ownership in the project.

In September, SYFC hosted the first of two showcases. Two showcases were scheduled with the hopes that experiences gained during the first performance would inform the second. After the first showcase, the performers and project committee reviewed the performance and considered improvements in the production, working with Folklife to apply that knowledge. Time between the two performances permitted the participants to significantly change and develop the content and to involve many more community members. The November performance was moved to a larger community theatre, which enhanced the experience for not only the community performers, but the audience. Bringing performers, family and other community members, project staff and videographers together for the showcases was a powerful, if sometimes chaotic success. This experience affirmed many things for the community: the importance and value of their cultural traditions, the potential to bring the community together through performance, and their ability to learn and navigate the cultural presentation system in the United States despite its differences from the system in Somalia.

CAEMP provided a template for Folklife, and they now see how elastic and flexible such a mentorship model must be. The process of evolving cultural awareness requires time and communication. The challenges of frequent visits to the SYFC site, located more than 15 miles from Folklife's Seattle offices, and the need for face-to-face time were significant. Folklife's ability to convey their knowledge and expertise in showcase development and production was greatly enhanced by the active role of a Project Coordinator deeply connected to that community and the dedication of a key Folklife staff person. Video and audio recording added challenges but proved to be a critical way to affirm the value of the project and to leverage future opportunities.

As with all mentorships, it can be hard to determine who receives the most benefit from the relationship. All parties involved experienced new cultural understanding, developed new skills, and worked through moments of frustration and confusion to achieve a shared goal. An outcome desired by all was that the Somali community be able to showcase their culture and participate in the 2013 Folklife Festival, which now is planned, and to continue to engage their community in future arts events at SYFC.

## Project Recipe

1. Be prepared to build a gradual process of cultural awareness on all sides. Learn preferred methods of communication within a community and understand the impact of traditional roles, taboos and holidays. This is fundamental to the success of the project.
2. Hire a project coordinator who is a respected member of the community and who is willing and able to tirelessly move the project forward. Their work will be further enhanced when connected to an organization in the community that provides a project home, and offers additional credibility and support.
3. Designate a point person on staff who can build and sustain these relationships.
4. Maintain fluid communication between the project coordinator, organization staff and contract team.
5. Bring an open mind to the concept and content of the cultural presentation. The community may have formats or approaches that do not fit your existing models or your expectations.
6. Learn to shift expectations around timeliness and deadlines keeping in mind that different cultures have differing norms about these concepts. Scheduling audio or video recording with outside sources increases the pressure around deadlines and structure.
7. Move away from e-mail communication. Telephone and face to face are critical. Assess (and budget for) the need for language translation services.
8. Have a plan for carrying the relationship forward after the formal mentorship is over.

## What Changed

Northwest Folklife, Somali Youth and Family Club and the Somali community in Renton all expressed significant commitment to build on the project experience. Folklife identified the need to create decision-making and management frameworks that better accommodate new programming with immigrant communities. Folklife intends to engage further with the communities it already serves, including the Somali community, to create metrics to gauge the community's need for services and Folklife's ability to offer these services. The organization sees this as a way to build its case for support for working with other immigrant communities. Folklife intends to continue to be a partner to the Somali community as it welcomes a Somali showcase at the 2013 Northwest Folklife Festival.

The Somali Youth and Family Club learned what it takes to engage its community in a large-scale arts and cultural program and this project helped the larger community rediscover its own rich cultural capacities. As a result of this project, the SYFC and others in the community have a new commitment to create opportunities for Somalis, young and old, to present and participate in their own cultural traditions. They see the value and intend to pursue opportunities to share and showcase their culture in other settings. Members of the community expressed how



*Somali community performs their showcase, Jaleecadii Muxubada at Renton's Carco Theater. Photo by Doug Plummer*

this experience opened up a new set of possibilities, and empowered them. The video and audio documentation developed as part of the INNOVATIONS Grant provided them with essential tools to connect with other sources of support. The project with Folklife provided them with new knowledge, resources and ways to navigate the American cultural system, which they now intend to pursue.

## More Information

**Northwest Folklife:** [www.nwfolklife.org](http://www.nwfolklife.org)

**Somali Youth and Family Club:** [www.youthclub.org/](http://www.youthclub.org/)

**CAEMP Project Documentary by Doug Plummer:** [www.nwfolklife.org/programs/caemp-project/](http://www.nwfolklife.org/programs/caemp-project/)

**Jack Straw Audio Pieces (Originally aired Jan. 28 – Feb. 1, 2013 on KBCS 91.3 FM)** <http://www.nwfolklife.org/listen/somali-youth-and-family-club/>

## Organization: Seattle Symphony

### Project: MySymphony

#### Project Goals

1. Program and promote four months of MySymphony membership benefits to 21 to 29 year olds.
2. Offer three concerts with post-concert social interaction with patrons, performers, live entertainment, hospitality and digital media (one event to occur during grant period, two events to occur in 2013).
3. Make MySymphony tickets available on mobile devices.
4. Refine program for further usage in the rest of the season.

#### Snapshot

**Seattle Symphony wanted to fill a gap in its audience engagement programs.** Based on feedback from younger patrons, the Symphony was missing ticketing options at a price point that matched the lower income level of 20-somethings, while allowing them the flexibility to attend one or many concerts, and to be able to plan in advance. The Symphony's existing Campus Club offers discounted rush tickets to college-aged students but these tickets can only be purchased in person just before each show. The Symphony also has a membership club, WolfGang, with special perks for individuals in their 20s and 30s who are ready to make a more serious commitment to symphony patronage. MySymphony was a nascent idea of the Executive Director and the Marketing Department for addressing this gap and the INNOVATIONS Grant permitted the Symphony to pilot the program.

MySymphony created targeted discount pricing opportunities for people ages 21-29 using online communication as a key component. The idea initially encountered internal resistance as there were concerns that the financial loss would be too great or that the new program would take away from the success of WolfGang. Despite the lack of momentum early on, the marketing team kept working on the program design and when the opportunity for the INNOVATIONS Grant arrived, they were ready to launch MySymphony. The grant funding allowed them to put a key element in place: a new Audience Development Manager. This new staff position created the capacity for managing all the pieces of a new audience-building initiative from processing sign-ups and responding to e-mail inquiries, to sending monthly notifications to members and planning targeted events. The position also handled the logistics and mechanics of offering discounted tickets via all applicable modes of sales. In hiring for this position, the Symphony

found its most qualified candidate inside the organization: an employee who had been in the ticketing office for seven years and could hit the ground running.

The grant period, June to December 2012, fell within the 2012-2013 season. During that time, the Symphony offered \$25 MySymphony tickets to 31 out of 69 of their concerts. The system was relatively simple. An individual in their 20's registered for membership in the MySymphony program by e-mailing the Audience Development Manager their birthdate. A MySymphony promotional code and login credentials were sent in reply, allowing the young patron to go directly to the Seattle Symphony's regular website, sign in, and pick any seat in one of three sections on the main floor of Benaroya Hall's Taper Auditorium for \$25 (about half the regular price for those seats). Two tick-



*Seattle Symphony Assistant Conductor Stilian Kirov, Symphony musicians, and guest DJ rehearse in preparation for a performance of Gabriel Prokofiev's Turntable Concerto, an event marketed to MySymphony members; photo by Jenna Schroeter, Seattle Symphony*

ets could be purchased, allowing them to take one guest of any age. MySymphony purchasers were also invited to attend some Symphony special events such as happy hours and concerts in the grand lobby. The Symphony simultaneously created a smart phone application for purchasing tickets, improving its appeal to twenty-somethings. The Symphony saw rapid growth from a base of 47 MySymphony members to about 350 members in only three months, which they attribute to the newly created Audience Development Manager position.

The Symphony relies mainly on social media ads and word of mouth to reach the targeted audience. Though the organization sees the program as a long term investment in audience, the quantity of members and tickets purchased is still crucial in order to offset the potential financial losses from offering extremely discounted tickets. Despite concerns from Symphony leadership, initial evaluation shows that the program is increasing revenue rather than causing a loss. The members are mostly new patrons rather than people leaving WolfGang in order to get a better deal on tickets. The new members are becoming repeat visitors and buying tickets far in advance, even for concerts where

they cannot use their MySymphony code. Because MySymphony isn't aimed at coalescing social groups to attend together (WolfGang somewhat serves that purpose), much of the marketing mirrors other Symphony campaigns and has not required new design work and branding. The current thinking is to integrate MySymphony attendees into the organization rather than siphon them off and treat them differently. As far as marketing activities, there have been advertisements on Facebook, flyers on the program placed at events at other organizations (such as the Seattle Art Museum), web ads, and mentions in Seattle Symphony advertising in local weekly newspapers.

As the program continues, it will be critical for the Symphony to automate MySymphony registration through the website. This is one of many future steps the organization sees as critical to making the process of coming to the Symphony as easy and seamless as possible for people in their twenties. Even though the program is just a few months old, the Seattle Symphony feels it has hit a sweet spot with MySymphony – finding the right ticket price and creating a flexible timeframe and system for new audience members to purchase tickets.

## Project Recipe

1. Begin designing a program to address a gap in audience engagement even before there is funding capacity, so that you are ready to respond when the opportunity arises.
2. Pull together a team from marketing, fundraising, executive, and ticketing areas of your organization to make sure the program idea pushes innovation but is grounded in what is achievable across departments.
3. Offer strong price incentives for young audience members and allow advance ticket sales so friends can make plans together.
4. Streamline the process of buying tickets so that your potential young audience members can make last minute decisions and get the tickets easily and quickly but eliminate the possibility of not being able to get tickets, as occurs with rush ticketing.
5. Find the right balance of marketing communication and extra opportunities to cater to the age demographic without overwhelming them.
6. Take advantage of existing events and programming and welcome this younger audience, reducing the burden of designing entirely new programming or events.
7. Dedicate all or a portion of a staff position to implementing, evaluating and improving the program.

## What Changed

Targeting new patrons in their twenties has increased the volume of audience members in this age bracket for the Seattle Symphony, and has allowed many current young patrons to participate more frequently. The program has received extremely positive feedback from young patrons and enables the organization to cultivate a rapport with a new group of people who can move up the ladder of patronage with the organization. The project has new and deeper support within the Symphony administration now that there is data showing that the quantity of the discounted ticket sales has outpaced budget projections.

MySymphony has influenced changes in the structure of the marketing department staff and added a new position crucial to carrying out this targeted initiative. The project has also served as a catalyst for experimentation overall with new methods of communication with concert patrons, new ticket sales techniques, and new social experiences for young audience members. The project furthered the Symphony's understanding of the limits of their current information technology systems and has set the stage



*Young Symphony patrons during intermission; photo by Klayton Kelly, Seattle Symphony*

for next generation upgrades. INNOVATIONS Grant funding for MySymphony established a level of credibility for the initiative internally and enabled it to take root inside the organization, where there is every intention of continuing the program.

## More Information

**Seattle Symphony:** [www.seattlesymphony.org](http://www.seattlesymphony.org)

**MySymphony:** [www.seattlesymphony.org/symphony/buy/MySymphony30s.aspx](http://www.seattlesymphony.org/symphony/buy/MySymphony30s.aspx)

## Organization: Seattle Theatre Group

## Project: Bear Witness: Voices of Strength

### Project Goals

1. Dedicate a position to build lasting relationships with targeted audiences of color by creating more communicative relationships in-person and with technology.
2. Engage African heritage and immigrant women from Kent and zip code 98118, especially young women, in culturally relevant programming.
3. Produce broadcast ready videos that demonstrate specific cultural relevance between noted artist and the targeted audiences.
4. Use Voices of Strength as a model program and create a white paper on working with underrepresented communities of color.

### Snapshot

Seattle Theatre Group (STG) created Bear Witness, a deep community engagement initiative to support the Seattle presentation of Voices of Strength, a multi-city tour of four dance pieces performed by eight provocative African contemporary dance artists. The INNOVATIONS Grant provided support for many dimensions of relationship building focused on three targeted communities – Somali youth in the Seattle area, young women in one of the country’s most diverse zip codes (98118 in Seattle) and associated student groups at the University of Washington. Videos of each performer presented in advance of the live performances, a master class and dance workshop, multiple pre- and post-show discussions, community collaborations and a celebratory dinner were organized as the primary elements of STG’s Bear Witness project. STG’s goal of engaging underrepresented audiences in culturally-relevant programming hinged on the organization’s ability to work cross-departmentally in unprecedented ways and to create a new position specifically for cultural engagement: a Cultural Liaison for the project.

Prior to the African dance artists’ arrival in Seattle, STG’s new Cultural Liaison used artist snapshot videos created by MAPP International to provide partner organizations and participants with insight into the visiting artists’ work. Additionally she dedicated weekly time to meet and volunteer at community partner organizations serving the Somali community, building her cultural fluency and strengthening trust. The time spent getting to know and listening to the different communities provided STG with many lessons that it immediately implemented to make the program appropriate to the targeted participants and



*Snapshot videos of each performance, as well as interviews of the dancers, were crucial when planning engagement efforts. Courtesy of MAPP International*

to heighten impact. In the case of the Somali Community Center, for example, this meant abandoning the idea of a community dance class (which would have been inappropriate to the way the Somali culture participates in dance) and instead planning an informal discussion, demonstration and community dinner. Master dance classes were instead held at a contemporary dance center in Seattle serving pre-professional dancers and at a community dance studio serving primarily young African American girls living in the neighborhoods of 98118.

The week of the Voices of Strength performances, the four dancers from Haiti/Mali, Ivory Coast, Morocco and South



*Maria Helena Pinto, a Voices of Strength dancer, doing a demonstration for youth at the Somali Community Services Coalition.  
Photo by Andrew Matson*

Africa moved through local dance centers, community centers, theaters and the University of Washington to share the story of their art-making. In addition to the audiences at the two nights of public performances in a major downtown STG venue, Bear Witness programming engaged 138 participants in new and deeper ways. Video was a valuable tool in bracketing the project. Not only did the MAPP videos serve as a way to introduce and explore the programming in advance, but professional quality video was shot by

STG throughout the entire week. A professional film crew documented the engagement and interaction of youth and adults with the performers at many sites. This coverage was used to create an STGtv episode that has a number of intended uses. It permits STG to share the experience more broadly online and in outreach programs long after the one week that the dancers were in Seattle. It also gives participants a permanent record of their experience with these dancers, and with STG, bringing them into the circle of those touched by the organization.

This engagement process was an important step towards STG's goals of building lasting relationships with targeted audiences of color and engaging African heritage and immigrant women from specific communities in culturally relevant programming. The INNOVATIONS Grant permitted STG to develop and use video to create linkage before, during and after live performance, and with the help of the project-based Cultural Liaison position, to strengthen awareness and understanding about African contemporary dance. The challenge ahead lies in building on this foundation with programming that resonates, with resources to support ongoing liaison functions, and expansion of the use of video to create and extend these connections.

## Project Recipe

1. Create an interdepartmental team to support the project holistically including members of the executive, marketing, fundraising, programming, education and production team.
2. Use technology to enhance and strengthen in-person communication rather than replace it. Show respect and investment in your community partners through face time and interest in their work.
3. Dedicate a staff person to act as cultural liaison and work as the coordinator for the interdepartmental team.
4. Be ready and willing to adapt quickly, and make sure all team members and artists understand that this is necessary to the success of the relationship.
5. Have a clear understanding of the difference between program partners and program supporters in order to have appropriate expectations and leverage the different relationships effectively.
6. Document the artist-community interactions through video so that others can benefit from the experience. Video quality should reflect and respect the high quality of the performers.
7. Bring your team together post events to evaluate, course correct, continue internal engagement and foster internal organizational change. Use follow-up meetings as opportunities for intentional transference of culturally relevant knowledge.

## What Changed

The STG cross-departmental staff that worked on the many aspects of this project have a greater appreciation for the value that such engagement projects bring to a community. Video documentation of community participants involved in the various activities made the engagement feel immediate and palpable to staff, even if they were not in attendance. The Cultural Liaison role proved critical, though the position was tied directly to the INNOVATIONS Grant funding and so has not been continued at this time.

STG now can use this experience as a way to inform internal decision-making. There is a new appreciation of the concept of “community benefit” as a measure of value for STG, and it has spurred discussions of long-term impact on the organization. It also has heightened awareness of the continuing challenges and the financial risks with programs that are not focused on near-term ticket sales, but long-term relationships.

Having many departments work together on the project created some new pathways within the organization. The post-project process of having staff members assess and evaluate the Bear Witness experience sets up opportunities for deep organizational reflection on commitment and capacity. STG now feels greater clarity on what questions need to be asked and answered going into such projects, and a realistic understanding of what it takes to try and sustain the connections and relationships begun with Bear Witness.

## More Information

Seattle Theatre Group: [www.stgpresents.org](http://www.stgpresents.org)

MAPP International: [mappinternational.org/artists](http://mappinternational.org/artists)

STGtv: [www.stgpresents.org/stgtv](http://www.stgpresents.org/stgtv)



*Seattle Theatre Group created an STGtv episode to document the week's engagement activities, allowing those that participated and experienced the performance, as well as those that did not, an opportunity to learn and grow from the performance. Video by Andrew Matson and Roger Habon*



*Nadia Beugre conducting an African dance workshop at NW Tap Connection in Seattle. Photo by Andrew Matson*

## Organization: TeenTix

### Project: TeenTix Website Research and Design

#### Project Goals

1. Research needs and challenges of teenage arts audiences that could be addressed through technology.
2. Design and build a new website that:
  - a. addresses cultural, logistical, and informatics barriers in 13-19 year old arts audiences;
  - b. creates an online community for young people from diverse backgrounds with a shared interest in the arts.
3. Prepare key pages to be translated in 2013 in order to address language barriers in 13 to 19 year old arts audiences.
4. Increase TeenTix member registration and ticket sales.

#### Snapshot

TeenTix is a clearinghouse for teenagers in the Puget Sound area to access arts events through discounted tickets. In its eight-year lifetime TeenTix has registered nearly 40,000 users and serves an audience of 17,000 pass holders who use their TeenTix credentials to access events with 41 participating arts and cultural organizations. Modestly staffed with two part time positions and the help of a few interns and a fifteen member Teen Steering Committee, TeenTix operates as a program of the Seattle Center Foundation, though it is in transition to become an independent organization.

TeenTix knew it was time to overhaul their web platform. The TeenTix website is the core of its relationship with its audience and the staff is keenly aware that the success of the program is deeply dependent on the effectiveness of the website. Because the organization essentially is a website, the staff approached this change with both trepidation and high hopes. The INNOVATIONS Grant provided an opportunity to undertake extensive research within the teen community and hire a skilled research and design team to redesign and upgrade the site.

TeenTix's original system of communicating through their website and e-mails was simple and easy to understand but labor intensive, had limited capacity to grow, and was distinctly different from what many technology savvy teens are used to. TeenTix leadership wanted to make sure that a new site would be on target on every level from tone to technology. They also saw the potential to be the first arts-centric online community for teens. In addition to rebranding and making a more inviting web platform for



*Members of TeenTix Steering Committee peruse mood boards, to settle on an overall design aesthetic for the new website. Photo by Holly Arsenault*

their current audience, TeenTix decided to significantly extend its reach by making the site accessible in some of the many languages spoken in Seattle: Spanish, Vietnamese, Cantonese, Mandarin, Somali, Tagalog, and Korean, making it the first teen arts website they knew of to tackle this.

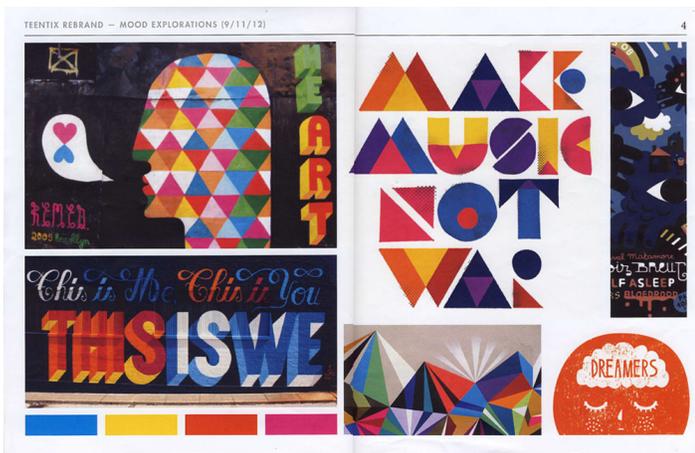
It is dicey to build a new custom website that can keep up with quickly evolving technology. An added challenge is a teen audience that by its very nature quickly evolves and moves on. Because their purpose is to break down barriers to the arts for teens, the staff's worst fear was that they would make something that didn't resonate or that discouraged teens from getting involved. Additionally, staff was acutely aware that TeenTix's site also must appeal to and reassure parents, and must project a professional identity of value to arts partner organizations and to arts funders.

In order to ground their project in real knowledge about the audience it would serve, TeenTix inverted the usual website design process. Website construction is a time consuming and multi-layered process which is why many organizations design a website based on their staff’s knowledge, experience and taste and then test its effectiveness as it nears completion. In order to maximize the audience influence and minimize the risks inherent in rebranding, designing, constructing and launching the website, TeenTix hired a young and flexible design and research team that embraced the TeenTix mission and frontloaded the process with thorough audience research. The team administered an extensive online survey and received a heartening 750 responses. They also conducted eight telephone interviews with teens to help form the survey questions and fill in blanks in the data. Through these surveys, as well as in-person discussions with their Teen Steering Committee, they invited broad-based feedback on specific site characteristics such as the importance of getting text reminders about events or the ability to see if friends are planning to attend. Responses were painstakingly aggregated into “mental maps” charting the motivations of teen users. This process deeply informed the site architecture as well as the other design aspects. The Teen Steering Committee’s role was fundamental to the research and design process. They served as backstop, quality control team, and TeenTix’s “conscience” at every step.

The research process provided numerous lessons and surprises. Because families—especially recent immigrant families—share e-mail addresses, and teens often make

little use of e-mail until later in their college and professional lives, the registration process had to be redesigned so that it did not rely on independent e-mail addresses--the industry standard. This guided the structure towards integrating with Facebook for registration, and planning for more text and smart phone based functionality in future updates to the site. Teen input also suggested ways to make the online experience more social without trying to duplicate the existing social media sites where teens already congregate and share information. Additionally, the staff found that when they really dug into the research and listened to Teen Steering Committee input, it simply disproved many of their pre-existing beliefs even though they had years of experience of listening to and sharing leadership with teens. Surprises included what teens wanted when it came to aesthetics, and the sophistication many teens brought to issues of online privacy and safety.

Staff capacity was stretched throughout the process. The INNOVATIONS Grant funding supported the work of the research and design team but did not support more hours for the staff to dedicate to this project. While creating a new web platform, the staff still had to maintain and use the old one, which at times greatly increased the workload. TeenTix delayed the launch of the new website, yet all involved felt that the project benefited from the depth and attention to multiple forms of research and input with teens. This has shaped every aspect from content to design and functionality of the new website and is key to TeenTix’s ability to serve a growing audience.



*Mood board provided by SleepOp to test the aesthetic preferences of the Teen Steering Committee in the design process. Design by Corianton Hale*



*Teen Steering Committee testing the new website. Photo by Pete Rush*

## Project Recipe

1. Find the right design team with the skills to do solid research and aesthetically appropriate design, and a sense of excitement about the project and audience.
2. Allocate additional regular staff hours to shepherd the process.
3. Conduct audience research early in the process — before you jump into design and site architecture—and create a system for methodically placing the findings in the map of the design.
4. Create a team of teen advisors to vet all stages of the process. Listen and incorporate their feedback.
5. Understand the importance of keeping your old site running shipshape while the new one is being built and plan for there to be some amount of duplication. This sets you up for as seamless a transition as possible.
6. Emphasize the importance of functional technology to your tech team. There can be no outages. Losing teen relationships can take only seconds.

## What Changed

The TeenTix website research and design project changed the rhythm of the organization's work by forcing it to not move too fast, but rather to slow down and carefully build—something that can be hard for small nonprofits delivering daily services. TeenTix gained a wealth of knowledge about who, how, and why area teens do or don't participate in the organization, as well as insights into how communication platforms interface with participating organizations and the Internet at large. The technical findings of the research had direct implications for how TeenTix can effectively achieve its mission. Even something relatively small, like taking the typographic space out of its name

(Teen Tix is now TeenTix) helps to ensure that the right people are effectively finding its services online.

A significant transformation for the organization was a complete branding makeover. The staff and Teen Steering committee unanimously chose one of three visual identities the design team presented. Using bold banner icons with an activist feel, the new visual identity heralds momentum and movement building. This, along with high website functionality and robust understanding of audience needs, sets a new stage for delivering their services to teens exploring participation in the arts.

## More Information

TeenTix: [www.teentix.org](http://www.teentix.org)

TeenTix: [www.seattlecenter.com/teentix](http://www.seattlecenter.com/teentix)

TeenTix blog: [www.teentix.blogspot.com](http://www.teentix.blogspot.com)



the demographic and arts experience criteria to be part of Crush Crew.

TPS was upfront about their desire to share the Crush Crew's stories as part of the Arts Crush marketing campaign. Crew members were invited to participate in a number of ways:

1. Creating vlogs (short online video journal entries) about their "First Arts Crush"—from stories they read as a child to family traditions. TPS hoped this would help other potential arts enthusiasts see that connection to art could take many forms and that there was space for them all in Arts Crush. TPS staff encouraged the Crew to vlog/blog about their experiences as much as possible throughout the festival.
2. TPS worked with partner organizations to create participatory arts experiences for the Crew that included dance classes, graffiti art and vlogging workshops, and VIP access to certain events. It became apparent quickly that Crew members preferred activities that were hands on but didn't put them under pressure or on the spot.
3. TPS created social activities in conjunction with each event to encourage Crew members to get to know one another and give TPS staff a chance to build relationships with the Crew members.
4. Staff also curated a list of events throughout the festival and encouraged Crew members to attend together. Crush Crew members received priority access to the Free Night portion of the festival.

The Crush Crew functioned as an ongoing source of information and insight on the targeted audience demographic. Staff worked to keep their activities numerous and open-ended, to avoid asking too much of Crew members or making it "feel too much like school". Over time, the staff realized that they may have been too careful and that a clearer and more directive structure would have encouraged Crew members to step up their level of engagement. They also learned that it was important to capture energy near the start of the Arts Crush season: after their first exciting meeting, the Crush Crew had no clear activity opportunities for several weeks and their level of engagement lapsed.

To get and keep Crush Crew members engaged, TPS staff had to step into the role of programmer rather than just

producer, and this stretched them to new limits. They spent much time taking in Crew input and curating a variety of activities with the Arts Crush partners that would bring a sense of excitement and cohesion to the Crush Crew. They knocked on many doors that led to dead ends, especially with larger organizations less able to respond to short lead time requests. The most effective collaborations emerged with smaller organizations with longstanding relationships and investments in Arts Crush, and the flexibility to deliver activities and atmosphere on short notice.

This demanding but rewarding first Crush Crew contributed to the most successful Arts Crush festival to date. It broke the passive audience paradigm, and engaged new participants experientially. By giving Crew members a vehicle for sharing their stories, and making it possible for them to meaningfully connect to art and each other, they came to see themselves as members and supporters of the local arts community. For TPS, the Crush Crew served as a microcosm of the larger Arts Crush audience and provided valuable insight to the background and psychology of audience participation. This understanding gives TPS new ideas about how to grow and shape the festival in years to come.



*Crush Crew members experimenting with graffiti art in partnership with Urban Artworks. Photo by Sam Read*

## Project Recipe

1. Create an opportunity that is more than marketing—put a small group of the target audience at the center of the communications strategy and engage them through hands on activities, dialogue and reflection.
2. Find an energetic and enthusiastic project manager who doesn't shy away from challenge and is capable of communicating and connecting with many different community members.
3. Go outside your comfort zone and build relationships with strategic partners that can be ambassadors for your program and assist you in reaching new audiences.
4. Work with compelling partner organizations to expand outreach and to co-program immersive arts experiences that are active and non-intimidating.
5. Create a clear structure, expectations, and ways to support the Crew's ability to reflect and share their stories as they have new, exciting and possibly uncomfortable experiences.
6. Develop programming that clearly bridges arts participation and social bonding.

## What Changed

Theatre Puget Sound established a new staff position dedicated to launching the Crush Crew and thereby built over 50 new relationships with individuals who are now deeply invested in its annual festival. In response to the appetite for continued arts-immersive and social Crew activity, TPS is planning ongoing activities and exploring ways to continue building Crush Crew. The organization learned that a deeper engagement is possible when a clear participation structure is in place, and that this provides ongoing insight into young adult participation. This initial Crush Crew foray has primed TPS for offering year round programming in the same vein.

When seeking programming for the Crush Crew, the organization learned that their energy was best directed to working with the most enthusiastic and responsive festival partner organizations. It will take continued work to reach this level of participation with the festival's larger institutional partners. Through creating Crush Crew, TPS gained a stronger sense of identity internally and externally as an entry



*Crush Crew curated event – 3rd Shift Dance's Window Dressing; Are We Not? Photo by Mike Hipple*

point to arts participation. This project solidified the organization's philosophy of growing arts participation through events that rely as much on social connection as artistic activity. The Crush Crew established TPS as a resource to other organizations interested in growing participation in this way.

## More Information

Theatre Puget Sound: [www.tpsonline.org](http://www.tpsonline.org)

Arts Crush: [www.artscrush.org/home4](http://www.artscrush.org/home4)

Arts Crush Blog: [blog.artscrush.org/](http://blog.artscrush.org/)

My First Art Crush Playlist: [www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLDD4AA9E0EAC6536F](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLDD4AA9E0EAC6536F)

Arts Crush Promo Video: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=bL3nBG\\_DI6A&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bL3nBG_DI6A&feature=youtu.be)

## Organization: Town Hall

### Project: In Residence

#### Project Goals

1. To generate cross-discipline connections for presenters and audiences.
2. To build and test a new format and content track of Artist and Scholar Residencies targeted to feature and resonate with 18 to 34 year olds.
3. To generate intense dialogue focused on reciprocity of voice between audience and residency artists/scholars.
4. To create and activate a new blog built off of the residency program.

#### Snapshot

Town Hall wanted to invert their usual programming paradigm in which artists and scholars present, and passive, if rapt, audiences attend. During “In Residence,” one artist and one scholar were selected to inhabit Town Hall for three months: attending events, curating events, communicating with audiences, and creating a new work that might resonate, respond, rebuff or reframe the chorus of voices, ideas, instruments, and conversations heard in programs there. The Residents were selected with an eye towards attracting a new community for Town Hall: young adults drawn to testing and experimentation, intrigued by opportunities mixing live engagement and online activity, and willing to engage in a true reciprocity of voice between the artist/scholar and audience. The INNOVATIONS Grant let Town Hall test this idea with an inaugural Artist-in-Residence (AIR) and Scholar-in-Residence (SIR) serving concurrent terms, September through November 2012, with a special curiosity about how the residents might encourage cross-disciplinary experimentation.

The scholar and the artist were each asked to do five things: 1) Attend a multitude of events at Town Hall during their tenure; 2) Curate and host a monthly series of work in progress by others in the arts community, presenting something from their own work in progress too. These monthly salons, called Scratch Nights, featured audience feedback along with libations, free associations, and general extemporizing; 3) Moderate an ongoing dialogue with Town Hall audiences on issues raised at Town Hall events, both in person and online on a new “In Residence” blog channel; 4) Create a piece of scholarship (SIR) or art (AIR); and 5) Present that work at Town Hall at the end of their tenure. Three things were provided to the SIR and the AIR: 1) Each received a stipend of \$3000 for the three months; 2) They



*Artist in Residence Ahomeful J. Oluo at the premiere of “Now I’m Fine”, marking the culmination of his residency. Photo by Bob Peterson*

were each given the key to the building with unprecedented access to Town Hall events and facilities, at any hour of any day, from the Great Hall to the photocopy cubicle; and 3) A fully-produced and promoted final project event for summarizing their “findings”.

The biggest stretch in carrying out the cross-disciplinary residencies proved to be the improvisational nature of a project that extended over a period of months. Town Hall presents an eclectic mix of single events night after night, and the residents had an opportunity to create a cohesive arc through a four-month period. Town Hall and the residents needed to find ongoing means of communicating and connecting to audiences who joined in the journey at any point along the way. It also turned Town Hall into a generative organization rather than a presenter—a private

goal of the initiative, but a challenge all the same. This pushed the organization's limits in terms of capacity and bandwidth even though there was universal enthusiasm for the project within the organization. In order to give meaningful honoraria to the SIR and AIR, Town Hall was unable to budget for a project manager. This management aspect was further strained by a key staff transition. Interdepartmental cooperation between Programming, Production and Marketing was strong, though it required more effort than anticipated as Town Hall sought to let the residency structure evolve flexibly. The short, intense three-month time frame meant that there was a constant need to respond both to the residents and to the audience, gathering and reacting programmatically to ideas generated from audience input.

The programs were generally well-received and well attended. Scratch Nights, as appropriate to their role as a laboratory, attracted audiences ranging from 25-70 people. The final showing, on December 9, drew just over 300. Meanwhile, general attendance at events attended/promoted by residents varied wildly, as their omnivorous approach included high profile and niche-oriented events. Participation in the online forum was mixed; healthy when residents engaged the audience with a direct, targeted question, but less continuous than Town Hall had hoped/expected. Staff found they needed to play a behind-the-scenes role to help keep the online conversations active and meaningful.

The project succeeded in magnetizing a new (and generally younger) audience to Town Hall—a fact supported through analysis of web traffic, ticket purchasers, and anecdotal observation during events. The residents reframed the Scratch Nights—from showings of their own works in process to more inclusive dialogues on the creative process—and the quality of the work in their final presentations was high. Each resident used the opportunity very differently. The scholar created a “multilogue,” weaving multiple voices of Town Hall patrons into a crowd-sourced portrait of the Fall 2012 Town Hall season she'd just experienced. The artist seized the production opportunity to publicly premiere a work long in development.



*Scholar in Residence Lesley Hazelton at the first Scratch Night.  
Photo by Town Hall*

Town Hall has always hoped that its commitment to accessible ticket pricing, married to its broad range of programs, can encourage audience exploration. A secondary but important goal of the project was to “model good Town Hall audience behavior” as the residents explored the full range of the organization's offerings and reached beyond their respective disciplines. The AIR and SIR served as guides and facilitators in this process, animating the acts of participation and engagement. The line between scholar and artist proved to be ever-shifting, disappearing at numerous points. That blurring of boundaries between disciplines proved one of the most intriguing aspects of the program: the residents exhibited knowledge in multiple disciplines and curiosity beyond their own areas of expertise.

## Project Recipe

1. Pick your residents with an eye to their good humor, flexibility and stamina along with their artistic and scholarly strengths. Temperament is important in navigating lots of moving pieces and people.
2. Embrace a bit of chaos. Giving unfettered physical access to your facility and freedom to create programs in a short time frame means that the unexpected is not only likely but inevitable.
3. Get your staff on board, ready and able to respond with grace, curiosity and goodwill.
4. Prove that you value your residents by paying them real money for their time, expertise and effort.
5. Having a staff project manager makes it all much easier, but it can be done regardless.
6. Provide some curating of your social media activity to create tighter structure and elicit more meaningful online dialogue. Posting direct questions can catalyze online contributions.
7. Make sure your staff can support the technology and production aspects of the project.

## What Changed

The residency function added a valuable dimension to Town Hall's programming and expanded participation opportunities. The residents acted as interpreters and provocateurs for the larger Town Hall audience. Their work gathered, reflected and amplified stories of the Town Hall community and illuminated new facets of its particular mix of scholarship and creativity. This experience convinced the organization that such work is a valuable investment in the evolution of long-term relationships with creative makers and audiences. Town Hall is committed to continuing the program and has selected the next two residents.

To be an effective collaborator, Town Hall needed to have a project lead focused on this program. There is inevitably a ramp-up period for all involved—the staff, the audience, the residents themselves—to find their rhythm. A project lead would have hastened deep involvement. Town Hall staff found it satisfying to use their skills working with the residents over a number of months, to respond to whatever formats the residents proposed.

Valuable understanding emerged around how to stimulate content-rich social media conversations. Over the grant period, staff experimented and refined ways to moderate and pace social media content in order to keep a continual

flow. They learned ways to sustain two-way conversation online. They worked hard to use social media as more than a promotional tool and found that, for this project, their marketing approach is actually part of the program. They now see that all of this does not necessarily happen naturally, but requires strategy and oversight. They also developed ways to coach and encourage the residents to live publicly in the digital space.



*An audience member using Lesley Hazelton's low-tech "Live Tweet Station." Photo by Town Hall*

## More Information

Town Hall Seattle: [www.townhallseattle.org](http://www.townhallseattle.org)

Town Hall Seattle: [Artist/Scholar-In-Residence http://www.facebook.com/home.php#!/THSinREZ](http://www.facebook.com/home.php#!/THSinREZ)

## Organization: Wing Luke Museum of the Asian Pacific American Experience

### Project: Art in Canton Alley

#### Project Goals

1. Engage young adults, ages 21 to 35 by creating an immersive environment in Canton Alley in conjunction with JamFest.
2. Integrate social media into communications and documentation.
3. Offer Asian Pacific American artists an opportunity to publicly exhibit their art.
4. Contribute to the economic revitalization of the Chinatown-International District.
5. Create and execute a technology-driven communication plan.
6. Validate the museum's approach in organizing unique, engaging and dynamic cultural activities.
7. Create a more extended reflection period to assess the project and its impacts.

#### Snapshot

Along the west side of the Wing Luke Museum of the Asian Pacific American Experience (The Wing) lies Canton Alley, one of the alleys that traverse the blocks of Seattle's Chinatown-International District. This alley – one of only two named alleys within the neighborhood – holds much history of the Asian Pacific American (APA) community and the founding of the City of Seattle, but also shows the neglect of a gritty urban area. The Wing turned Canton Alley into an immersive arts environment in conjunction with its third annual JamFest, the organization's summer neighborhood festival combining music, visual arts and performance, held at venues throughout the district on the evenings of third Thursdays in June, July and August. While there was a single modest charge for music at other venues, all activities in Canton Alley were free. The Wing created an arts destination using the heritage of the alley as a launching point for a culturally relevant presentation of contemporary art in a unique outdoor setting.

The Wing's goal of engaging young adults ages 21-35 set the stage for expanding use of social media to promote and communicate about the events in advance, and to actively encourage event participants to post their own photos and comments during and after the event. A media partnership with a weekly newspaper and rack cards that the staff delivered citywide proved at least as important in promoting the event. Equally important to the museum was bringing JamFest attendees, especially young adults directly to the small businesses in the district – they wanted to bring "the hometown stranger" to the neighborhood. Being a good



*JamFest Brochure 2012 promoting 11 musicians and performing arts groups. Design by Romulus Ramirez*

and trusted neighbor is a central value of the organization, and JamFest was intended to benefit the merchants and the community, as well as the attendees. Having asked small businesses to invest time and resources, the museum wanted to deliver on the promise of customers.

An accomplished Asian American burlesque artist kicked off JamFest inside the museum and then led the crowd to Canton Alley, setting a tone of bold fun and turning the once derelict space into a place of vibrant arts and community activity. The three-night event drew over 830 attendees with approximately 80% purchasing food and drink in the district. There was a healthy showing of young adults from Seattle and suburban communities. Social media played a growing role over the three evenings. Two individuals were recruited to Tweet from the final event, using their own accounts. This, along with posting the Twitter hashtag for The Wing on signs around the alley, generated spontaneous social media activity reaching a range of followers.

Participating restaurants, often small establishments with no websites or advertising budgets, had approached the project with trepidation and timidity. By the end of the summer they were deeply engaged and supportive as



*Participants of all ages join in the sights, sounds and fun of Art in Canton Alley, 2012. Photo by Alan Alabastro Photography*

their understanding and trust of the museum's intentions grew. Canton Alley became a shared and neutral space for celebrating the Chinatown-International District neighborhood. The variety of players each contributed a vital element: the museum, small local businesses, artists and musicians, community organizations, and a lively group of event attendees.

## Project Recipe

1. Build a strong internal project team that includes people from all departments of the museum whose contributions are welcomed equitably, regardless of job title.
2. Commit time and resources to building relationships with businesses, community organizations and artists/musicians. Trust is the most valuable commodity and takes time and effort.
3. Stretch artistic presentations through research, consultation and serendipity. Young staff members are a great resource. Try something new.
4. Set the physical boundaries of the event space to create critical mass.
5. Seed opportunities for social media use by participants, such as posting Twitter hashtags on signs, but avoid being so directive that you change the flavor. Posts that come directly from participants have an authenticity you can't buy and reach beyond your existing networks.
6. Be prepared to trouble shoot event logistics and be surprised and grateful wherever you find friends and helpers. You never know who can get a dumpster moved at the last minute.
7. Remember that these events are about fun! All involved, from staff to visitors, should be able to tap into and enjoy that aspect.
8. Think about long-term benefits as well as the immediate return to the organization. If your mission is grounded in the community, think of the effort as investment of capital with an impact that accrues over time.

## What Changed

Producing Art in Canton Alley affirmed The Wing staff's interdepartmental approach to planning an entertaining event that would attract a mix of people to the neighborhood, including young adults. The process from start to finish was a powerful reminder that a museum that often shows serious and sometimes difficult material can also embrace light-hearted art, artists and art forms and attract new audience members who find entertainment and popular art forms easier points of entry.

The Wing deepened its existing commitment to revitalizing its neighborhood. It also affirmed the value of creating porous walls between the museum and the neighborhood, so that a visitor's experience doesn't begin when they walk through the museum doors. The Wing wants museum visitors to explore the neighborhood, whether it is eating in a restaurant, patronizing small shops or getting a sense of the cultural richness of the community while walking about. Art in Canton Alley strengthened relationships of many kinds to help advance that mission.

## More Information

Wing Luke Museum of the Asian Pacific American Experience: [www.wingluke.org/home.htm](http://www.wingluke.org/home.htm)

Chinatown-ID JamFest: [www.wingluke.org/jamfest/](http://www.wingluke.org/jamfest/)

Four Seas Restaurant: [www.fourseasatl.com/](http://www.fourseasatl.com/)

Phnom Penh Noodle House: [www.phnompenhnoodles.com](http://www.phnompenhnoodles.com)

World Pizza: [www.facebook.com/pages/World-Pizza/158562957492458](https://www.facebook.com/pages/World-Pizza/158562957492458)

**JamFest CHINATOWN-ID JAZZONKINGST PRESENTED BY THE WING**

Enjoy live music, food and drink specials, and performing and visual art at JamFest. Includes free admission to the Wing Luke Museum of the Asian Pacific American Experience. June – August Third Thursdays 5:30-9:30 pm. [www.wingluke.org/jamfest](http://www.wingluke.org/jamfest)

**AUGUST 16 LINE-UP**

5:30 **THE SHANGHAI PEARL HAPPY HOUR** at The Wing, 719 S. King  
Explore The Wing's latest exhibitions and sip on drinks while Uncle Kitman, spins old school jams.

6:30 **The Shanghai Pearl**, in The Wing Tateuchi Story Theatre  
International burlesque performer

7:00 **Jannie & Friends Jazz Band**, at Four Seas, 714 S. King  
& 8:15 Jazz standards plus Chinese folk songs in American Jazz style

7:00 **Angelo Pizarro**, at Phnom Penh, 660 S. King  
& 8:15 Eclectic, passionate, fiery acoustic nylon-string guitar

7:00 **Ashley Durant & Friends**, at Tai Tung, 655 S. King  
& 8:15 Pianist vocalist, playing old style Delta blues and boogie woogie

Ongoing **Sidewalk Symphony**, at World Pizza, 672 S. King – Guitar and cello join for swing, showtunes, standards and pop | **Kinetics**, at The Wing, 719 S. King – Fresh, energetic performance of traditional & contemporary jazz | **Sometimes Astronauts**, in Canton Alley – Rock and roll built to stand the test of time travel

plus at **ART IN CANTON ALLEY**  
7:45 **Canton Alley Artists** are back! Including Dean Wong, Rick Wong, Barry Wong, Yoon Joo Han, Dorothy Ng, Amanda Roth, Najwa Ebanks, Jeff Wendland and Mizu Sugimura. Visit **Canton Alley Apartment No. 6**. Discover the **Sun May Company**, and enter in the toy rickshaw races. Get a bite to eat at **Fortuna Café**. And join in the **Alley Party!** sponsored by the Historic Alley Project.

After hours **Seattle Pinball Museum**, 508 Maynard  
JamFest ticketholders get \$2 off admission the night of event

Get your tickets at **The WING**  
719 S King St | 206-623-5124

WITH SUPPORT FROM: **FORKS FOUNDATION**, **CHASE**, **ARTS EXHIBITION**  
MEDIA PARTNER: **WING LUKE MUSEUM**  
Additional Partners: American Hotel, IDEA Odyssey, Northwest African American Museum, ICDIops

SAVE THE DATE  
CHINATOWN ID JAZZ ON KINGSTREET  
THURSDAY NOV 3

Map of JamFest events and locations. Design by The Wing. Map inset by Romulus Ramirez.

## KEY INGREDIENTS

What ingredients are most likely to lead to success in short-term projects designed to build arts participation? The outcomes of the thirteen INNOVATIONS grants are reflected not only in terms of audience participation, but also in terms organizational learning. In fact, numerous lessons emerged from these intensive projects that are likely to be applicable to longer-term participation initiatives. These lessons or “ingredients” can be of value to any organization considering its readiness and capacity for stirring the participation pot within and beyond its current audience.

1. **Lighten the mood** – Embrace mistakes and missteps as a necessary part of learning for all involved. Fun and laughter are great leavening agents when working on participation projects inside your organization and in the community.
2. **Commitment** – Assess the locus and depth of commitment within your organization for your project. Who are the champions? This has a powerful impact on the outcome and impact.
3. **Flexibility** – Let projects morph to reflect the unique characteristics of communities and audiences you wish to engage, and provide enough – but not too much—structure. Embody the ability to accommodate and champion the untried, bringing curiosity, skills and enthusiasm to new recipes.
4. **Advisory groups and other liaisons** – Identify, support and learn directly from members of the communities and audiences that you hope will participate in and enjoy your efforts.
5. **Mutual trust and respect** – Successful participation projects are built on trust. There are no shortcuts in building relationships.
6. **Shared resources** – Many participation goals cannot be reached by a single organization working alone. Linking or sharing resources can create a banquet of significant mutual benefits. Seek out and learn from past efforts by other organizations.
7. **Social media goals**– Be clear on your social media intent. Online discourse and dialogue is different than promotion and marketing. Reflect the personality and character of your organization, your audience and your staff.
8. **Technology that works** – Effective and efficient digital technology tools are expected, and need to be well integrated into both communication and content strategies.
9. **Look beyond home** – Your physical location may be the launch pad or just one of a number of spaces or places where you can connect your work with those you wish to reach.
10. **Realistic approximations of time and effort** – Enthusiasm for a project often overrides a reasonable assessment of what is required. Allocate adequate responsibility and time for staff working on participation projects and support their efforts. Be realistic.