

THE HEINZ ENDOWMENTS

Where Do We Go From Here?



POTENTIAL NEXT
STEPS IN THE ARTS &
CULTURE PROGRAM'S
TRANSFORMATIVE
ARTS PROCESS

By Justin Laing, Program Officer,
and Janet Sarbaugh, Senior Program Director

The Heinz Endowments, Arts & Culture

Background

The Heinz Endowments' Arts & Culture Program has, for many years, used the metaphor of an arts ecology or ecosystem to describe its giving and its view of the city and region's cultural life. The use of these words reflects our growing understanding of the importance of a diverse cultural landscape, and our belief that a thriving cultural life will be one in which many forms of art will be present, evolving and interacting.

If an ecosystem is defined as a network of interactions among organisms—and between organisms and their environment—how do we translate the concept to Pittsburgh's cultural community? What are the components of our ecosystem and the conditions in which they operate?

As the oldest giving program at The Heinz Endowments, we have the longest trajectory over which to contemplate these questions. The earliest investments were major cultural institutions, such as the Pittsburgh Symphony and the Carnegie Institute. The Heinz family's investments in these institutions predate the creation of The Heinz Endowments itself. Perhaps the most visible investment is the creation of Pittsburgh's Cultural District and the great theaters and public art that are resident in the district.

Beginning in the 1980s, however, the Endowments began to take an interest in a broader ecosystem with the funding of smaller arts organizations and arts education. When we conducted a strategic planning review in the late 1990s, we studied our work in terms of the wealth of cultural institutions present in the community, but also through a series of "lenses": creative capital, which is the role of artists; arts participation, which focuses on consumers of the arts; arts learning, which centers on schools; and civic linkages, which focus on community development and public art.

... if we are to continue to make the argument for arts as a public good, we must ensure that it is relevant to its community...

Our philosophy has been to purposefully allocate our giving to all of these aspects of the cultural ecosystem. However, over the last five years, staff has made a conscious decision to devote more attention to those efforts that bring cultural resources to more youth in the city and region, especially in communities that we believe were less likely to have benefited from our grant making in the past (or "communities that we believe are most likely to benefit from our grant making today"). This greater emphasis was spurred by several factors: our increasing awareness of the inequities in access to arts and cultural activities; our belief that access to the arts and to culture is a right and not a privilege; our understanding that if we are to continue to make the argument for arts as a public good, we must ensure that it is relevant to its community; and our conviction that our resources should be allocated in such a way as to insure that we have excellent and diverse arts and culture resources *and* the broadest possible access to these resources.

In 2012–13, Arts & Culture staff conducted two visioning processes to help us explore ways to address inequities and bring the arts to more citizens. The first process focused on the issue of cultural vitality in Pittsburgh, and was conducted with the guidance of Dr. Maria Rosario Jackson, formerly of the Urban Institute and currently Special Advisor to the Kresge Foundation. The process convened a small group from the cultural sector and from other sectors such as education, public safety, health and planning. The grounding concept of the work was cultural vitality, which we defined as "evidence of creating, disseminating, validating and supporting arts and culture as a dimension of everyday life."

We also examined the question “What should the citizens of Pittsburgh have in terms of cultural resources?” The innovation for us in this visioning process was that the question was not referential to the cultural sector, but to the community—the variety of consumers of cultural resources.

This exploration of cultural vitality helped us to look at our grants program in new ways. Most important was the suggestion for a new overarching framework for much of our work—one that focuses on viewing the arts as central to human development. This does not mean that we will no longer use the arts’ intrinsic value or economic arguments as frames as well. But it does imply that we want to give more weight to supporting those arts activities that advance human development.

New or enhanced directions implied by this shift could include:

- Developing innovative approaches for funding organic arts and cultural activities, including support for small businesses as they are often cultural pulse points in communities.
- Providing Pittsburgh artists with a wide range of supports, including funding to contribute to community building and community development efforts.
- Placing more emphasis on in-school and out-of-school-time arts education, especially in low-income communities.
- Encouraging amateur arts practice and linking it to professional activity.
- Using the arts as a tool for helping to achieve equity—to address racism, classism and longstanding barriers to opportunity.
- Engaging in more cross-sector work, not only within the Endowments, but with grantee partners in health, community development and education.

We chose to pursue youth programming first because we had already established some grant-making experience in both in-school and out-of-school-time arts programs, with the added bonus that this field connects well to the work of our colleagues in the Children, Youth & Families and Education programs.

The second visioning process built upon the first and was titled “Art Transforms: How and for Whom?” It connected the concept of arts and human development to our previous grant making in arts programs for youth. We chose to pursue youth programming first because we had already established some grant-making experience in both in-school and out-of-school-time arts programs, with the added bonus that this field connects well to the work of our colleagues in the Children, Youth & Families and Education programs.

The “Art Transforms” process convened 23 Pittsburgh practitioners in after-school arts, in-school arts education, teaching artistry, and neighborhood development to learn from other cities and to develop and improve arts programs for youth in Pittsburgh’s distressed communities. The process included site visits to youth programs in Oakland, California, New York and Boston; anti-racism training; and a number of brainstorming workshops that synthesized our travel experiences with Pittsburgh data and developed a direction for the Arts & Culture Program going forward.

When we first began the transformative arts process, we identified a number of critical questions that we would need to answer in order to bring more funding to more people in the Pittsburgh region. The overarching question of the transformative arts process was “How can the arts play an empowering and transformative role in the lives of youth living in Pittsburgh’s ‘distressed neighborhoods?’” The term “distressed” is taken from the Allegheny County Health Department and refers to specific communities that meet particular standards of unemployment, high school

graduation rates, single female headed households and income. This question then led to a number of sub-questions:

- What is the current state of arts instruction in Pittsburgh's "distressed neighborhoods"?
- How do we create an environment for young people that reflects what we want for them and their lives?
- What are the components of a transformative arts agenda? What does transformative arts look like? What would be the critical elements of the pedagogy or approach?
- What would be the critical elements of an agenda bringing arts to "distressed communities"?
- How might we balance issues of individual arts learning with the idea of helping youth to think about larger social issues facing them and their neighborhoods?
- What would success look like in a grants program for youth in "distressed neighborhoods"?
- What could be different in the neighborhoods as a result of this work?

While we were not able to answer all of these questions, we still learned a great deal from the process, and we hope that is evident. Perhaps our most significant learning was the realization that we were probably asking the wrong questions or asking the questions prematurely. As the process moved along, feedback from group members caused us to think differently and led us to the conclusion that we should be asking how we might best transform *ourselves and our ways of working* as part and parcel to answering the initial question focused on the lives of youth.

Although the initial question about how the arts can be transformative in the lives of youth will still be the guiding theme, we now see the connection between the processes and assumptions of the philanthropic sector and the challenges of "distressed neighborhoods." We also repeatedly heard that the term "distressed neighborhoods" further stigmatized selected communities. So, rather than use this term, in most cases we will instead refer to the neighborhoods collectively as "underfunded" so as to make the term self-referential and based upon our own examination of our grant-making data. With this in mind, the following represents our initial conclusions and ways in which the Endowments should further its work in the context of the original questions.

What Does Transformative Art Look Like?

These ideas on what transformative arts processes look like come from the discussion and comments of the participants in the Transformative Arts Project (TAP) process, what we saw and heard on our site visits, and our own ideas as funders of a variety of arts education programming. Rather than provide an exhaustive list of every single dimension of transformative arts work, we will instead share the key principles we presented to the TAP group as well as to our board. Taking the example of Harvard University's Project Zero "The Qualities of Quality" research,¹ these principles look at work that goes on "in the room" (where children are learning) and "outside the room" (where

¹Project Zero is an educational research group at the Harvard Graduate School of Education composed of multiple, independently sponsored research projects. Since 1967, Project Zero has examined the development of learning processes in children, adults and organizations. Today, Project Zero's work includes investigations into the nature of intelligence, understanding, thinking, creativity, ethics and other essential aspects of human learning (taken from Project Zero website). The referenced report is *The Qualities of Quality: Understanding Excellence in Arts Education*, Steve Seidel et al, Project Zero, Harvard Graduate School of Education.

administrators, funders, teachers and parents are planning, funding and evaluating). Following the “room” sections, we include some examples from our site visits of the various qualities that were listed so as to help to make them more concrete. We want to note that these examples are not the only instances of compelling work that we saw during this experience. While Pittsburgh has many of its own wonderful examples to share, the process did not include a time to build consensus on quality Pittsburgh programs, and so we do not include local examples. Instead, we have included the qualities and national programs highlighted by the Pittsburgh participants as critical to transforming the way the nonprofit arts community is experienced in neighborhoods that we believe are underfunded by our program.

In the Room

Excellent teaching artists

- Teaching artists are “practicing professional artist(s) with the complementary skills and sensibilities of an educator.”²
- Teaching artists have a shared pedagogy that allows them to approach the work from a shared framework without negatively affecting their individual creativity.
- Teaching artists can help youth deconstruct issues of racism and classism in ways that empower and help them to avoid the traps of underfunded communities.
- Teaching artists love and cherish children; program structure allows artists to build relationships with children beyond the artistic training components.

Quality materials and physical spaces

- Children and youth are learning in spaces that inspire them and allow them to flourish as developing artists.
- Children and youth have the materials and technology required to do their very best work.
- Programs have materials that clearly define goals, guidelines and outcomes, and show the relationship between artistic practice and issues of the larger community.

Sequential and focused learning

- Participants have the significant time needed to develop as artists. We imagine experiences where children and youth gather multiple times a week to work with artists and develop their craft. There is buy-in from participating children and families in addition to opportunities for more casual interactions.³

² *Qualities of Quality*, p.52

³ “Committed,” “connected” and “casual” spaces are terms that we learned from one of the TAP participants, James Brown, program director for the YMCA’s Lighthouse Project, to denote the wide range of commitment levels that should be offered to children and youth.

Connections to schools and other kinds of community institutions

- Programs take place in multipurpose community spaces, not solely arts spaces; high-quality programs are found in schools and community organizations; and relationships are built with other areas of work such as community development.
- Multi-racial, multi-class participant groups—though not necessarily for every individual program—whose convenings are supported.

EXAMPLES

- *Clear and Codified Pedagogy:* The Global Action Project based in New York, N.Y., has a wonderful example of an online curriculum that helps teachers to think about how to be facilitators of learning both in the art form and on larger social questions facing youth in their communities.
- *Culture and Race:* The Ifetayo Cultural Arts Academy based in Brooklyn, N.Y., shared with our group its e-learning platform that provides a great example of a framework for organizations or consortia looking to build their curriculum on an African, Latino, Asian or Native American framework.
- *Great Materials and Spaces:* Participants took a tour of Youth Uprising in Oakland, Calif., and saw a space that was flexible enough for youth to simply hang out and get a meal with friends or engage in real training in dance, music and media arts.
- *Learning is Sequential and Focused:* At the East Bay Center for the Performing Arts in Richmond, Calif., we learned of the organization's certificate program that provides certificates to participants who completed four years of training with master artists in art forms as diverse as Mariachi and West African drumming.
- *Connecting to schools and other spaces:* In Boston, Villa Victoria presented its community development model that included art openings to facilitate community dialogue on issues of changing identities, in addition to the media classes that were offered to children and youth.

Outside the Room

- Funders are willing to support artists and organizations that want to address issues of equity, including:
 - Multi-year, multi-sourced financial support to allow qualified artists and programs time to build quality and participation.
 - Field-building support that aids in artist training and the development of shared pedagogy that blends deep and socially critical arts instruction.
- Data is captured and evaluated in ways consistent with the values of the program i.e., in ways that support participant and artists voices.
- Organizations have commitment and passion for the work that lead to countless examples of the staff and board working extended hours and donating personal resources to make sure the vision is achieved.
- Relationships are built with parents and communities.
- Collaborations and convenings among teaching artists and arts organizations regularly take place.

One of the first orders of business in our effort to transform our work will be to convene our grantees who are doing extensive work in this space to meet and share the work that they are doing, discuss what opportunities and challenges they currently face, and see what opportunities there may be to work together.

- The philanthropic and government sectors are regularly looking at how their work in communities can be more supportive of one another and how their resources can be more equitably deployed.

EXAMPLES

- *Funders:* In Boston, we learned of the work of the Boston Foundation where the foundation had a three-year grants program designed specifically to support artists and organizations that wanted to address racial justice. Boston participants noted that this kind of support at the funding level allowed conversations to take place around race that otherwise might not have occurred, particularly within the foundation itself.
- *Data Capture and Evaluation:* Based in Brooklyn, N.Y., Groundswell developed an internal database system that allowed it to track their participants' progress against both artistic and academic goals and assess their work in more systematic ways over the history of the programming.
- *More than Maximizing Resources:* On our tour of Boston sites, we were treated to an evening at the OrigiNation Cultural Arts Center, where we learned of a Congolese-American family that has built an amazing dance organization replete with its own site where it holds community dance and martial arts classes as well as has a pre-professional contemporary Black dance company. Despite the fact that the organization has not received a great deal of support from the funding community, it has managed to offer a wonderful experience for youth for what is now approaching two decades.
- *Entrepreneurial Organizations:* Artists For Humanity impressed many of the participants in the TAP process through the role that entrepreneurship played in their financial model. One-third of a \$3 million budget was earned through sales of art work done by the participants.
- *Relationships with Communities:* El Puente in Brooklyn, N.Y., has been a part of the Williamsburg, Brooklyn community for more than 30 years. The multifaceted Latino center for arts, culture, leadership development and justice advocacy has begun a project called the Green Light District Project, designed to prevent the standard tale of gentrification and displacement from being told in this community by engaging youth in leading community conversations, door-to-door campaigns and community-wide arts events.
- *Regular Convenings of Artists and Funders:* Interestingly, this was one of the areas that was often discussed as a necessary part of the ecology, but we actually did not see very many cases where this was actually occurring. Nonetheless, this will be a part of how we define success in the next phase of this work in Pittsburgh.

What would be the components of Transformative Arts Agenda for The Heinz Endowments?

1. FIELD BUILDING

In terms of where we go from here, the field-building work may be the most critical step that will need to be taken. As was noted in the document "Art Transforms: How and For Whom?" many of the struggles that we faced in both the culturally responsive arts education work and the out-of-school-time arts agenda had to do with the failure to effectively support the development of a cohort that could first define and then carry out the work. To that end, one of the first orders of business in our effort to transform our work will be to convene our grantees who are doing extensive work in this

space to meet and share the work that they are doing, discuss what opportunities and challenges they currently face, and see what opportunities there may be to work together. Our plan is that we will provide grants for organizations that have specific ideas on how they would increase the impact of their work and that these grants may be used individually, in small groups or pooled, and used across the entire cohort.

Taking a page from the methodology of Project Zero and its study “The Qualities of Quality,” our second step in this field-building work will be to commission research on the specific qualities of the work of the cohort members mentioned above. This research would help to create a set of principles for transformative arts work that is truly developed and owned by the local field. Our hope is that unlike the process used with the Culturally Responsive Arts Education Program, in which a small group was led by foundation staff and developed core principles, this effort would lead to local practitioners having shared language around definitions of transformative arts work. This work could then guide the creation of professional development, curriculum and assessment models, and help organize the field.

At the suggestion of our participants, we have deliberately chosen not to use a request for proposals process at the outset of our work in order to encourage a variety of responses to a general set of goals that we have defined.

2. PROGRAM SUPPORT AND SUPPORT FOR NEW IDEAS

At the suggestion of our participants, we have deliberately chosen not to use a request for proposals process at the outset of our work in order to encourage a variety of responses to a general set of goals that we have defined. In furtherance of this idea, we intend to begin with the field-building work described above and look to see what new opportunities spring from that process while also developing new partners by sharing the paper in the field and hopefully sparking new conversations. In addition to our efforts to build a cohort of arts organizations and practitioners, we will continue to directly support youth-serving programs and efforts while also looking to have conversations with a range of individuals who work in underfunded neighborhoods. The idea of supporting ideas that come from the community and are focused on the youth and neighborhoods that are at the center of this initiative is an approach somewhat different from the more traditional foundation tool of an RFP, but we believe it will allow us to receive a greater diversity of responses and partners.

3. COMMUNICATIONS

One of the great benefits of the TAP process was the opportunity to talk about difficult issues such as the role of foundations in “underfunded communities,” how we use racial terms, the impact of past arts initiatives, and whether love is required to be a good teaching artist. In this next phase of work, we would like to find a way to regularly stimulate this kind of conversation as a way of supporting the cross-fertilization of arts, education, community development, arts presenting, out-of-school-time programming, and the list goes on. As was noted by many participants, there is an opportunity for Pittsburgh to both participate in and influence the national conversation in this regard. This support of communications could include creating a blog, supporting a speaker series, or asking for local cultural workers to develop communications of their views in this area, whether through a new arts piece, writing or multimedia.

4. EVALUATION / DATA

Another critical learning from the process was that the Endowments did not capture data on its work with youth in “underfunded communities” and could not easily share what exact percentage of dollars were going to these communities. That said, we feel confident from our knowledge of our grant making that while we do not have an exact percentage, the total is not a large one. We plan to work to improve our ability to track this information.

In addition, we want better data about the range of programs that currently exist in the county. We plan to take a scan of programs in Allegheny County's distressed neighborhoods so that we can get a clearer sense of the scope of programs in Pittsburgh and, in doing so, inform our future grant making.

Finally, there is the question of how we might evaluate this process for the numerous stakeholders involved in the process including the Endowments' board, staff, grantees and interested parties in the community. The goals we presented to our board at the Spring 2013 meeting were rather broad, and establishing more specific data-gathering priorities will be challenging but necessary.

5. WORK ACROSS ENDOWMENTS' PROGRAMS AND PARTNER WITH OTHER FUNDERS

Frequently during the TAP process, Endowments staff was reminded that all of this work did not have to be supported solely by the Arts & Culture Program or the Endowments. In fact, for this work to make an impact, it will need to have a broad base of support. For this reason, the Endowments will look to work across programs to support this agenda and seek opportunities to partner with colleague funders, whether they are private or public. Because arts with social justice interests have the capacity to both reach and alienate a range of supporters, relationship-building will be key.

What Would Success Look Like?

The goals that we presented at the Spring 2013 Heinz Endowments board meeting were:

- To increase the number, quality and choice of programs for youth with a particular focus on neighborhoods that have distressed tracts.
- To become more responsive to ideas in the community that are aligned with the principles and interests of this work.

We imagine success might look like:

- One thousand additional children will experience at least three to five hours of out-of-school-time, high-quality arts instruction per week;
- A range of funders will support the continuum of transformative arts programming that adds \$3 million of annual support to this field of work;
- The Endowments, in particular, and the funding community, in general, will have an expanded list of arts leaders and will become familiar with and supportive of a much broader set of neighborhoods. Children and youth from the programs we support will be noted in local and national media for working to make their neighborhoods more equitable.
- An ongoing training program/workshop that builds artists who can work inspirationally with African American youth and youth from underfunded neighborhoods will be in place.
- The Endowments and other funders will have supported a number of collaborations and professional development opportunities that artists say have increased the impact of their work.

How Prominently Should the Work Address Race, Class and Larger Social Issues?

When we presented a draft of our future direction to the group, we heard from a number of the participants in the room that they were disappointed that addressing issues of racism were not addressed more prominently in our plan, and so we will work to meet this challenge as the work moves forward. One step that we can take is increase our own capacity as staff to effectively raise questions of race and class, and support those conversations among our grantees and in the community.

While there was some progress made in the Transformative Arts Process, we noted that in certain cases, issues of race were discussed outside the group, and so we did not fully meet our goal for the group to be able to raise and resolve these matters as they arose. In terms of pedagogy, we heard the group say that teaching artists should be prepared to help youth think about how issues of justice and injustice affect their lives and that these conversations and efforts should be visible in the work of the youth, but in site- and context-specific ways.

Conclusion

As we have been told by both local and national participants in this process, transforming the way that the nonprofit arts are experienced by youth in “underfunded neighborhoods” will take time. Thus, we are hoping that we can spend 10 years working on this effort. We expect that time will dramatically affect and change this set of goals and our answers to these questions, and that we will need to continue and improve our ability to listen to the field and communities. To that end, we will develop an advisory committee as an important means of gathering feedback about how the work is progressing as well as helping us to shape this work as it moves forward.