



San Juan County Arts Council

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FINAL REPORT

Pilot Project for

The Creative Vitality Index in the San Juan Islands

June, 2013



Photo by Teddy Deane, 2013, Friday Harbor, San Juan Island, WA

"We can't talk about the creative sector, including arts and culture, in the abstract. It is also about place and the environment. On these Islands, it's all one, a continuum."

Comment at one of the CVI workshops

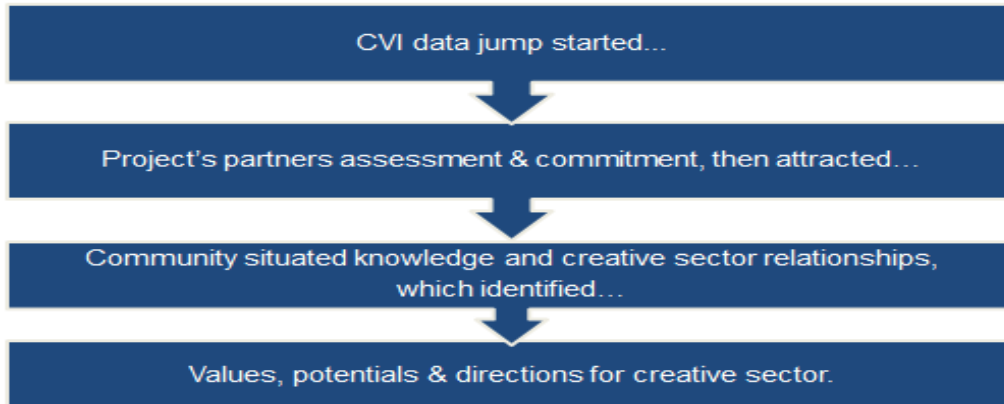
Key Project Goal: Advance the Islands' Creative Sector by Attention to Two Zones

1. Work towards an algorithm of the San Juan Islands' creative economy – benchmark its present values, examine its components & critical relationships
2. Increase awareness of the Council and manifest its commitment and capacity to work on behalf of the creative sector, reinforcing the Council's theme: *Where arts flourish, community prospers and lives are enriched.*

Project activities in Two Zones...



Four fundamental inquiries towards the algorithm were identified:



Use of CVI Data to Jump Start the Process – the Data Story

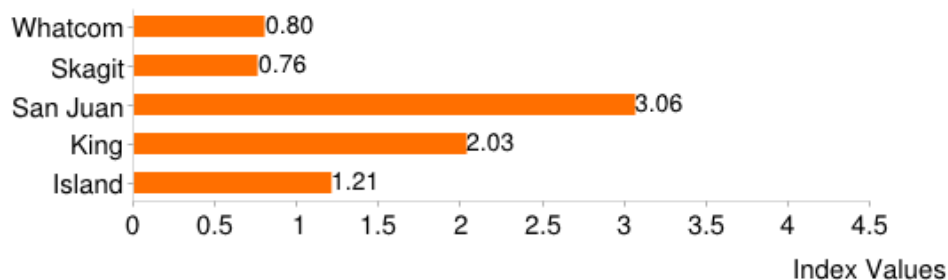
Project partners, working together, explored the history, sources and nature of the CVI data in general and for the County in relation to the state and other counties. Limitations of CVI data led to proposition to develop a future Arts and Creative Sector Directory and Profile. We then used CVI Data in series of community workshops to inform community of some indicators of the standing of the arts in San Juan County and to solicit responses. CVI data showed:

- a. San Juan County had an overall 2010 Index of 1.87 compared to WA state of 1.04
- b. Per Capita Sales in Art Galleries and of Individual Artists: SJC - \$402 and index of 3.06, highest of five major counties:

Region	Art Gallery and Individual Artist Sales	Per Capita	Index
Island	12,446,000	158.54	1.21
King	515,750,000	267.06	2.03
San Juan	6,345,000	402.37	3.06
Skagit	11,597,000	99.20	0.76
Whatcom	21,090,000	104.85	0.80
Totals	567,228,000	242.04	1.84

Source: Economic Modeling Specialists, Inc.

Art Gallery and Individual Artist Sales Index, 2010



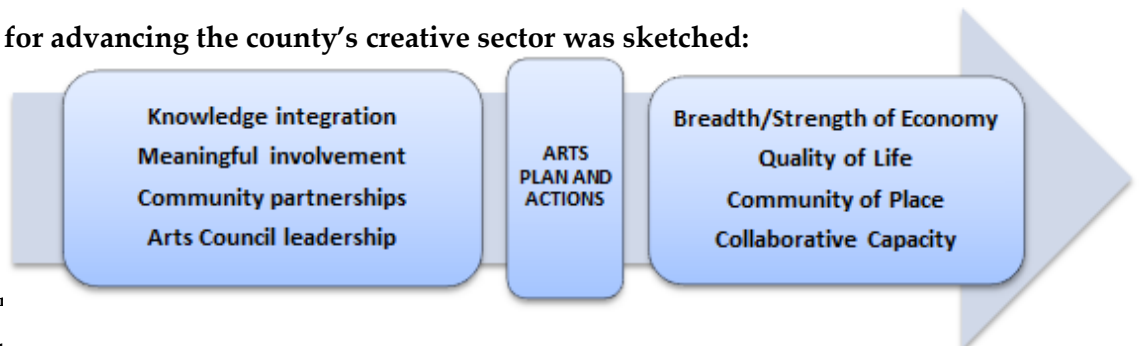
The CVI picture of Art Gallery and Individual Artist Sales underscores the relative power of economic support that is derived from people outside the county. Per capita sales in the county of \$402.37, compared with about half as much in King County, held workshop attendees' attention and led to discussions in three veins:

- a. The unique setting and natural qualities of place are drivers in the prosperity engine,
- b. Art and cultural productions occur throughout the islands – every place is a player and part of the equation, and
- c. Support for and involvement in the creative sector must cut across the entire demographic profile, and education at all levels and for all media is critical for sustaining the sector.

What Were Our Successes?

- a. Held three two-hour seminars, one on each island (San Juan, Orcas, and Lopez). Each session included a presentation of the role of the Arts Council, explained the CVI, showed relevant CVI data, discussed the implications for the Creative Economy in the San Juan Islands, and posed two questions for discussion:
 - *What other ways do we have to measure the economic importance of the Arts?*
 - *How can we advance the vitality of the Creative Sector?*
- b. Key elements of success
 - Total of 55 people attended the sessions.
 - 16 Agencies and organizations were represented, including not only artists but also government agencies and chambers of commerce.
 - 10 Galleries and Artisans were represented
 - Parties with diverse interests in the Arts from all the islands gathered for the first time.
 - Attendees gained interest in the CVI; engaged in lively discussion and advanced many ideas; expressed enthusiasm for the event and expectations for the Council.
 - Responses to the question, *“How can we advance the vitality of the Creative Sector?”*
 - Learn from *comparative studies* and other *success stories*
 - *Define what we have* (build a profile of the arts of the county, report the inventory of arts/culture biennially, focus on strengths and challenges)
 - *Define what we want* (a plural “we” – partnerships and process for involvement, maintain a broad scope attuned to evolving demographic and cultural factors, and envision a future of the creative sector)
 - *Develop an Arts Plan with Actions for implementing it.* (With Arts Council leadership, build and plan a strategy for getting to the vision, draw on the connections and strengths within the Economy, Education, Environment and Community Place-making, and partner with Economic Development Planning and the Community Comprehensive Plan.

An algorithm for advancing the county’s creative sector was sketched:



What Were Our Key Challenges?

- a. Initially, understanding the composition, derivation, and use of the CVI
- b. Maintaining sufficient in-person contact/exchange when participants are distributed geographically across all islands, connected by ferries.

What Was The Impact On Our Community?

- a. Enhanced interest and awareness of the importance of *all* of the arts to the economy of the county through evaluation of the CVI and gathering representatives of diverse organizations and interest groups.
- b. Posing the two questions provided the basis for conversation among groups that heretofore had not been aware of their shared interests.
- c. Interest was created and expressed in developing a plan for improving communication and awareness of the arts as part of the economy's engine for the county.

Who Were the Partners in the Project?

- San Juan County Arts Council (<http://sjcartscouncil.org/>)
- San Juan Islands Visitors Bureau (<http://www.visitsanjuans.com/>)
- San Juan County Economic Development Council (<http://www.sanjuansedc.org/>)

What Are the Expectations for this Partnership?

- a. We believe that this partnership will continue with a mission to develop ideas initiated in this pilot project that will over time
 - Encourage artists, tourists, events to visit and live in the islands
 - Increase artistic activities and resulting generation of revenues within the county
 - Raise awareness of the islands as a destination for people interested in the arts
 - Foster communication among all the arts in the islands
- b. During the pilot project, representatives of the Arts Council, the San Juan Visitors Bureau, and the San Juan Economic Development Council met several times to understand the CVI and how it could assist all parties in their efforts to create the islands as a destination for tourists and permanent residents, additional artists of all kinds, and identify means of measuring the success of those efforts.

Our Thanks for the support of these organizations for this project:

- Washington State Arts Commission (<http://www.arts.wa.gov/>)
- The Western States Arts Federation (www.westaf.org/)
- The National Endowment for the Arts (<http://www.nea.gov/>)

Attachment: Photographic Expressions of some of the collateral events that happened during the course of this project.