

SUPPORT FOR AND FROM ARTISTS IN COMMUNITY SETTINGS

Barbara Schaffer Bacon

As, they always have, ARTISTS ARE WORKING IN, WITH AND FOR COMMUNITIES. They are working as animators, cultural organizers, teaching artists, and in a myriad of other roles. They are making work in community settings by choice. For many, this work is their central creative practice while for others it is a dimension or portion of their work. Interest, opportunity, and training for community based work are growing despite the fact that such work is often underfunded and the artists are poorly paid.

My presentation builds on **SUPPORTING ARTISTS IN COMMUNITY SETTINGS** published by Grantmakers in the Arts GIA Reader in 2014 (The paper is presented in its entirety below.)

In an era of “creative placemaking” the artist in the community has gained currency. In fact, there is demand and often not enough supply. Gone are the days when boosting the stories of exceptional artists and exceptional community based work is sufficient. What’s needed are training and support systems that will make quality community arts development work *less exceptional and more ubiquitous*.

Artists *are* making work with community members that connects people, reveals history, addresses social justice and activates the social imagination. They *are* working with neighborhood residents, planners, police, public works, environmental activists, community organizers, health professionals and transportation specialists to name just a few. Five cities have initiated residencies in municipal government; transportation agencies and community foundation have put out calls for artists to solve civic problems ranging from social cohesion to pedestrian safety. However, infrastructure to link artists with cross sector opportunities is not always present and there are a lot of places around the country where we don’t have a corpus of artists skilled in community practice.

Have our support models kept pace with the desire of artist to work in community settings and the demand for cross sector work that foregrounds civic outcomes? What is developing and what is necessary and possible? Is this a moment to invest and expand systems of support?

In addition to points made in the GIA article referenced and included here, I posit a few additional observations beginning with a few miscellaneous ones:

- Should we be rebuilding a strong connection between community-based practice and informal arts as Dr. Gard did at the University of Wisconsin?
- To what degree can community arts practice be advanced with a business model? Can artist’s intuitive, iterative creative work be codified sufficiently to be replicated? scaled? priced for profit? – Should it be?
- In the 70’s CETA (the Comprehensive Employment & Training Act) -- the largest federal artist employment program -- spread artists into community and neighborhood settings throughout America Largely without job descriptions. Arlene Goldbard cites a Department of Labor estimate that \$200 million had been invested in CETA

Thumbs up to the CETA Arts Program of Dallas, a pearl among the troubled programs of the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act, which fell under President Reagan’s budget ax. During its four years of existence, CETA Arts placed 400 artists in jobs, and brought the arts to thousands of people in Dallas who might not otherwise have gotten a chance to paint a picture, play an instrument, or see a play.

arts jobs in FY79 alone. Notes Goldbard, “there is scarcely a U.S. community artist who was around in the mid-1970s who did not either hold a CETA job or work directly with someone who did. Most community-based groups in the United States dating from that time were launched on their labor-intensive path with CETA support.”

Traditional support models were developed with the studio artist in mind – commissions, fellowships, residencies that rewarded artists with solitary studio time or production support.

Through grants but especially through community and education programming, Local Arts Agencies, have been major supporters and employers for artists in community settings over the past quarter century.

Leaders assembled here by the Gard Foundation are driving many of the leading initiatives to build and meet demand for artist working across sectors. They have pioneered training models, built infrastructure, found funding and other supports to address the gap between supply and demand. These include artist-devised and led programs, programs based on open source philosophy and utilizing dispersed leadership models, support models rooted in social justice values delivering support to artists working deeply on the ground, and long standing programs that demonstrate the value of continuity and network support.

- Laura Zabel - Springboard for the Arts
- Bill Cleveland - Institute for the Study of Community and the Arts and Intermedia Arts Creative Community Leadership Institute and Minneapolis Creative CityMaking Program
- Roseann Weiss- Community Arts Training (CAT) @ the St. Louis Regional Arts Council
- Michael Rohd – Center for Performance and Civic Practice
- Carlton Turner – Alternate Roots
- Roberto Bedoya – Oakland CA Arts Council, formerly with Tucson Pima Arts Council (S)
- Vickie Benson, McKnight Foundation
- Savannah Barrett – Art of the Rural

Training programs of all shapes, intents and durations are emanating at local and national levels from colleges and universities, artist sharing their own models, artist entrepreneurial programs, national art service organizations, and more. Options for Community Arts Training & Support prepared for Intermedia Arts by The Center for the Study of Art & Community with Americans for the Arts research and data support provides useful background and a starter list of a proliferating number of programs. As I see it, there are some core questions about training opportunities that this convening should address include:

- What is the marketplace we have and the one we need?
- What are core program and curriculum elements?
- How can national programs be customized and local programs be scaled or replicated?
- What infrastructure and supports are needed to sustain artists working at intersection of other sectors?

SUPPORTING ARTISTS IN COMMUNITY SETTINGS

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As, they always have, ARTISTS ARE WORKING IN, WITH AND FOR COMMUNITIES. They are working as animators, cultural organizers, teaching artists, and in a myriad of other roles. They are making work in community settings by choice. For many, this work is their central creative practice while for others it is a dimension or portion of their work. Interest, opportunity, and training for community based work are growing despite the fact that such work is often underfunded and the artists are poorly paid.

Support for artists working in community settings has fallen outside discussions about individual artist support. At the 2013 GIA conference in Philadelphia, a session¹ organized to explore the topic of support for these artists drew a good response. Over two dozen program officers from private foundations, local and state arts agencies, and national service organizations joined a lively conversation. It felt like a subject whose time has come.

This article combines the information gathered at that exchange with threads from other field conversations to advance these questions:

- What comes under the artists in community settings heading? Where is it happening? Who's doing it?
- Who is supporting it? What does support look like?
- What do artists need?
- What are roles for funders?
- Is there interest in ongoing exchange and other action around supporting artists work in community settings?
- Is this a moment to invest more and more intentionally in artists working community settings?

It is useful to enumerate the range of community settings in which artists can be found:

- Artists working with organizations such as the Wounded Warrior Project with veterans and their families on writing projects, music theater, and other art projects.
- Teaching artists and artists working in youth arts and youth development programs; working in prisons, nursing homes, hospitals, retirement facilities and community settings of all types.
- Cultural organizers
- Artists trained to work with social service partners to devise projects with and for clients.
- Culture bearers transmitting their traditions and practices while living and working in their communities
- Performing artists trained and licensed to bring their talent to the classroom as substitute teachers
- Actors trained to “play the part” of prospective renters or home buyers to test fair housing practices.

¹ Session Description: How is philanthropy supporting artists working outside traditional art settings? Some artists are instinctively drawn to using their art forms as tools to improve learning, attitudes and physical wellness, and to capture the imaginations of individuals, young and old, whose lives are changed by artistic encounters. These artists often find the process of making art in the community more important than the art they are making. Are arts philanthropists supporting these artists in their work in jails, hospitals, schools, YMCAs, parks and recreations programs, and other community settings? What role could arts funders play, peer-to-peer and in partnership with funders in other sectors, to increase resources and opportunities? Are arts funders supporting intermediary groups who prioritize this work? Join us to discuss these questions and consider how we can increase our investment in these working artists.

- Artists working through community arts organizations
- Artists working in park & recreation programs, community centers, centers for new Americans, etc.
- Artists supported by fellowships and residency programs to engage with communities

Some observations

Grantmakers provide support to artists in community settings for a variety of reasons. Funders are supporting artists to work in community settings because their grants are “artist-driven” and that is where the artists want to be working.

Other funders are motivated by a commitment to increasing arts access, education, and opportunity for creative expression. For some, support is tied to foundation or agency strategies related to social goals such as community revitalization, youth development, public health, violence reduction, or social inclusion. Within this context *place-based work* is distinguished from *placemaking*. Generally, artists in community settings are committed to authentic work that honors the people, place and community. There is concern that current emphasis on placemaking misses the value of community arts practices.

Funders value intermediaries that can get closer to the ground in diverse communities to identify and support artists and community partners. However, reaching artists and communities in non-urban areas, native culture bearers and others who may not identify as artists may require broader thinking about intermediaries. It was noted that folklorists are good community connectors who can reach and connect with ethnic populations, immigrant communities, and culture bearers in sensitive ways.

When social outcomes are the goal, evidence of progress or change is expected. For example, a funder supporting arts programs for court-involved youth looks for ways to get real evidence of reduced recidivism. This means that going beyond counts (how many participated...) and outputs (how many sessions were held) to document and report individual and community outcomes. Scale, capacity, and resources all present challenges for meaningful evaluation. Interest in tools, frameworks, and extant research that would advance evaluation practice and increase reporting is high. Evidence that artists working in community settings are reducing costs or providing a better return on investment in certain areas could be vital.

Since many working artists are under-employed, opportunity to use their creative skills and talents in other settings opens new prospects. Some discover rewards in community based work not found in the studio or on the stage. They are glad to be contributing to social justice, improved health and wellness, education, etc. Creating evergreen opportunities in other sectors, paired with training and job prep can serve artists and infuse creative approaches into new settings.

Creative youth development, another arena that employs many teaching artists in community settings, got a boost recently at the [National Summit on Creative Youth Development](#) convened this past March by the Massachusetts Cultural Council in partnership with the President’s Council on the Arts and the National Guild for Community Arts Education. That Summit produced a national action agenda adding to the momentum for around community based work.

Training for artists doing this work deserves further exploration and attention. The Emily Hall Tremain Foundation, which supports artist entrepreneurial training, reports increased interest expressed by their grantees in providing training for community engagement. Discussion of

training raises questions about competencies, ethics standards and when certification should be considered.

Some established training models and new approaches being tested and refined were shared.

St. Louis Regional Arts Council (RAC) Community Arts Training Institute (CAT) trains artists with social service partners to encourage and support artist collaborations at social service organizations. The 18-year-old program has trained over 270 partners and yielded an extensive network of community arts practitioners with positive results.

In Minneapolis/ St. Paul both Springboard for the Arts and Intermedia Arts have developed training and both are experimenting with delivery beyond the Twin Cities. [Springboard](#) offers a daylong program to teach artists the basics of community organizing to prepare them to initiate short term projects with community partners. The [Intermedia Creative Community Leadership](#) program is a longer more intensive/comprehensive approach that trains artists with others in the community development arena.

Academic programs focusing on community arts and social practice are proliferating. As well, many artists and artist-led organizations provide training in their methods through institutes, internships and apprenticeships. [Examples: Urban Bush Women, Dance Exchange, Cornerstone Theater, Michael Rohd, SPARC, Alternate Roots). Often this training is experientially-based. It can be an income stream for the artists.

[The Actors Fund Work Program](#) is a comprehensive workforce development program providing career counseling, job training, and job placement to help clients find work that can be done while continuing in the entertainment industry or while developing a new professional direction. They operate the STARRRS Program as a collaborative effort with participating New York City Public Schools. AWP members, after receiving training and obtaining their OPD (Occasional Per Diem) license work in elementary, middle or high schools throughout New York City as substitute teachers. They come from all of the performing arts, i.e. drama, music, dance, etc. to teach a variety of subjects. During the training, participants are given a wealth of instructional materials to use, and they develop a portfolio of their own lesson plans for single lessons and multiple lesson units.

The National Center for Creative Aging has been making progress in recruiting and preparing artists for work with seniors. They have developed the [NCCA Online Artist Training in Arts and Aging](#), a free online course for teaching artists interested in learning how to lead lifelong learning programs in the arts that engage older people as creators.

[The Association of Teaching Artists \(ATA\)](#) is a non-profit professional organization whose mission is to advocate for, support, strengthen, and serve artists who teach in schools and in the community from all disciplines in NYS and beyond.

[National Guild for Community Arts Education](#) and its members develop and deliver training for teaching artists – primarily at the local level. From the Guild’s perspective “The success of community arts education organizations---of our field---depends upon maintaining positive long-term relationships with teaching artists, preparing them well, nurturing their development, and helping them build sustainable careers.”

Strategies that could build and improve support for artists working in community settings:

Where is the money coming from? Can arts funders be motivated to increase resources for community based work? When does support for artists in community settings come in the form of a paycheck for employment? Can we increase these kinds of jobs for artists and ensure fair wages? What is coming from other sectors? Can more be leveraged?

Arts funders may find opportunities to build demand and promote professional pay for artists through education and partnerships internally and in the community. They might work across departments to form funding partnerships with internal colleagues whose program goals intersect with and could be advanced with community arts strategies. Similarly, arts funders may be able to stimulate interest from community leaders and funders from other sectors in support of artists working in community settings. Language is always an issue when working across sectors.

The model provided by the National Center for Creative Aging suggests addressing specific populations and settings with full focus can enable comprehensive development including national partnerships scaled training options and the creation of local to national-to-local communities of practice through central infrastructure. Of note is NCCA's work with connect Grantmakers for Aging, Grantmakers in Health, and Grantmakers in the Arts.

A full mapping of this arena of creative community based work, training, settings and partners could lead to more connections and collaborations around funding, training, and evaluation.

In terms of evaluation, believing that data leads to policy shift, a first and practical step would be to collect, share, and analyze extant research and evaluation reports about artist's community based work. Not only could funders and artists benefit from access to reports and documentation, but there may be ways to aggregate data and findings for analysis.

Since data and evaluation are important, funders should consider carrying the responsibility and costs for implementing evaluations on impact across a cohort/ portfolio of grants. As an alternative, they should try to provide funds to support evaluation planning, evidence collecting, data gathering. Funders need to scale expectations with scope.

As they always have, ARTISTS ARE WORKING IN, WITH AND FOR COMMUNITIES. The conversation among funders in Philadelphia, reported and expanded here, marks a milestone in the growing recognition of this work. What are the ways to improve our collective practice, share information and learnings, and establish an accessible body of knowledge around this work? Who will take the next step.