Strategies for Sustaining Arts and Culture in the Metropolis

In recent years, many cities across the country have seen their nonprofit cultural sectors grow rapidly but find that this boom and its attendant infrastructure are difficult to maintain. Arts organizations are also competing more intensely with each other for funding, and civic leaders are searching for ways to provide more stability to their arts sectors while also dealing with an onslaught of urban problems, political turnover, and declining budgets.

Philadelphia is a case in point. Although the city has undergone a dramatic revitalization that many have attributed to the dynamism of its arts sector, the current mayor closed the city's Office of Arts and Culture and redistributed cultural support programs throughout city government. In response, William Penn Foundation and the Greater Philadelphia Cultural Alliance asked RAND to conduct a study of Philadelphia and ten other cities that would help civic leaders in Philadelphia develop a model of cultural support for the future.

The ten cities include some that are new and flourishing (Charlotte and Phoenix), some that are older manufacturing centers struggling to reinvent themselves (Baltimore, Cleveland, Detroit, and Pittsburgh), and some that are regional centers with diversified economies and stable populations (Boston, Chicago, Denver, and Minneapolis–St. Paul).

The RAND study provides a novel and systematic analysis of the way major metropolitan areas support their nonprofit cultural institutions. The researchers created a new framework for organizing information about the way cities support their cultural sectors, identified the conditions that promote strong metropolitan support for the arts, and then drew particular lessons for Philadelphia.

Although the recommendations of this research focused on Philadelphia, the study offers results that will be of interest to civic leaders across the country. Its key findings are that cities with strong cultural support

- have either a centralized agency, public or private, with multiple functions, or a combination of public and private agencies with a clear division of support between them

Abstract

The nonprofit arts face an environment that challenges their continued growth and raises the prospect of future consolidation. Focusing on the relationship among the components of local communities' "arts ecology," this research develops a new framework for evaluating systems of support to the arts. It draws lessons from Baltimore, Boston, Charlotte, Chicago, Cleveland, Denver, Detroit, Minneapolis, Philadelphia, Phoenix, and Pittsburgh. Using a novel approach, researchers assess the strengths and weaknesses of Philadelphia's arts sector and offer recommendations for ensuring its sustainability.

- recognize the contribution of the arts to other city goals, such as economic development and tourism, and collaborate closely with city agencies to support those goals
- have strong arts alliances that encourage arts organizations to collaborate with each other on marketing, acquiring employee benefits, controlling production costs, and fundraising.

Framework for Comparing Cultural Support

The researchers begin by acknowledging the differences in the histories, economies, and demography of the eleven cities. The older manufacturing centers have long-established and prestigious arts organizations but have often lost the headquarters of corporations that originally drove the local economy, provided civic leaders, and sponsored the arts. The newer cities are growing rapidly, becoming new corporate hubs, and building their cultural institutions. Some cities (Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Cleveland, and the Twin Cities) have strong local foundations with a long history of supporting the arts sector; other cities do not. These different conditions have led each city to take a different approach to supporting its cultural sector.

To describe and compare these approaches, the researchers developed a framework that focused on the network of organizations in each city and the services and level of support they provide.

Organization of Cultural Support Systems

Cities organize their cultural support systems using a variety of different organizational forms—government agencies, private coalitions, and public-private partnerships.

Although recognizing the important role that private foundations and corporations often play in supporting the arts, the study focuses its analysis on organizations that are specifically established to support the arts. Such organizations follow two basic approaches. The first, used in Boston, Chicago, and Charlotte, relies primarily on a single multifunction agency that is either a part of city government, as in Boston and Chicago, or a private agency, as in Charlotte. The second approach, characteristic of nearly all the other cities, relies on a variety of public and private agencies for cultural support. Denver and the Twin Cities have adopted a combination of public agencies to deal with different aspects of the arts and culture sector. The other cities, with the exception of Detroit, which lacks both a city department and a strong private organization, have distributed support among a private arts alliance and various governmental or quasi-governmental agencies.

Support Services

The services provided by these organizations go well beyond financial support. The five types of support are identified in Table 1. The service levels represent the combined services available in each community for each category of support. The table also illustrates that different categories of support tend to be provided by certain types of organizations. For example, grants are usually supplied by government agencies and technical assistance is most often provided by arts alliances.

Using this taxonomy, the researchers evaluated the types and levels of support to the arts sector in the eleven cities. As Table 2 shows, there are great differences in the levels of cultural support provided in these cities, and within cities there is more support in some areas than others. (Only Detroit has the same level of service in all five categories.) This is so partly because not all cities have the organizations that typically provide that service. For example, the three cities at the basic level in providing presentations and public art all lack public agencies for the arts. In addition, cities with particularly strong support in one area, such as funding, may require less support in another, such as technical assistance.

Key Factors In Strong Cultural Support

Besides describing these patterns, the study highlights the conditions that seem to foster high levels of cultural support.

Organizational Structure. Cities with the strongest support for the arts have organized their support in one of two ways. Either they have large, multifunction agencies that provide a wide range of services to the arts sector, such as Chicago and Charlotte, or they have both public and private agencies that combine their services to the arts sector, such as Denver and Pittsburgh. In contrast, cities that rely primarily on a single private agency (like Baltimore and Cleveland) or that do not have either a city agency or a private agency (like Detroit) tend to have lower levels of support for their arts sectors.

Integration of the Arts with Economic Development. Those cities that view the arts as a central element of their economic development strategies, like Charlotte and Chicago, have greater resources for the arts and fewer threats to those resources. The integration of the arts into other city functions is reflected in the broad responsibilities of their offices of cultural affairs. In some cities, these offices include tourism, film production, zoning, and community revitalization.

Collaborative Relationships Among Arts Organizations. Cities with strong arts support have arts alliances (and sometimes city agencies) that encourage collaboration among arts organizations, particularly new and smaller

Table 1
Comparison of Service Levels by Function

Function	Service Level			Provider
	Basic	Expanded	Full	
Grants	Less than $500,000	$500,000 to $4 million	More than $4 million	Government agency
Technical Assistance	Convening, Information	Workshops/seminars Access to experts	Strategic planning for entire sector	Arts alliances; local arts and business councils
Presentation, Public Art	Public art (statues/ murals)	Presentations of performances, festivals, and art fairs	Own/operate arts institutions	Government agency
Promotion, Advocacy	Information on schedules, events, organizations	Fun Guide, discounts Special-interest marketing Interactive web sites	Advocacy/policy Package promotions	Alliances, government agency
Economic Development	Permits Information on area to outsiders	Active promotion of film and tourism Art as civic asset	Neighborhood development and cultural districts	Office of cultural affairs or other city departments

Table 2
Community Ratings by Function

Function	Basic	Expanded	Full
Grants	Baltimore, Boston, Detroit	Chicago, Cleveland, Twin Cities, Philadelphia, Phoenix	Charlotte, Denver, Pittsburgh
Technical Assistance	Baltimore, Detroit, Twin Cities	Boston, Cleveland, Denver, Philadelphia, Phoenix, Pittsburgh	Charlotte, Chicago
Presentation and Public Art	Cleveland, Detroit, Pittsburgh	Baltimore, Charlotte, Twin Cities, Philadelphia, Phoenix	Boston, Chicago, Denver
Promotion and Advocacy	Detroit, Twin Cities, Pittsburgh	Baltimore, Boston, Cleveland, Charlotte, Phoenix	Chicago, Denver, Philadelphia
Economic Development	Cleveland, Detroit, Philadelphia	Boston, Baltimore, Phoenix, Pittsburgh	Chicago, Charlotte, Denver, Twin Cities

organizations, on a range of activities, including joint marketing and fundraising efforts and involvement in cultural facility planning for the arts sector as a whole (as in Charlotte). They may even provide group rates on health and liability insurance. The authors suggest that such collaborations are an effective strategy for survival in the competition for resources, since the nonprofit arts sector is unlikely to sustain its historical expansion.
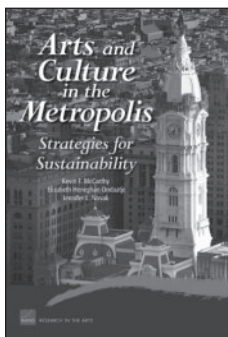
Recommendations for Philadelphia

The final chapter of the study focuses on the strengths and weaknesses of Philadelphia's cultural sector and offers several recommendations for the future:

- Use the evaluative framework as a strategic planning tool to identify gaps and opportunities in organizational structures and services.

- Develop a clear vision of where the arts sector is headed and how it supports broader regional goals, then identify and recruit an arts champion from outside the arts sector to promote this vision.
- Create a strong central office of cultural affairs that is integrated with other offices of city government.
- Encourage arts organizations to think and act collaboratively. Too often, they view the competition for resources as a zero-sum game in which one organization's gain comes at another's expense.
- Persuade leaders in the government and business sectors that supporting the arts advances the region's broader goals.
- Build future audiences for the arts by supporting policies, such as arts education, that stimulate demand, not just supply. ■

This product is part of the RAND Corporation research brief series. RAND research briefs present policy-oriented summaries of individual published, peer-reviewed documents or of a body of published work. This research brief describes work done for RAND Education documented in *Arts and Culture in the Metropolis: Strategies for Sustainability*, by Kevin F. McCarthy, Elizabeth Heneghan Ondaatje, and Jennifer L. Novak, MG-477-WFP, 2007, 104 pp. $25.00, ISBN: 978-0-8330-3890-6 (available at http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG477/). The RAND Corporation is a nonprofit research organization providing objective analysis and effective solutions that address the challenges facing the public and private sectors around the world. RAND's publications do not necessarily reflect the opinions of its research clients and sponsors. RAND® is a registered trademark.

www.rand.org

This PDF document was made available from www.rand.org as a public service of the RAND Corporation.

This product is part of the RAND Corporation research brief series. RAND research briefs present policy-oriented summaries of individual published, peer-reviewed documents or of a body of published work.

The RAND Corporation is a nonprofit research organization providing objective analysis and effective solutions that address the challenges facing the public and private sectors around the world.

Support RAND

Browse Books & Publications

Make a charitable contribution

For More Information

Visit RAND at www.rand.org

Explore RAND Research in the Arts

View document details