

APPENDIX C

Cultural Participation Policy

The arts have the capacity to bring people together. Music, literature, theater and other art forms can help individuals and communities gain a greater appreciation of their heritage, develop a sense of unique identity, and learn to see themselves in new ways. The mission of the Ohio Arts Council is to fund and support quality arts experiences to strengthen Ohio communities culturally, educationally and economically. In order to fulfill its mission, the Ohio Arts Council adopted the following Cultural Participation Policy to ensure that the programs and policies of constituents and grantees are accessible to all Ohioans:

The Ohio Arts Council (OAC) believes that participation in the arts allows people to celebrate their diverse backgrounds and abilities, encourages the discovery of a sense of common purpose and understanding, and enhances individual creativity. The OAC requires applicants and grantees to strive for wide cultural participation and to make their arts programs, facilities and opportunities accessible to everyone. The OAC expects to see multiple perspectives and diverse cultures reflected in the governing, program planning and participation efforts of arts organizations that apply for funding, receive grants, or take part in any programs and services supported by the Ohio Arts Council.

Although the OAC recognizes that organizations must determine the most effective ways to authentically link the work they do in the arts with the people in their communities, organizations are strongly encouraged to engage people in their communities from specific and underserved populations in their planning and programming.

Specific populations include, but are not limited to:

American Indian/Alaskan Native

Middle Eastern

Appalachian

Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander

Asian

People with disabilities

Black/African American

Seniors (62 years and older)

Latino and Hispanic

Underserved populations include, but are not limited to:

Members of immigrant or ethnic groups

People who are unemployed

Rural residents

People who are homeless

Urban or rural youth

The Cultural Participation Policy provides a broad statement of goals. The purpose of this background paper is to explore the concept of cultural participation in more depth.

Understanding the components of and benefits from cultural participation can assist organizations in designing meaningful programs and advocating for the important role of the arts in individual and community life. As such, working to build participation becomes part of an organization's assessment of its community's needs and long-range planning. Publications by organizations such as the RAND Corporation, Alan Brown and others listed at the end of this article may be helpful in explaining how and why people participate in the arts and what benefits they receive from their participation. Because the OAC has incorporated many of the concepts from these studies in its grant programs, applicants may find the following summary of some of the key ideas and terms from these studies useful.

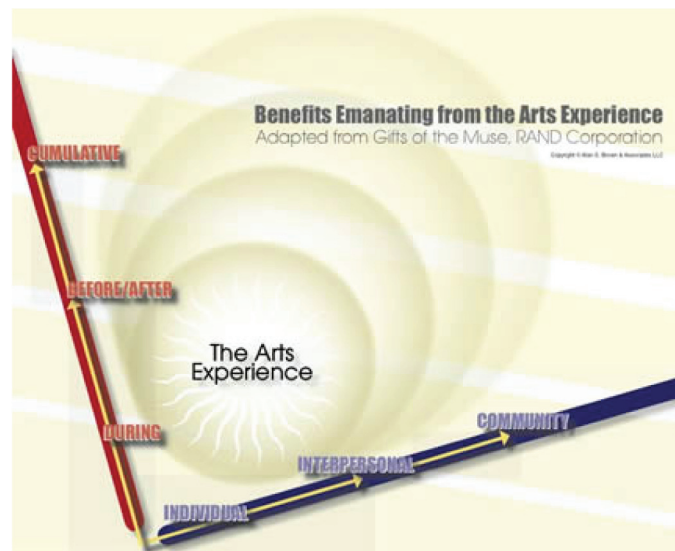
People participate in the arts in multiple ways. All are significant to the health and vitality of arts organizations and communities although the level and intensity of commitment may be variable. The RAND studies provide one useful way of thinking about arts participation by identifying three primary means of participation. The first means of participation includes people who are **creating** art; that is, people who are actively engaged in the creative process whether as a profession or for personal enjoyment. They may include singers, dancers, actors, painters or writers. Traditionally, when we think of the arts, these are the first participants to come to mind. However, a second means of participation includes people who are **appreciating** a particular form or discipline. Art appreciators actively engage in a relationship with the work of art and the artists through experience and interpretation. A third important means of participation includes people who are **supporting** the arts. This group helps ensure that artists and arts organizations can do their work through personal donations, volunteering or advocating for the allocation of public and private resources. Of course, at different points in time, people can participate in more than one of these ways. Reflecting on these three means of participation may help organizations design varied program models to increase participation in the arts.

The OAC encourages applicants to consider all of the ways in which people participate in the arts, and how their participation relates to the quality of each experience. The benefits to an individual are complex and can be difficult to express. Alan Brown has devised a figure based on *The Gifts of the Muse* published by the RAND Corporation, that captures an "architecture of value." Brown, writing in [The Grantmakers in the Arts Reader](#), describes it this way:

"The arts experience itself is positioned in the lower left-hand corner of two axes, with the benefits of the experience rippling outward like waves.

The horizontal axis reflects the social dimension of arts benefits, from individual through interpersonal to community. The ‘interpersonal’ level acknowledges the importance of social benefits such as bonding with friends, family cohesion, and building social networks.

The vertical axis introduces time to the model, in the general sense of proximity in time to the arts experience. This allows for discussion of benefits that occur concurrently with the arts experience (i.e., “real time benefits”), of benefits that kick in immediately before or after the experience (especially when there is dialogue about meaning), and of longer-term benefits that accumulate or accrete over time. Accretion - that is, “to grow or increase gradually, as by addition” - is a key concept here, underscoring how repeat experiences lead to higher order benefits ... ”



Brown’s diagram illustrates how a single arts experience with one individual have some impact but, as an arts experience is extended over time and reflects the additional social dimensions of interpersonal and community interaction, the impact is greatly amplified.

It is up to organizations and individuals to determine the most effective ways to link the work they do in the arts with the people of their neighborhoods, towns, or cities. For example, an applicant might want to broaden, deepen or diversify participation depending on their organization’s mission, current priorities or community need. Attracting greater numbers of the populations that are already attending events would be an example of broadening the audience. Deepening participation can be accomplished by creating a greater level of engagement by people who are already involved in your work through such means as workshop attendance, board membership, or increased volunteer activity. Engaging groups or individuals in your work who are not already involved is an example of diversifying participation.

Identifying barriers to participation and then developing strategies to minimize the barriers is another approach that can lead to increased participation. Practical barriers, such as lack of childcare, difficulty parking, or cost of an event, can be a powerful deterrent to participation. Perceptual barriers, although less tangible, can be just as powerful a deterrent to participation as practical ones. These barriers include the feeling of potential participants that they don't have the right clothes to wear to an event or that they might not "fit in." Finally, even after a person attends an activity, experiential barriers might keep them from further engagement. Such barriers might include cramped seating, poor customer service, or the lack of information that could have helped explain an exhibition or performance.

It may not be possible to address all these methods for building participation and eliminating barriers among the various groups in your community at the same time. However, applicants should think inclusively about how to build participation (through strategies to broaden, deepen, or diversify involvement) and how to decrease barriers to participation (through efforts to reduce practical, perceptual, or experiential obstacles). Assessment of the needs of the community, its people and the organization is critical to understanding challenges and possible solutions. Applicants may want to learn more about how significant, personally meaningful and transformative arts experiences can lead to increased public value as discussed in *Revealing the Public Value of the Arts* by Christy Farnbauch, Mollie Lakin-Hayes and Jerry Yoshitomi. Approaches for increasing participation in the arts should be comprehensive. It is best to involve community residents in the planning and programming of your organization in such capacities as members of advisory committees or task forces; contributing editors, guest curators or artists; members of the governing body or board; or full- or part-time staff. To start the process, applicants might consider increasing cultural participation with specific initiatives targeted toward particular populations in the community.

The support of the Ohio Arts Council enriches lives and builds vibrant and creative communities throughout the state. Public funds provide assistance for artists, arts and education organizations resulting in over 16 ½ million artistic and cultural participant experiences for Ohio residents each year.* The OAC is committed to wide participation in the arts and encourages the reflection of multiple perspectives and diverse cultures in the governing, program planning, and participation efforts of arts organizations who apply for funding. The staff of the OAC is willing and able to assist organizations and individuals in efforts to increase cultural participation so that, working together, we can achieve the goal of strengthening Ohio communities culturally, educationally and economically.

A New Framework for Building Participation in the Arts and Gifts of the Muse: Reframing the Debate About the Benefits of the Arts are important publications by the RAND Corporation. For more information, see the full study at www.rand.org.

The Values Study: Rediscovering the Meaning and Value of Arts Participation. Alan Brown. For more information, see the report at www.wolfbrown.com/images/articles/ValuesStudyReportComplete.pdf

An Architecture of Value in *The Grantmakers in the Arts Reader*, Spring, 2006. Alan Brown. For more information, see the article at www.giarts.org/usr_doc/brown.pdf

Focusing the Light. Mary Campbell-Zopf, Michael Sikes, Deborah Vrabel. A series of seven booklets that present a fundamental management strategy for program planning and evaluation. Available from the Ohio Arts Council at www.oac.state.oh.us/resources/FocusingTheLight/Planning.asp

Revealing the Public Value of the Arts. Christy Farnbauch, Mollie Lakin-Hayes, Jerry Yoshitomi. For more information, see www.oac.state.oh.us/news/NewsArticle.asp?intArticleId=126

*Participant experiences as reported by arts and cultural organizations to the Ohio Arts Council for FY2009.