



Information with Impact

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September 12, 2008



Inquiry: Cultural Data in Planning and Economic Development

Funder: The Rockefeller Foundation

Publication for Arts and Culture Leaders:
Communicating Value: Re-framing Arts and
Culture Data





Key Question:

Do professionals outside the sector find the currently available data about arts and culture compelling and useful?



Target Audiences: Professionals from the Fields of Planning and Economic Development

- Shape decisions that affect quality of community life
- Advise elected officials
- Allocate resources
- Implement policies about investments, land use, resource protection
- Use data of all types, including employment, economic trends, opinions and preferences
- Design neighborhoods and facilities



Data Typology

1. **Employment** in Cultural Jobs and Fields
2. **Economic Impact** of Cultural Activity
3. **Cultural Assets**
4. **Scope of Infrastructure** Supporting Cultural Activity
5. **Participation** in Cultural Activities
6. **Public Opinion** of Value of Cultural Activity



Synthesis of Study Findings

1. Cultural investments promote **economic** development.
2. The nature of venues and locations of **venues** matter to equity of cultural participation.
3. Cultural participation, especially informal arts, enhances **community building**.



Sector Definition

- Performing and Visual Arts
- Applied arts (e.g. graphic design, architecture, exhibit design)
- Crafts and Traditional Cultural Occupations
- Film, Media, Video
- Humanities and Historic Preservation
- Literature and Libraries
- For Profit, Not for Profit, Informal



Big Picture Findings

Community arts and culture assets are accepted as positive contributors to community quality of life by planning and economic development professionals....independent of quantitative proof of value.

BUT

Professionals are skeptical about validity and utility of existing data and research findings.



Findings about Sector and its Characteristics

- Personalized perspective dominates
- Narrow sector boundaries
- Cultural business is different
- Stereotypes of the cultural worker
- Lack of scale-ability
- Confusion about public subsidy



Findings about Data, Methods, Uses of Data

- Professionals have higher standards
- Advocates have over-interpreted
- Problems with "quality of life" indices
- Data not useful for decisions of interest
- Imported methods can be awkward fit





Four Implications for Communication about Data



1. Know Audience Goals: Take into account the professional lens and bottom-line goals

Community planners: strengthen communities based on assets

Economic developers: stimulate economic activity, creating jobs





2. Fill in Background: roles, employment, definitions, markets, distribution, connection to other sectors

- Counter stereotypes directly
- Provide comparisons
- Acknowledge limitations



3. Promote Assets: tangible and less tangible cultural assets

- Organize for access
- Frame for story generation
- Link related resources
 - public art + transit routes
 - arts venues + hospitality amenities
 - artisans + suppliers of materials + distributors



4. Communicate “evaluatively”

- Build theory of how investments influence outcomes
- Recognize implementation qualities
- Acknowledge value of contributory role
- Aim for “double outcomes”: capacity building that leads to economic value



Implications for Data
Collection



Themes of Descriptive Cases

Use Arts and Culture to:

- Attract development
- Enhance pride
- Recognize or build an economic cluster
- Develop and market a sense of place
- Create understanding of community issues
- Expand participation in planning processes



Desirable Characteristics of Descriptive Cases

- How investments unfold in contexts
- Track intended outcomes – intermediate and summative
- Rationale for particular outcomes
- How outcomes evolve
- Longitudinal information – 6-8 year timeline
- Inputs, including subsidy
- Aspects of context that hinder and support



Levels of Interest

- High Interest
 - Information about participant behavior
 - Role of arts education and arts training
- Low Interest
 - Synthesized findings



Questions and Reactions

