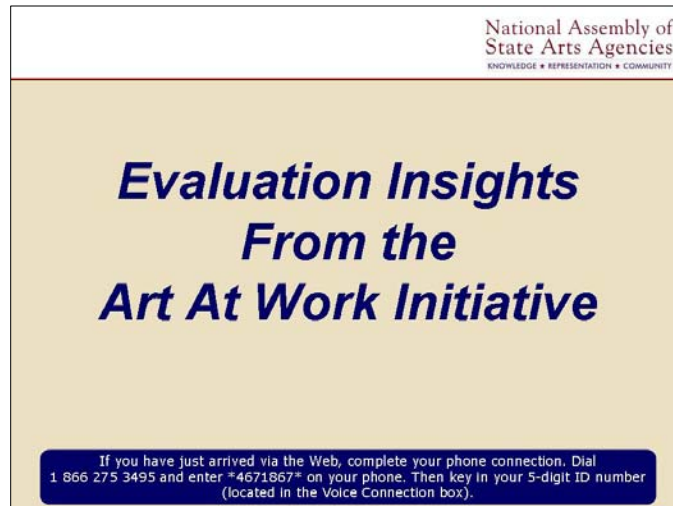


# Evaluation Insights from the Art At Work Initiative

Thursday, March 18, 2010  
Web seminar  
Abridged Transcript



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## Introduction

**Jonathan:** Good afternoon, I'm Jonathan Katz CEO of NASAA and it is my pleasure to welcome you to today's web seminar. We've been very gratified with the reception of these web seminars over the past year. Hundreds of people have logged into the seminars on a wide variety of issues, such as arts education, arts participation, advocacy and dealing with the recession. These sessions have become an important way that state arts agencies can learn about the latest research and model programs from both within and outside of the state arts agency field. Along those lines I hope you enjoy today's seminar which will take a look at some evaluation work being done by the Art At Work Initiative, an exciting program within municipal government in Portland, Maine. To tell you more about it, let me turn it over now to today's host, Kelly Barsdate.

## Session Kick-off

**Kelly:** Thanks Jonathan, and thanks to everyone out there across the country for tuning in. It's great to see so many state arts agency folks come back together in our virtual seminar hall again this afternoon.

Evaluation is always hard in the arts, but in these days of tight budgets and intense competition for funds, concerns about evaluation are ramping up even more. We're all asking questions about how we can document the value and impact of the arts, and this seminar is going to explore some of those questions.

As Jonathan said a moment ago, NASAA uses these Web seminars in a couple of different ways. One way is to share information *from or about state arts agencies*, like we did with last month's "Creative Leadership" seminar on programs from the Oklahoma and Utah arts councils. But we like to mix things up and look outside the state arts agency circle, too – sharing ideas from other parts of the arts or policy worlds. That's the approach we're taking with today's session.

Rather than focusing on state government, we're going look at a different part of the public realm - municipal government. We'll hear about the Art At Work initiative in Portland, Maine and how it is changing the way local government employees and citizens understand and relate to each other. We'll hear how they are evaluating the impact of that work to gauge how it's affecting both the city and the community.

National Assembly of State Arts Agencies  
KNOWLEDGE • REPRESENTATION • COMMUNITY

- How can we document the civic impact of the arts?
- What kinds of indicators are meaningful?
- Are there practical ways to collect information?

**ART AT WORK**  
An Arts & Equity Initiative  
With the City of Portland, Maine

**Animating Democracy**  
A Program of Americans for the Arts

If you have just arrived via the Web, complete your phone connection. Dial 1 866 275 3495 and enter \*4671867\* on your phone. Then key in your 5-digit ID number (located in the Voice Connection box).

In line with that local focus, we're delighted to be collaborating on this session with the Animating Democracy program at Americans for the Arts. They have a very exciting project underway that's all about evaluating the impact of arts and civic engagement projects. There is a lot of stuff coming out of this project that will be of interest to states. We'll hear from both Pam Korza and Barbara Schaffer Bacon from Animating Democracy.

Barbara is nationally known for her expertise in cultural planning and as an arts management educator. She's a former director of the Arts Extension Service in Amherst, where she worked for 13 years. She's also a lecturer at NYU and a senior faculty member for the Empire State Partnerships' Summer Institute on arts education. Barbara will be on line during our Q&A and also will be sharing some material with us toward the end of today's session.

Before that, we'll hear from Pam, who also has a background with the Arts Extension Service. Also, Pam literally "wrote the book" on public art in America. She managed the project with the NEA that produced "Going Public: A Field Guide to Art in Public Places." Pam also ran the New England Film and Video Festival and has done planning and evaluation work for numerous artists and arts funders, too.

And today, she's first in our speaker lineup! So Pam, I'll pass the mic over to you to tell us more about this impact initiative.

## The Arts and Civic Engagement Impact Initiative

**Pam:** Barbara and I have worked with Animating Democracy right from the get go. Our interest has been to strengthen the role of art and culture in civic engagement. This has been based in the belief that art really has something to contribute to community change. By no means is this a new concept. Whether you describe art for change as civic engagement, community development, community building, social justice or any of those terms, it is true that community based arts and artist activists have been doing this for a very long time. Helping artists and arts groups to understand how to work intentionally in a civic context and to be effective in that work has been at the core of Animating Democracy from the start. We've done that through a number of things: through grant making, with Ford Foundation resources, through lots of publications, through workshops and training and through special initiatives.

Animating Democracy from the start. We've done that through a number of things: through grant making, with Ford Foundation resources, through lots of publications, through workshops and training and through special initiatives.



One of current initiatives is the Arts and Civic Engagement Impact initiative. If artists and arts groups are claiming that their work is making and creating civic and social change, the question that arises is “how do you measure that?” We launched the initiative in 2007 with support from the Kellogg Foundation to respond to several common needs that we had been hearing about. First was the need for more concrete evidence.

Anecdotal evidence has been the easiest to collect and report on for many arts folks, but many people believe that you need quantifiable data as well to make a compelling case, whether it’s to community partners, or civic leaders, funders, trustees, legislators. There is also a need to foster evaluative thinking. Some states may have experienced this with your relationships with grantees. Many practitioners do not see the value or the benefit of evaluation in the way that it becomes a natural and integrated part of planning and implementing their work. And finally, there is a need for more realistic and attainable results. We hear this, for instance, from folks like Maria Rosario Jackson at the Urban Institute, in two ways: expectations that are reasonable around the actual outcomes that are being claimed as well as realistic expectations around evaluation methods, mainly because they can only be undertaken within a set of limited means.

The Arts and Civic Engagement Initiative set out to do three things, first to identify work that already exists from various fields and figure out what is relevant there, second to equip practitioners with practical knowledge in order that they can strengthen their own capacity to assess and describe the kind of social change that results from their work, and the third to position the arts as valid and viable contributors to social change. This is a bit of a longer term goal and a bit ambitious for the first part of our initiative, but nevertheless one for which we will continue to aim.

**The Arts and Civic Engagement  
Impact Initiative**

*Responding to a need:*

- for concrete evidence
- to foster evaluative thinking
- for reasonable expectations




Supported by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation

**The Arts and Civic Engagement  
Impact Initiative**

1. *Coalesce knowledge and advance learning* among stakeholders (leading practitioners, researchers, evaluators, and funders)
2. *Strengthen the capacity of practitioners* to assess and describe social change outcomes
3. *Position the arts* as valid and viable contributors to civic engagement and social change

Supported by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation

We convened a working group of researchers, evaluators, funders, as well as practitioners, this group included Chris and Kelly. They guided our efforts throughout the first years of the initiative and contributed a lot to research, writing and resource development.

The Working Group includes:

**Mark Stern** and **Susan Seifert** Social Impact of the Arts Project/U Penn; **Suzanne Callahan** Callahan Consulting for the Arts; **Chris Dwyer** RMC Research; and **Maria-Rosario Jackson** Urban Institute. Other members of the Working Group include: **Kelly Barsdate** National Assembly of State Arts Agencies; **Denise Brown** Leeway Foundation; **Claudine K. Brown** Nathan Cummings Foundation; **Dudley Cocke** Roadside Theatre; artist **Rha Goddess** (1+1+1+ONE); **Marian Godfrey** Pew Charitable Trusts; artist **John Malpede** LAPD (Los Angeles Poverty Department); **Marc Vogel** William and Flora Hewlett Foundation; **Roberto Bedoya, Leia Maahs** Tuscon Pima Arts Council; **Maribel Alvarez** Univ. of Arizona, Tucson

One of the results of the working group’s efforts is this continuum. We came up with this illustration to depict the range of social and civic outcomes that the arts aspire to and often achieve. From the left, “enhancing knowledge or awareness of an issue” to the right “system or policy change” and other outcomes you see in between relating to change in attitudes, capacity and action.



Artists and their work affect what people tune into, what they know, how they talk about issues that matter, and they can validate and expand whose perspectives are being heard in the public sphere. And with issues that are often portrayed as “black and white” art can often surface the nuances or ambiguities that allow us to get below the surface of the issues.

### AWARENESS, KNOWLEDGE, DISCOURSE



- Deepening understanding of complex issues
- Giving voice
- Enabling, enhancing, dialogue
- Making information inviting and accessible


Dead Man Walking  
San Francisco Opera

Artists and their work can have an effect on what people think and feel. In creative work the research and the planning and art making processes often engage people in ways that clarify ideals and values. Arts projects might explicitly aim to increase respect or shift attitudes around an issue.

## ATTITUDES, VALUES

- Generating hope, pride
- Expressing, clarifying ideals, values
- Promoting respect
- Shifting attitudes

Vietnam Veteran's Memorial  
Maya Lin



Capacity outcomes have to do with the abilities and resources that enable people or organizations or communities to be effective contributors to social change. In Animating Democracy's grant making we were especially interested in strengthening the capacity for artists and arts groups to apply the power of their art to meaningful civic dialogue. And what that meant was building their civic responsibility and skills.

## CAPACITY

- Building social capital
- Developing creative skills for organizing
- Increasing the status of disenfranchised groups
- Developing leadership and persuasiveness

Songs of the Civil Rights Movement



Thanks to Robert Putnam we all understand that social capacity is an important capacity in communities. Again, the planning of art making processes create opportunities where bonds and bridges are strengthened and when those relationships are strengthened there can be a gain in status and agency for all the disenfranchised groups.

This family of outcomes relates to how people behave, relate and take action in their communities and in society. Projects might aim to increase civic participation and engagement overall, perhaps to expand who participates or to mobilize people to come together for action.

## PARTICIPATION, ACTION

- Expanding who participates
- Motivating people to act
- Enhancing organizing strategies
- Mobilizing people



When we think about policy or structural or systems change we are aiming for lasting or sustained change that has to do with insuring inclusion, equity and fairness. As we've learned working with our working group experts, change at this level can rarely be attributed to one thing, including an artist or single arts organization. But, artists and arts groups do contribute to these longer time frame types of change. It often just takes sustained commitment, like artists embedded in an institution such as we'll hear about today. It takes cross-culture partnerships and leadership. Thinking back to the continuum slide for a moment, in representing these outcomes on a continuum we might be saying there are many points along the way that we could describe as short or intermediate outcomes critical to striving for the lasting changed located on the right hand side. In Animating Democracy's work we have argued that important work happens along all of those points along the continuum and that artists and arts have a role to play at all those locations.

Part of our initiative is what we called the "field lab" that supported five cultural organizations and projects. Each of these was paired up with an evaluation professional that explored with that arts group or artists how to gauge and describe the social change outcomes of their work. We were really concerned with honing in on what would be useful and meaningful in each case and also doable. The learnings from each of these collaborations are documented in full case studies available on our website. What we hoped to learn most from Marty and Chris's work was how to hone in on outcomes and indicators that provide evidence of concern to targeted stakeholders and opinion leaders.

## SYSTEMS, POLICIES

- Improving access and equity
- Diversifying leadership
- Advancing policy change
- Increasing sustainable assets



"Local 11" 1998  
Judy Baca. SPARC

### The ACEII Field Lab

**Finding Voice**, a program of the Tucson Pima Arts Council helps refugee and immigrant youth develop literacy and second language skills by researching, photographing, writing, and speaking out about critical social issues in their lives and communities.

**Los Angeles Poverty Department (LAPD)** is a Skid Row-based theater organization with a longstanding commitment to making change in L.A.'s Skid Row community through theater-based civic engagement work.

**The Hip Hop Mental Health Project (HHMHP)** seeks to contribute to shifting the paradigm of shame and alienation surrounding mental illness, and create SAFE place to confront the issue and obtain vital information. Through the integration of performance and dialogue, the HHMHP works to impact public discourse and values around mental illness in urban communities.

**Art & Soul (The Orton Family Foundation)** in Starksboro, VT is applying arts-based methods of community engagement to generate and inform conversations around community values and a vision for one community's future that are robust enough to influence concrete actions and decisions.



**The Arts & Equity Initiative (AEI)** is a three-year project of the City of Portland led by artist Marty Pottenger that seeks to address challenges in municipal government through strategic art projects between artists, city departments, unions, elected officials and the community.

## Evaluating Art At Work / Thin Blue Lines

**Kelly:** Thanks for that overview, Pam. We'll patch you back in later so that people can ask some questions.

Next, let's turn to our featured program. On top of being an amazing arts project, Art At Work give us a very concrete example of how to evaluate an arts program in meaningful ways and explore the impact it has on different people it touches.

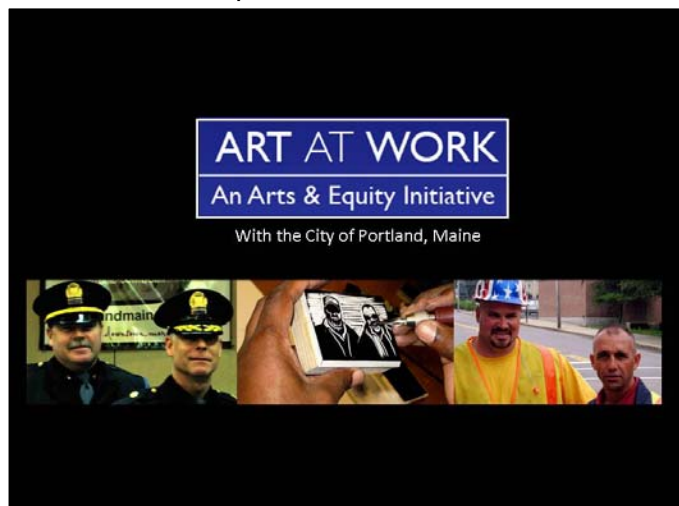
To help us do that, we have Marty Pottenger and Chris Dwyer with us.

Marty directs the Arts & Equity Initiative, which is a public-private partnership between the city of Portland, Maine and Terra Moto. She's a playwright, a performer, a director and an *Obie Award* winner for her solo performance piece, "City Water Tunnel #3." Marty has a long relationship to the labor movement as a tradeswoman, organizer, and speaker. And now she's taken on city hall in Portland with the Art At Work initiative!

Chris Dwyer, from RMC Research, worked with Marty to help her design an evaluation framework for this project. In addition to being an evaluator with special expertise in the arts and culture, Chris is, herself, an arts champion. She's a former chair of the New Hampshire State Council, has chaired her city arts commission, served on the Currier Museum board and is an elected official on the city council in Portsmouth, New Hampshire.

Marty and Chris are going to do a tag-team today, with Marty up first. Marty, over to you!

**Marty:** This is Art At Work, it is kind of a moving target a project in motion. It started out as AEI (Arts and Equity Initiative) and now we have a name we like even more after three years in Portland, Maine.





Art At Work is a national initiative to improve municipal government through strategic art projects with municipal employees, elected officials and artists. It was an idea that had been brewing for a few years and circumstances conspired and the City of Portland asked me if I was able to come up and try to use the arts to assist them with issues particular around race and class.

**ART AT WORK**  
An Arts & Equity Initiative

A national initiative to improve municipal government through strategic arts projects with municipal employees, elected officials and local artists.

These are questions that our project is asking are continually be revised. I like to lead with questions that immediately establish a sense of dialogue; a frame that we can work from. Although people say I'm the artist in residence for the City of Portland, that isn't how I would describe it. We are official partners. I am the executive director for an art nonprofit called Terra Moto and I had a three-year contract to come up and have an office in city hall and see what was possible.

**ART AT WORK**  
An Arts & Equity Initiative

**Q: Can art transform government?**

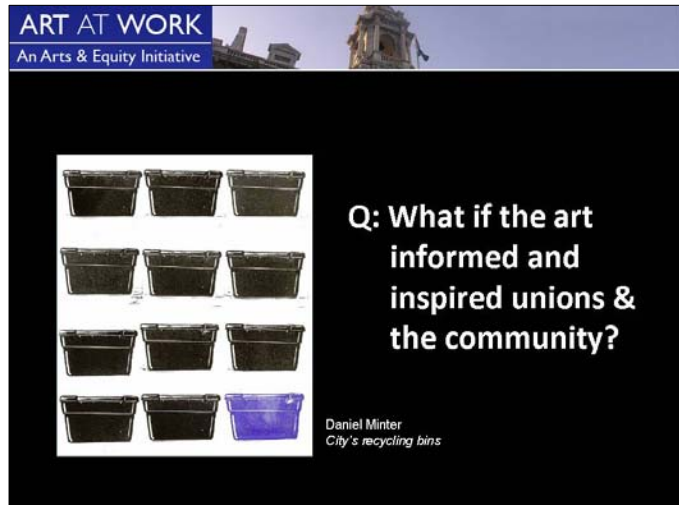
**Q: What happens when police and artists make art about their lives?**

The three departments we've been working with have been public service, health and human service and the police. In this slide our city street clearing crews are practicing for the snow plow rodeo.

**ART AT WORK**  
An Arts & Equity Initiative

**Q: What if city workers made art about the work they do every day?**

So what if art inspired unions and the community? You can imagine there are a lot of places that a city could use the intelligence and imagination that art brings. I realized that art making opens up an access and intelligence in each of us that costs no money, took no time and was immediately available. It let people hold contradictions more eloquently, let them remember connections more clearly and really access a way of problem solving that seemed like an excellent thing to add to municipal government. This is a print by Daniel Minter, who is one of the artists working with the Department of Public Services. We have had about five workshops so far and the prints that they have made now hang around the city, at places like the landfill, the recycling center, at the public social services center and at city hall.



This is Elizabeth Jabar, who is working with Health and Human Services staff, and this is one of her prints. One of the core ideas in the project is that we identified a few key issues that department had not had a chance to address. The city has a long term care center called the Bern Center and the issues of retention and high turnover, especially among the lower paid and heavily burdened staff, is an ongoing issue that has an effect on the entire institution. And that was the key issue that we were addressing here.



We also did a series of projects with the Department of Public Works. There are about six or seven hundred workers in that department and a very low awareness about diversity and how the community in Portland has changed dramatically in terms of demographics. Portland became a desirable location for second immigration and refugee relocation, so the effort here was to create an art project that helped city workers to deconstruct the myth of whiteness and actually claim their heritage. The print making was about being Scottish and Irish and really just creating a level of awareness amongst the municipal



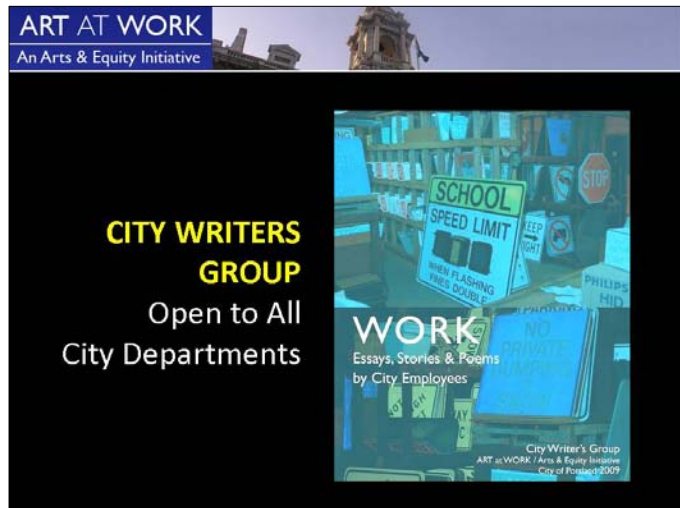
employees.

On the right we have project that is a partnership with the coffee shops where you could buy a cup and meet someone from public works to really emphasize the diversity of the department and the people. This David Melendez's carving of a red hawk that he saw on top of a shed. These prints become a dictionary so that employees can tell the story of their work.

After a couple of years I thought it would be great to have a project that anybody could join, just to see who was out there in terms of the city employees. So we started a City Writer's Group that was open to everyone and we planned to meet once a month and some of the times we met on city time and some of the times we met outside. You can imagine that is a lively issue to sort out. This is the book that we made, so people would have an actual product. We also turned these into large posters that hang all over the city. One of my favorites is one written by one of the clerks called "hands." It's a poem about the different kinds of hands that give her money and the last two lines are:

*What does it take to earn it  
What had to be sacrificed*


Now we come to the project that we are really going to focus on, and the project that Chris and I really took on ourselves, called *Thin Blue Lines* with the police department. That first year it was really strong arming people, some were kind of semi-ordered by their commanders. The second year no one was ordered and there were twice as many volunteers to participate, which is a really great example of an outcome. In the first year we had to wait three months for a public poetry reading and to start a dialogue with the library as a partner, because the idea that the police would read their poetry in public was unimaginable. By the second year we did three public poetry readings in the first three weeks.



We tried to keep the bar high in terms of goals as well as the quality of the poems. Partnering one on one with the poets Was critical. Even Maine's Poet laureate was involved. With police morale so low, it was helpful to partner the officers with poets that had really strong street cred, like the chair of USM English department. This had an immediate useful effect.


**ART AT WORK**  
An Arts & Equity Initiative

Goal: To dramatically improve the relationship between the police and the public, making the lives & work of the police department more visible & their good work more evident - to the public, to the department, to each other.



In the last slide we saw the police officers at a funeral, Sergeant Rob Johnsey's, and in this slide we see his family. This became a focal point for the project and gave it a lot of momentum. Previously we had interviewed officers and turned what they had done into poems and had them exhibited at city hall and in the police headquarters. But up to that point the cops, themselves, had only written a handful of lewd, lascivious rhyming limericks for me. Then Sergeant Johnsey died of a gunshot wound and it became known for the first time at his memorial service, to everyone but his wife that he wrote poetry regularly. It was that revelation that got other police officers to write poetry. They would write poetry for a calendar to raise money for Johnsey's family. It needed to be at that high a stake for them to do it.

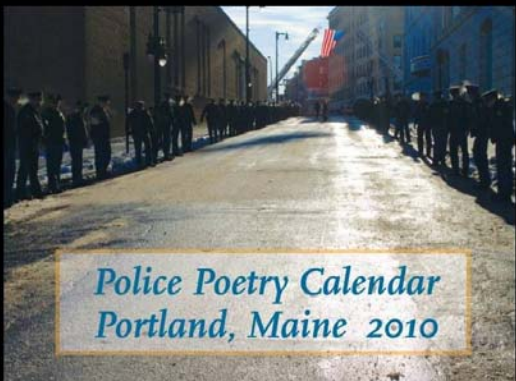
**ART AT WORK**  
An Arts & Equity Initiative



The idea of a calendar of poems, writings & photographs by police and local artists came during Sgt. Rob Johnsey's funeral when everyone learned for the first time that he loved to write poems.

There are eleven warrior poets, police officers, who wrote poems for the 2010 calendar and eleven professional poets. The two key issues with the police department were low morale and their relationship to the public. This is the cover of the calendar. Unfortunately we lost another officer the second year and this photograph is from his memorial service. Twice as many officers volunteered for this project and they realized that this was a project that they wanted to be a part of. Now they've become Facebook friends with their poets and have had dinner at each others' houses. There's still a journey and there's still a process, but

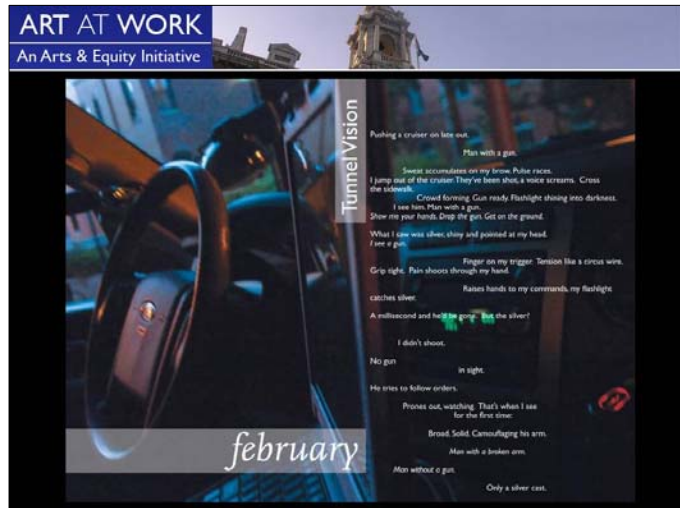
**ART AT WORK**  
An Arts & Equity Initiative



*Police Poetry Calendar  
Portland, Maine 2010*

now the police officers always take the lead. We actually meet with the poets regularly to kind of train them on how to let the officers be in charge of ideas. The officers actually asked if they could start meeting in May instead of September, another strong indicator of impact.

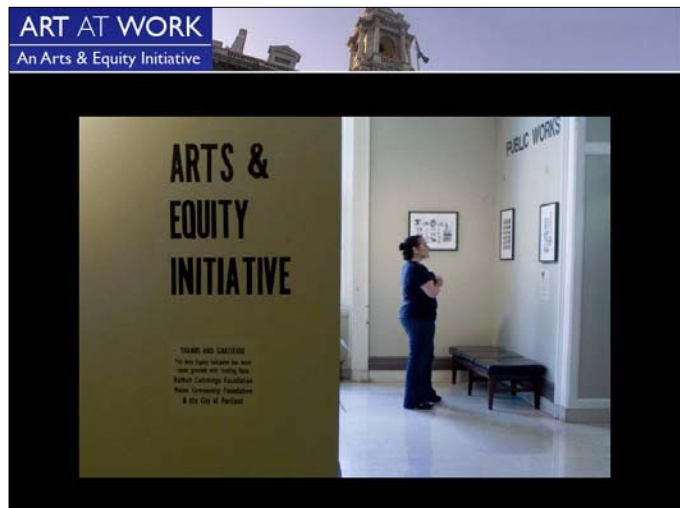
We put this image in to show you a page of the calendar, which is available on Amazon. The first year we made about \$8000, but I wanted to really show you the quality of the work. This particular poem is by a detective who was a bout to pull the trigger on someone when she realized that it was an arm cast painted silver, not a gun.



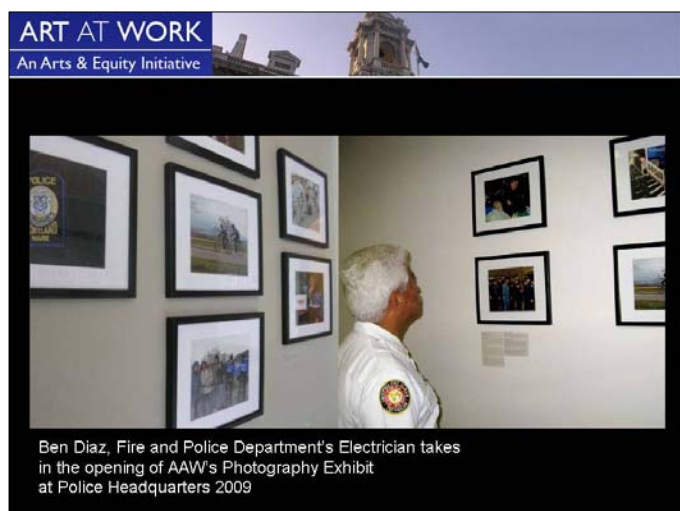
The officers are taking the poetry very seriously. This is a reading and this is Commander Michael Sauschuck, who was just named Assistant Chief a few days ago. He is our main person now, and it always takes one. I just wanted to let you all know that a key approach is to ask questions like, "Who is respected in this department? Who do people look to?" Begin with those relationships and talk with those people about what they could see happening. Also, make sure you bring in evaluation right from the beginning. It is very different to say to someone, "Would you like to write poems?" than it is to say, "What would you like to see shift in this department?" When I met with the Los Angeles mayor's staff last April, I asked the mayor's chief of staff, "If you could change anything in the way that LA runs, what would it be?" Asking that question got us extra time with her just thinking out loud. Then I could take that information back to my colleagues and other artists and figure out what art project could head us in that direction.



If you walk through the gallery here you will enter the city chambers where all the council meeting happen and public hearings take place, so everyone has to walk through the art to get to the meetings.



This is at the police headquarters, where we have been asked to install a permanent forty photograph exhibit. These are all photographs from the police calendars and the captions here are as meaningful as the work, not only telling who did it, but what it means to that person as well.



On the right here is the janitor's closet door which has a lot of calendar paraphernalia on it, another indicator that we have been successful in terms of actually connecting to all the layers of the police department. Thanks everyone, I'll now turn it over to Chris.



**Chris:** You've heard Marty mention taking an evaluative perspective and evaluative thinking a few times. Listening to Marty you know that if you were part of this or there you wouldn't feel the need for an evaluation you "just know" that it's working and the results are real. But, once you step just a little bit away from it, as you all know, explaining to someone else the value of this work becomes much more challenging. Marty was very interested in having an outcome evaluation where she could make a case-not just document, but make a case-for the value of this work. So, I will share a few thoughts about outcome evaluation and what is a critical

part of it. One is to be open to exploring your work from multiple viewpoints from the outset. And then to frame those perspectives as questions about outcomes of value, not to simply assume that they are, but really have a genuine and authentic inquiry into work others are seeing as values. That's hard for people in our field. A key part of that is to develop indicators that describe what kind of behavioral, attitudinal and system changes would result from your work. And you can see that is connecting to what Pam shared with you earlier. Really anybody can do those things if you take a systematic approach. You don't need an evaluator or technical skills to do those. The rigor, the sophistication of evaluation and the cost of the evaluation comes in afterwards in how you collect the data and how independent you may want your evaluator to be. I was interested in working up front with Marty and the other project directors to see if we could build in an evaluative perspective so they could take it from there and didn't really need outside expertise after that.

There were five steps in both projects that we went through. It's a way to guide a conversation with the project staff to start instilling evaluative thinking right away. First we wanted to determine "Who should value our work?" Who Marty wanted to eventually be able to convince about the value of her work was local officials, her colleagues in the field, folks in city hall, etc. One of the things I've found in arts and culture is that it is really hard for people to think beyond funders. We are really hung up on funders, and freeing yourself up to think about who the other stakeholders are really strengthens the evaluative potential. The next step is for

each of those audiences you are interested in addressing, you really need to learn what their current concerns and priorities are. It's a matter of trying on their perspectives. It is a magical thing that happens when you are willing to learn about their concerns. The third part is a bit of a pause. Once you begin to understand others' perspectives it will change how you carry out an initiative. I like to pause before we even go onto evidence and outcomes. If you are really

## Taking an Evaluative Perspective

### Basics of Outcome Evaluation:

Explore the value of your work from multiple viewpoints

Frame questions about outcomes of value

Develop indicators that describe desired behavioral, attitudinal, and system changes resulting from your work

After that it's all about rigor, sophistication, independence, cost!

## Systematic Inquiry

**1. Audiences/stakeholders:** Who should value the work? Who do we need to convince about the value of the work?

**Hint: Think beyond funders**

**2. Connections:** What are the current concerns and priorities of those audiences?

**Hint: Try on others' perspectives**

**3. Implementation qualities:** Are there adjustments that would make a stronger connection to important audiences?

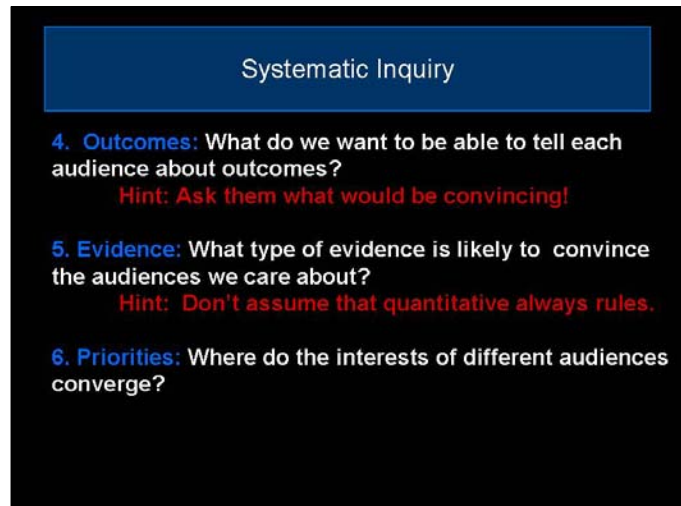
concerned about the audience and their priorities, what does that already tell you about what you might do differently? Marty there's an example you might share related to families.

**Marty:** We realized that the families were going to be an integral piece for affecting the low police morale issue, for many reasons. So, from the beginning, we figured out that we would be mailing a copy of the calendar to each family as soon as it was printed because to rely on the officers to take it home was a possible weak link. We sent it to the families with a letter that explained what our goals related to morale were, thanked them for the role they have already played and invited them to participate in an online survey.

**Chris:** Once you have your audience and you know what their concerns are, you really have to start asking yourself, "At the end, what do we really want to be able to tell those audiences about the outcomes?" A great way to figure that out is to ask them what would be convincing. Don't just assume what would convince them, ask. Often, in the arts, we think about the number of people who have attended a performance, but reduced tension between the youth and the police is going to be more important to some audiences than how many people show up to a poetry reading. I separate step four and step five because the outcomes

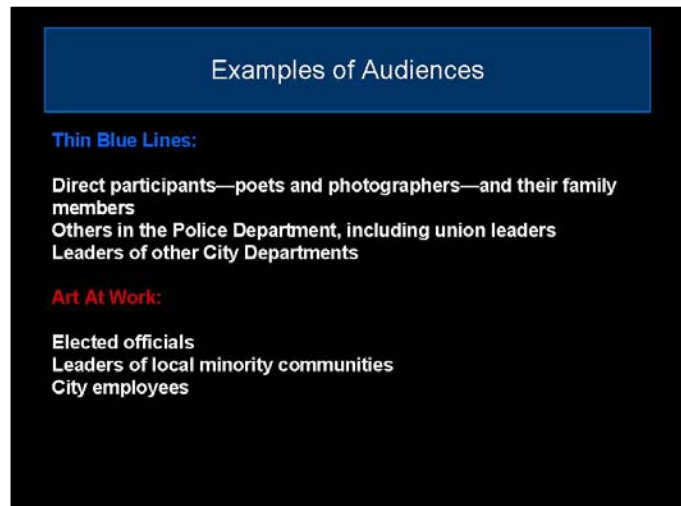
you are aiming for may be different than the type of evidence that is likely to convince the audiences you care about. Pam said at the beginning that quantitative evidence is important to many audiences, and that is true, but we also know that it is likely a particular kind of quantitative evidence, or a combination of quantitative and qualitative evidence, that is most convincing and that will depend on the audience. At the beginning of the project Marty and I went through and identified which audiences we really wanted to focus on and then where their priorities converged. I'd like to share with you just a few examples from those five steps.

These are examples of some of the audiences we brainstormed. For Thin blue Lines it was very focused, the people right in the police department. For Art At Work, Marty's overall project, we looked at a wider set of audiences.



**Systematic Inquiry**

- 4. Outcomes:** What do we want to be able to tell each audience about outcomes?  
**Hint: Ask them what would be convincing!**
- 5. Evidence:** What type of evidence is likely to convince the audiences we care about?  
**Hint: Don't assume that quantitative always rules.**
- 6. Priorities:** Where do the interests of different audiences converge?



**Examples of Audiences**

**Thin Blue Lines:**

- Direct participants—poets and photographers—and their family members
- Others in the Police Department, including union leaders
- Leaders of other City Departments

**Art At Work:**

- Elected officials
- Leaders of local minority communities
- City employees



And then we developed a series of evaluation questions and indicators for those changes in behavior. Here are just a few examples. This is the one about how involvement in the police project affects the perception of the profession and the morale in the department. I want to call your attention to that first indicator, because that became so important. Marty and I, together with some advice from others, built up a whole series of indicators. If you don't know what you're looking for, you won't know it when you hear it. One desired result was that police officers wanted to be recognized on the street by members of the public and they wanted to hear appreciation from the public. No surprise that started to happen with this project.

Examples of Evaluation Questions and Indicators

**In what ways does involvement in the police project affect perceptions of the profession and morale?**

**Behavior:**

- Participants are recognized by and hear appreciations from the public

**Attitudes:**

- Participants acknowledge that project participation increases their (and their families') pride in the police profession
- Participants are better able to separate selves from work roles
- Morale of Police Department is enhanced with shared sense of efficacy and solidarity

Here's a different kind of the overall perception, how the community's perception of the police department changed over time. We wanted to zero in on that. We developed some examples of attitudes and indicators that would be a positive outcome about the police acting fairly. We also thought through what kinds of system-level changes could occur. We hoped that over a couple years the police force would become more representative of the community's demographics in a lot of different ways.

Examples of Evaluation Questions and Indicators

**How do the community's perceptions of the Portland Police Department change over time?**

**Attitudes:**

- Perception that police are fair and act fairly, especially on part of communities of color/immigrant communities
- Community takes pride in professionalism of Portland PD

**System:**

- Police Department proactively recruits people of color
- Police force is representative of community demographics in multiple ways—race, gender, sexual orientation, etc.

I'm really big on indicators. We probably had seventy-five that we brainstormed for this, and part of the value of having so many is that it really sensitizes people to what you are looking for. Also, once you have indicators figured out, you can determine where you are going to get data. Articulating indicators will help you sort out the timing of data, baselines, will some things come way down the line or right after an event, etc. Once you have the indicators they help you shape the instruments. So, it was pretty easy for Marty to create survey questions and interview questions using the language in those indicators. To me, the indicators you articulate up front- in consultation with your stakeholders- are the frame for all of your

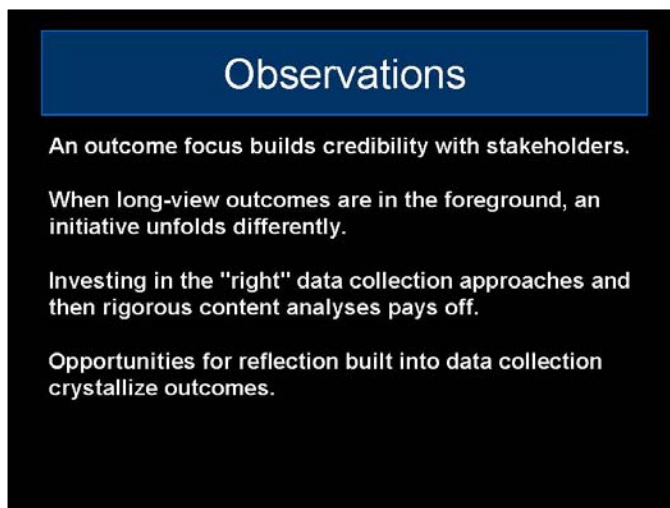
Indicators can:

- Define sources of data/timing of data collection
- Facilitate development of instruments
- Provide a frame for documentation
- Structure organization of content and analysis of information

information. Whether there's an article in the paper or minutes from a council meeting or an anecdote from a policeman, you know what to do with those from an evaluative perspective and you log them into the indicator that corresponds with them. So when it comes time to pull this all together you have the structure of your content analysis. That's a real quick tour of the process that we did to get to the point.

We talked recently and came up with a few quick observations about all of this. Marty?

**Marty:** Having an evaluative perspective from the beginning allowed me to have meetings that brought a sense of grounding and seriousness to the project. In the beginning people were interested, but very wary of this whole arts thing. So getting to start with an evaluative framework really helped undercut the way that art can be perceived as trivial or non-essential. That was contradicted by really aiming at core issues aimed at them and how they could improve. So I was able to have meetings with the mayor, city council, community leaders from a different perspective.



**Observations**

- An outcome focus builds credibility with stakeholders.
- When long-view outcomes are in the foreground, an initiative unfolds differently.
- Investing in the "right" data collection approaches and then rigorous content analyses pays off.
- Opportunities for reflection built into data collection crystallize outcomes.

**Chris:** The second one is particularly important to me, and something I really harp on. If you do this kind of systematic thinking on the front end that's evaluative thinking and you have short, medium and long-term outcomes in mind you are going to do an initiative differently. It is going to unfold differently, because you are thinking differently about where you are trying to go. Now I understand this might not be for everyone, but in this case Marty had some very particular goals and well understood outcomes she was trying to achieve. Still it has been very interesting to me how quickly she sometimes reshapes something based on a conversation. The challenge of this in terms of the right method of data collection, taking some time to really think about that and then rigorously doing the content analysis, is where the real payoff in this process lays. Some strategic help, a little consultation on the technical side from an evaluator, can help steer things in the right direction.

**Marty:** To actually build in an evaluative exchange at every event, something as simple as asking a questions like, "What's one thing you're taking away or learned?" brings the group together and allows everyone to hear each other, as well as provides a lot of information. One to two hour interviews we did the first year of the poetry calendar, while completely evaluative, really deepened the experience of the project for the individual and helped them better analyze what it meant to them. It really shifted their relationship to the project.

## Discussion

**Kelly:** Thanks so much, Chris and Marty. It's great to see a concrete example of how that type of thinking can affect the course of a project. We're going to open things up for discussion, with all our guest speakers.

To kick things off we have a couple of questions for you Marty and Chris. You mentioned a series of attitudinal indicators, things like morale of the police department and the community perception of police fairness. How are you actually measuring those things?

**Marty:** One of the indicators was participation, how people use the calendar. Another was when a bunch of national and international publications carried the story the officers started using the banner headlines as screensavers in their cruisers. Officers also reported more positive contact with the public. You measure media count, how many stories are positive at this point, and I track how the union's relationship was within itself and how it is now.

**Chris:** I had hoped that we could piggy back some questions on a community survey, but Portland doesn't do anything like that, although they thought it was a good idea. So the kinds of things that Marty is talking about are really less expensive proxies.

**Kelly:** Sounds like a lot of things constitute data, which is much more than Survey Monkey results.

**Marty:** Right. As part of the police officer interviews I mentioned we handed out a detailed survey, which Chris helped me design. 93% of the officers who participated stated that the process definitely improved the morale.

**Chris:** So a combination of a survey and more open ended analysis of the interviews.

**Kelly:** Here's a question for you, Chris. A lot of evaluation experts suggest taking a standard logic model or rubric approach for evaluating projects. What's your take on that, and did you and Marty consider that here?

**Chris:** We typically do that in our evaluation, but what I find is sometimes that's a little off putting to practitioners, particularly more creative practitioners who feel like they are being put into little boxes. So I really have a logic model in my own head when I'm talking to an artist or staff, trying to figure out what they are really looking for short term and long term. I'm trying to probe so that I understand, but it is more of a tool that I use, but I don't necessarily draw it out for artists or people working on the actual project. I find that often the logic model conversation ends with the boxes, but doesn't really get to the richer questions and indicators. I see it as only one tool.

**Kelly:** Let's cover a couple more questions on this project and then turn to a few on the broader project. Marty, you talked about how Art At Work has affected city workers and the families of cops and the community. What about a level higher, with elected officials. Would you mind talking a bit about what you're seeing there and maybe what you'd like to see?

**Marty:** Policy is changing. One of the policies that the police officers most hated was that they were forced to wear a hat according to the uniform code, no matter what. One of the officers wrote a poem in the first calendar, which I'll quote, titled "I Do Hate the Hat:"

*When it's a child  
A victim  
Someone harmed  
I take it off*

The policy was changed and, from the police chief on out, everyone attributes the changing of that policy to the poem. There is a much longer conversation that can be had here, regarding the people who make budget decisions as economic issues spiral out of control. What I have seen is that the mayor of Portland has just chosen this project to be the NEA mayor's initiative that Portland submitted. Many councilors lobbied for that to be the case. That reflects a big sense of support from elected officials.

**Kelly:** That's great, congratulations. Here's another question that has come across the transom, from the Nebraska Arts Council. When a number of the desired outcomes are significant, like increasing diversity in the police force, how do you control for variables that could intervene? And how do you counter skeptics or deal with them?

**Chris:** The project would not ever claim full credit for something like that, but in collecting information and indicators in this sort of file structure that we've mentioned, there will be lots of information about how various individuals attribute certain changes to particular actions. I think the anecdote that Marty just shared with you about the hat and the policy is a good example of that. I work a lot with kids, but when you are working with adults and they make a direct attribution like that that is claimable value as long as you don't claim that there was no other cause for it. We're not ever talking about direct cause and effect, but rather one of the causes.

**Marty:** We have made those changes, the city is making those shifts, and I don't know if you can trace them to any one thing or another. It's about keeping the bar high and keeping those relationships with people that allow them to have the opportunity to think out loud and discuss how they might achieve something.

**Chris:** And I think it is really important that you aren't afraid to claim that those are the kind of outcomes that you are looking for, whether or not you can attribute them. It took a lot of conversation to pull that out of Marty, because at the beginning I was having trouble getting how we could get that equity part out of what they were doing then, something we could see and trace. What are the connections between the short, the medium and the long term that might get us to equity? That's the value of thinking this through on the front end.

**Kelly:** This is actually an echo of what Pam mentioned in the beginning, that the arts aren't the only solution, but they are certainly contributing to a lot of impact along a continuum. This project was just one of several other lab projects in the initiative that paired an evaluator with practitioners to really get at these questions about how we can clarify outcomes and capture information on indicators about the difference we make. Were all of those projects evaluated in the same way, would you mind talking about that a bit?

**Pam:** They were not all done in the same way. In fact, from the perspective of this being a sort of laboratory, we were pretty intentional about looking at different types of outcomes and different approaches to tracking change. For example, in Tucson the Tucson-Pima Arts Council is a funder of a project called Finding Voice, which allows refugee and immigrant populations develop both their literacy and language skills through arts, primarily photography and writing, but also at the same time exercise their civic participation and become active members in their community. This project worked with Mirabel Alvarez at the University of Arizona, Tucson with a more ethnographic approach, looking at the qualitative types of change that could be documented through a variety of strategies.

**Barbara:** I can pick up and describe a bit more with a project that Rha Goddess, an artist from New York, has been working on called the Hip Hop Mental Health Project. It primarily consists

of a one woman show that presents one woman's experience with mental illness in a community. Its aim is to really be very intentional about opening up dialogue about mental illness and mental health services in the African-American community. She was very interested in understanding the literal impact of the one time performance experience and the dialogue that she associated with that. She was very interested in getting support for her work from social services and folks that are more interested in the issues of mental health and mental illness. She wanted real evidence that her work was making a change in attitude and perhaps behavior. She worked first with some social scientists from City University of New York and then again with Suzanne Callahan, and through both experiences had an opportunity to really hone a meaningful audience survey that allowed her to accurately capture and calculate the meaning of that performance. At the same time she had some opportunity through discussions with Suzanne to think through some of the effects that performance experience and also understand that the work that she did in a community previously and the work that was done to follow-up in the community had a whole different level of impact. So from that project we got another great survey example and a report on its effects. We also were able to get Rha's reflections on how evaluative thinking has impacted her work as an artist.

**Kelly:** You'll be sharing with us in a moment where there are profiles about how each approach was unique. Here's another question for you Barbara: given the economy right now is economic impact on your continuum, or did you consciously decide to look at other types of impact?

**Barbara:** Americans for the Arts is well known for its work on economic impact, some would say that it may rely too much on that argument. We see this Civic Impact Initiative as being the first step on the ladder towards being able to discuss the social impact of the arts in a more meaningful way and make that case better. That is where we really positioned this work and we have tried to stay focused on social impact, civic impact and civic engagement, not to fall back on to just program evaluation, i.e. how well did it work? That is obviously seen through this lens, but it is not the primary focus of it.

**Marty:** The kinds of issues that we are taking a shot at are very expensive issues. Discrimination suits against cities, turnover of employees, etc are very expensive. If any of this is able to shift that, we are talking hundreds of thousands of dollars.

**Kelly:** I love that you make that point, because there are many ways that these social impacts do have economic impact and economic impacts have social impacts as well. I love that interplay. And another thing I love about these examples is that there is a chronic concern in the arts field for when a critic says, "Show me employment data or go away." There's plenty more that we can say.

I have a last question here, having worked on this project for a while I'd like to ask you all what you think some of the biggest take aways of this work could be for arts funders? Public funders, like state arts agencies, or private funders. What do you hope funders will do differently or think about as a result of this work?

**Pam:** I think we are still in progress trying to answer a question like that. But one thing that worked well unilaterally was the coaching that the field lab enabled. When we put everything out on the table for the working group and asked, "What are some of the things that should be improved in the field?" Hands down people said that in order to really foster the notion of evaluative thinking it is not enough to throw tools at people or put them into a workshop, but the kind of one-on-one assistance that Marty and others benefitted from was truly a game changer.

**Chris:** I think it is really important that funders not confuse people who are trying to do important work by pre-specifying overly narrow sets of outcomes or overly narrow means of getting to outcomes. I regularly have taken everyone in our group to task over the loose use of the words “quantitative” or “qualitative,” whether they are using them with data or talking about analysis. I think too often funders have used words or prescriptions without really understanding what the implications are from the evaluative side. They’ve pushed things that are unrealistic, or have given the impression that all they want is documentation, which is very tedious and can be very detailed and doesn’t always get at the real outcome. So I think that the language that the funders use when talking about what they would like for an evaluation needs to be thought through very carefully. This is not a one size fits all, or just a tool off the shelf. Any important work is not going to fit neatly into a simple model.

**Marty:** I’d stress the importance of keeping the quality of the art created very high. Figure out a form of art that has a lower skill entry, but make it possible for participants to make very powerful work. That encourages the community to work and it changes their work as well. I think that it is important that funders have that in their minds.

**Barbara:** I would just put some punctuation around this idea of indentifying indicators and we hope that the family of outcomes and indicators that we are collecting in our work will be helpful. Without having a big list, and a wide berth of things to look at, we end up asking, “What change did you make?” We almost end up putting that causal chain on the project. But what if we could all learn to look at realistic expectations? If we set expectations that capitalize on the qualities and questions about what the artists and the arts can bring to their communities, we can start asking better questions as funders, and we can give our artists and organizations a chance to be realistic in what they promise in their proposals.

**Marty:** I have one more, quick one: the importance of a long term commitment. A lot of these problems look worst first when you first go after them, but that itself is actually a sign of progress. In this conversation we have been talking a lot about the pluses that happen, but these are meaty problems with real challenges. For us it wasn’t until after the first year that things started to happen. We had to wait, go and listen and learn a culture, and that’s kind of the perspective you have to start with.

**Kelly:** It certainly can take more than one fiscal cycle to achieve the outcomes you are aiming for. Clearly, this is a huge topic – and a larger one than we can fully explore in a brief Web seminar format. So before we close, we wanted to be sure to spend a little time pointing you toward some additional materials you can access on line as you’re thinking through these issues in your own state.

## Additional Information

You don’t have to scramble to write all of this down – we’ll be sending out an e-mail message later this evening that will have all of this material in it.

First of all, be sure to check out the Art At Work Web site. Here you can learn more about all of the work Marty and her artists are doing, view a slideshow about each project, download poems and writings



from the police force and more. Be sure to give it a look. Barbara would you be willing to tell us just a little more about where we can access some more information from the other projects that are underway?

**Barbara:** We've been working to make the output and resources from the initiative available, so coming soon is an Impact Arts website that will be accessible through Animating Democracy. We're putting some final touches on it. It is designed to be practical and provide a host of useful resources.

Coming soon

# IMPACT ARTS

The Website

Useful Resources for


## Understanding and Reporting the Civic and Social Impact of the Arts

From ANIMATING DEMOCRACY'S  
The Arts and Civic Engagement Impact Initiative

Supported by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation

The site encourages people to start thinking in an evaluative way, particularly about social impact. We'll have a lot of focus on outcomes and indicators. We will share a family of outcomes and indicators and the kinds of arts activities that might be introduced. And finally, the site will be a place where you can find a lot of case studies, tools, frameworks and actual evaluation reports.

# OFFERING



- **A Place to Start**  
thinking about evaluation and social impact
- **Social Impact Outcomes and Indicators**
- **Evaluation in Action**  
case studies, tools, and frameworks

Here are some of the features that will be there. We are doing a lot with evaluation terms. There will be a place where you can participate and share your thoughts and good definitions. In addition to a beginner's guide that will draw people through developing indicators and methods of data collection, the annotated listing is a central resource of existing material from a wide range of fields: community development and social service, not just in the arts. It will include indicators work as well as case studies, theoretical papers and articles. Both the

# Features

- Key terms and concepts
- A Beginner's guide
- An annotated listing linked to useful evaluation tools and resources.
- Outcomes, indicators, and data collection methods for common social and civic outcomes
- Case studies, evaluation reports, and profiles
- Theoretical papers, essays, and articles

case studies and the papers from the initiative are already available on the Animating Democracy site. The Impact site should be live in another two months.

**Kelly:** Thank you, Barbara. NASAA will send out an announcement about the site when it's rolled out and will promote it via our site, as well, so keep an eye on NASAA notes for that news.

Speaking of the NASAA Web site, there are some additional resources on that site that will be helpful to anyone who is puzzling over evaluation issues. Our follow up e-mail to today's session will include those links and should arrive in your inbox later this evening.

I'd like to extend a final thanks to all of our presenters today – Pam, Marty, Chris and Barbara for being so generous with what you've learned today. Our thanks to Americans for the Arts for collaborating with us on this session. And a big thanks to all of you in the audience for participating, too. We look forward to meeting you back here soon, and to hearing from you in the meantime with your feedback and ideas about future seminars.

## More Resources

**National Assembly of  
State Arts Agencies**  
KNOWLEDGE • REPRESENTATION • COMMUNITY

- Follow-up Resources e-mail
- Transcripts & slides
- NASAA Web Site [www.nasaa-arts.org](http://www.nasaa-arts.org)
- Getting Started With Program Evaluation

