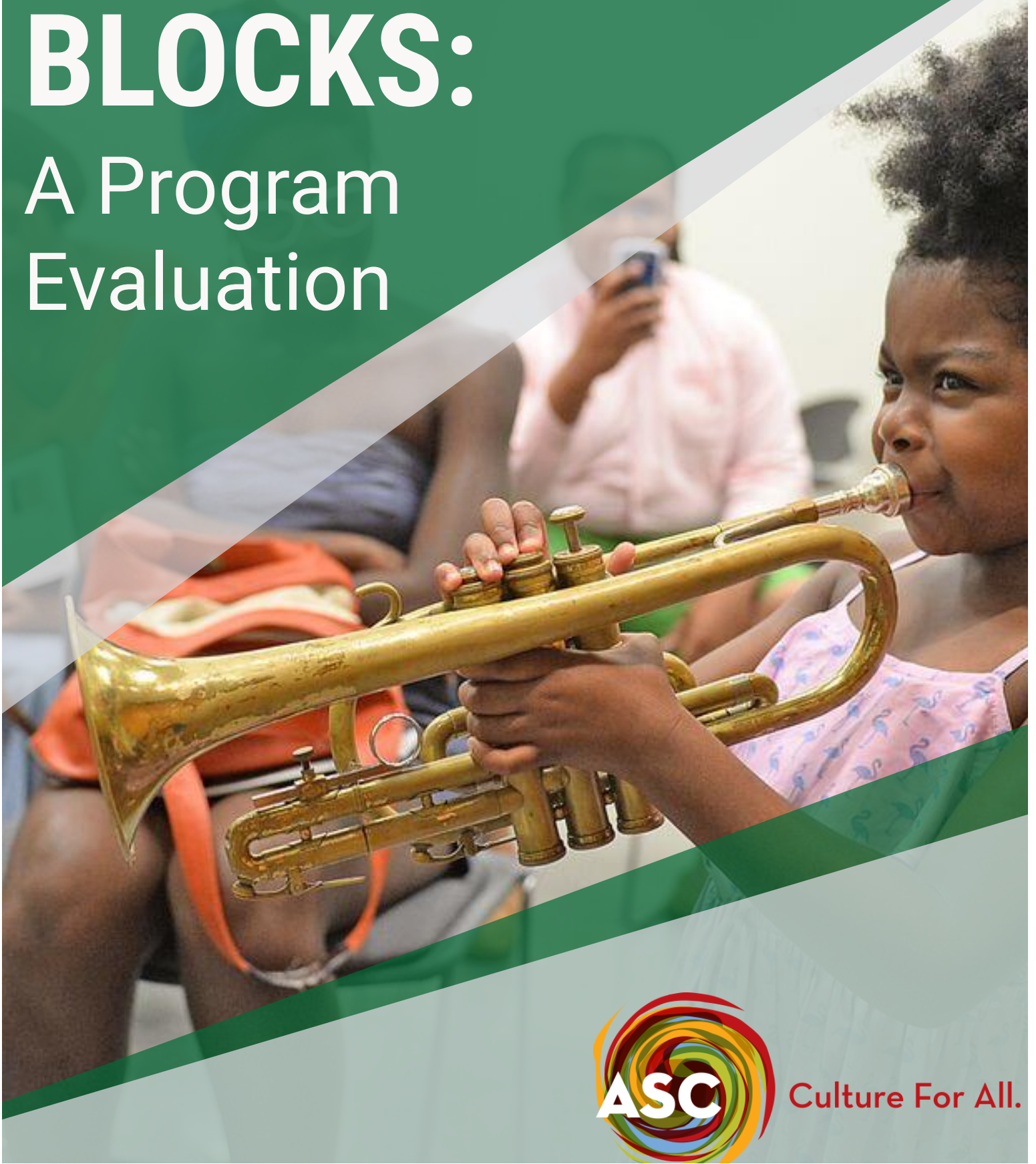


CULTURE BLOCKS:

A Program
Evaluation



Culture For All.

Master of Public Administration Program
at
The University of North Carolina at Charlotte

Advanced Seminar in Public Management Problem Solving
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Executive Summary

Overview

The Arts and Science Council (ASC) enlisted the Capstone class of the Gerald G. Fox Master of Public Administration (MPA) program at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte to conduct a program evaluation on their Culture Blocks program. ASC is the designated “Office of Cultural Affairs” for the City of Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, and six suburban towns by providing advocacy, cultural education programs, cultural planning, fundraising, grant making, public art and workshops, and trainings for the cultural community (ASC, n.d.-c). Culture Blocks is a program that brings arts into neighborhoods that may not have access to other Arts programming. When ASC was gathering data for the Quality of Life Explorer, it became apparent that certain segments of Mecklenburg County suffered from a lack of access to cultural programming due to the location of the main cultural institutions in the city center. ASC started the Culture Blocks program in 2015 after gathering research that indicated access to arts programming can result in numerous positive effects for individuals and communities.

ASC partnered with the Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation Department and Charlotte-Mecklenburg Library to provide quality opportunities for arts experiences in existing community facilities. Culture Blocks began by identifying five geographic blocks in Mecklenburg County with low attendance at ASC-supported cultural institutions. Based on its success since inception and increased funding and support from Mecklenburg County, Culture Blocks grew from five geographic blocks to nine. ASC asked the MPA class to do three things: explore the community impact of Culture Blocks, analyze the outcomes and objectives of the program, and provide recommendations of best practices to support the continued growth of the program.

Methodology

To accomplish the tasks of the project and provide a thorough evaluation of the Culture Blocks program, the MPA Capstone class performed the following research:

- Conducted a comprehensive literature review
- Analyzed current Culture Blocks data and reporting processes
- Surveyed current Culture Blocks providers
- Conducted focus groups of Culture Blocks attendees
- Observed Culture Blocks events
- Evaluated similar benchmark programs
- Interviewed stakeholders

Findings

Through these methods, the team gained further insight into the best practices of similar programs, Culture Blocks accomplishments, and where enhancements could be made. The findings all fell into four major themes:



Recommendations

Based on research, the Capstone class determined that Culture Blocks is successful at its current level of operation. However, if the program is to grow and become sustainable, the class proposes the following recommendations (Table 1) in order to maintain the impact they are having on Mecklenburg County.

Theme	Recommendations
The Arts Have Impact	I. Enhance Data Collection
	II. Increase Marketing Capacity
Access to the Arts	III. Provide Guidelines in Spanish
	IV. Identify Future Facility Locations
	V. Create Onboarding Packet for New Facility Managers
	VI. Enhance Access to Transportation
Program Administration	VII. Provide Application Workshops/Webinars for Interested Providers
	VIII. Use Application Windows Rather than Rolling Deadlines
	IX. Consider a More Streamlined Application Process
Program Evaluation	X. Reconstruct Reporting Process
	XI. Implement Strategic Decision Making
	XII. Develop a Logic Model
	XIII. Enhance Data Collection
	XIV. Gather Feedback from Facilities
	XV. Enhance Data Analysis

Table 1: Recommendations

Introduction

In late 2018, the leadership of ASC approached the MPA program at UNC Charlotte to conduct a program evaluation of their Culture Blocks program. The purpose of this evaluation was to provide data collection and analysis along with benchmarking and recommendations for future growth and ongoing measurement against both stated and unstated goals. While operating within the duration of an academic semester, the MPA class presents this final report on objectives outlined in the Scope of Work (Appendix A). Over the course of this program evaluation, the MPA class defined the term “cultural programming” as service offerings in the arts, science, history and cultural heritage, and employed the following methods to gather relevant, measurable information:

- Conducted a comprehensive literature review
- Analyzed current Culture Blocks program data
- Conducted stakeholder interviews
- Surveyed Culture Blocks provider
- Observed Culture Blocks events
- Conducted focus groups of program participants
- Researched best practices benchmarking, including a survey of highly successful arts and culture program providers around the county

After reviewing the compiled research, the class found four overarching themes among the results. First, both academic and qualitative research supported the idea that the arts have value and provide positive impacts throughout a given community. Second, addressing potential barriers is crucial to providing access to quality arts programs. Third, there are best practices for program administration among benchmark programs. Fourth, Culture Blocks could utilize alternative program evaluation strategies to ensure that they continue to grow and serve the community in the most effective and efficient way possible.

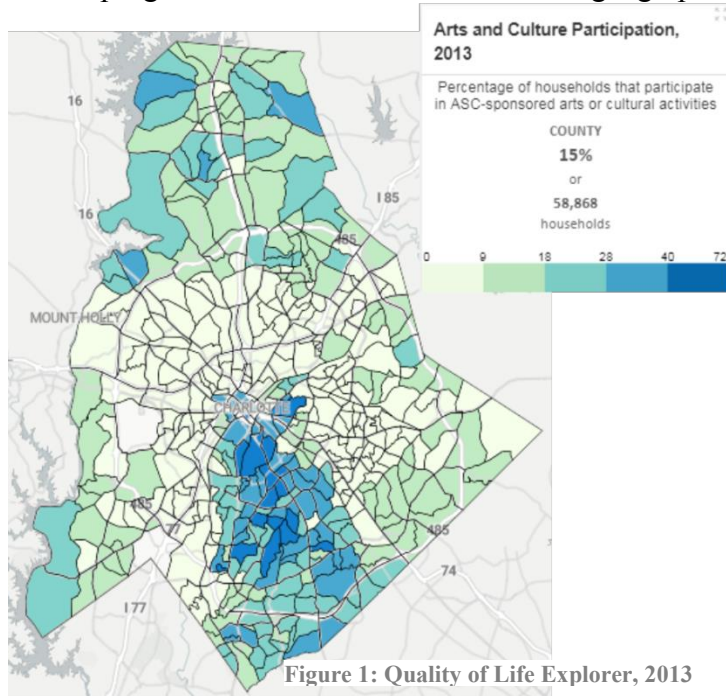
Background

Arts and Science Council

ASC fulfills its mission of “Culture for All” through serving as a resource hub, advocate, and funder of cultural experiences in Mecklenburg County. Programs and services are administered by professional staff, independent contractors, and other organizations that receive funding from ASC. Funding for ASC is provided by local and state government along with private gifts from individuals and corporations. As such, ASC serves as the designated “Office of Cultural Resources” for the City of Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, and six suburban towns by providing advocacy, cultural education programs, cultural planning, fundraising, grant making, public art and workshops, and trainings for the cultural community (ASC, n.d.-c).

Why Culture Blocks?

The ASC Culture Blocks Program began in 2015 to further the mission of arts inclusivity for all residents in Mecklenburg County. Culture Blocks stakeholders Robert Bush and Ryan Deal concluded that arts and culture were underfunded and lacked participation in the poorest and most heavily populated areas of the county. The pair was among those who founded the Culture Blocks program in order for ASC to focus on geographic areas and “create mini cultural master

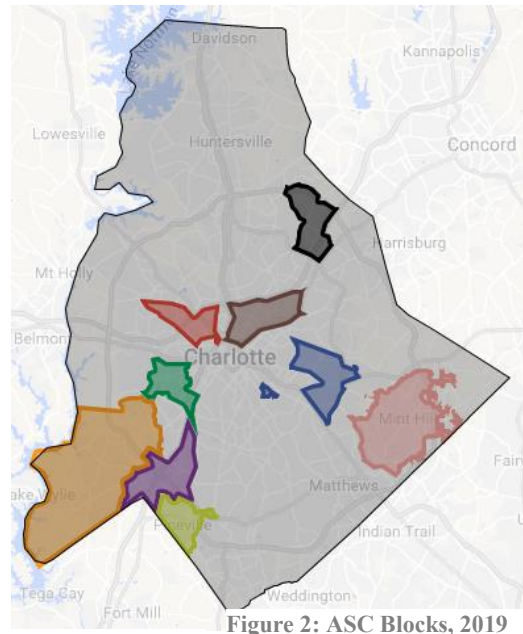


plans for individual neighborhoods,” according to Ryan Deal (R. Deal, personal communication, March 4, 2019). This position is supported by data from Charlotte-Mecklenburg’s 2013 Quality of Life Explorer, which indicated that a majority of predominantly minority-based, lower-income neighborhoods had drastically lower levels of arts participation than others in the region (Figure 1). To encourage arts participation in these areas, administrators from ASC developed the Culture Blocks program to bring programming to the neighborhood “blocks” that have lower levels of arts participation (Mueller, 2019).

Culture Blocks funds local artists and nonprofits to provide free, neighborhood-based programming in informal venues such as recreation centers, parks, and libraries. Known as providers, these artists develop projects to bring cultural programming to designated neighborhoods with funding and support from ASC. Programming is designed according to the culture and interests of the residents of each neighborhood and includes a variety of participatory activities and performances to appeal to a wide variety of ages and interests (Mueller, 2019).

Growth of Culture Blocks

In partnership with the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Library and Mecklenburg County Park & Recreation Department, and fully funded by Mecklenburg County, ASC began by identifying five geographic areas, or “blocks.” These areas had historically low levels of participation in traditional ASC-funded institutions, but were still active at local county facilities, such as libraries, parks, and recreation centers (Figure 2). ASC went into these areas to gather feedback from



Year	County Funding	Percent Change
2016	\$300,000	--
2017	\$500,000	66.7%
2018	\$675,000	35%
2019	\$800,000	18.5%

Table 2: Mecklenburg County Budget

citizens as to what they wanted and needed in terms of cultural experiences. Funding has increased each fiscal year (Table 2) from the county to support nine designated blocks, splitting costs between initial support, dialogue, and cultural programming. The program continues to grow, and as a result, evaluation of the effectiveness and sustainability of Culture Blocks has become an administrative priority for ASC.

Methodology

In order to adequately address the tasks laid out in the Scope of Work, the class employed the following methods:

Literature review

To better understand the impacts of the Culture Blocks program, academic and professional studies were analyzed within the following topics: culture relatability, community and neighborhood benefits, impact of involvement, attainable knowledge, psychological benefits, economic role, and best practices for program evaluations (Appendix B).

Provider survey

To better gauge provider feedback on the program, the Capstone team employed a 10-question survey that was dispersed to 57 active Culture Blocks providers. Seven out of the ten questions were multiple choice on an interval scale, while the last three were open-ended to allow providers greater flexibility in their input (Appendix C).

Benchmarking

To provide a comprehensive view of Culture Blocks' potential future impact on the community, the Capstone team analyzed comparable benchmark programs nationwide. The students researched similar arts councils or offices of Cultural Affairs within the fifty cities identified in the Chetty study for economic mobility (Chetty, Hendren, Kline, & Saez, 2014). A survey regarding the methods related to administration, measuring program effectiveness, and program evaluation was sent to assess the best practices of these programs (Appendix D).

Stakeholder interviews

To better understanding the origins of ASC's Culture Blocks program, the Capstone team members conducted interviews with ASC-identified stakeholders and individuals with prior and current significant connection to the Culture Blocks program. These individuals include those who were at the helm of the program when it originated, program providers, and local elected officials (Appendix E).

Event participation observation

Several members of the class gathered qualitative research with visits into the community to see Culture Blocks programs in action. These visits spanned multiple blocks, including various

programs, and community dinners. Attending community dinners and arts experiences gave the students a first-hand view of the experiences and intent of the programs (Appendix F).

Focus groups

A researcher conducted two focus groups after two separate Culture Blocks programs to examine the impact that attending Culture Blocks programming has on attendants. The researcher had no relationships with any of nine participants in either of the focus groups and communicated her affiliation with UNC Charlotte as a student to all participants (Appendix G).

Existing Culture Blocks data and reporting analysis

The data provided by ASC included the quarterly reports of providers that showed the number of programs and the number of people that attended the respective events. In addition, ASC provided us with a final reporting document that captures an overview of the program, frequency, target audience, impact on the community, the degree to which marketing and development are involved, and overall delivery. The class analyzed the quarterly reports and final reporting documents to determine the efficiency and effectiveness of Culture Block's current reporting mandates and processes (Appendix H).

Findings

While analyzing the literature and responses from the provider survey, benchmark programs, focus groups, and event observations, the Capstone class continued to come across four overarching themes:

- 1) Community arts have great value in the impacts they have on individuals and the community.
- 2) Barriers must be addressed to provide broad access to the arts.
- 3) Best practices can be identified in arts program administration.
- 4) Program evaluability and evaluation practices lead to improved programming.

As the class continued to research, the findings were organized into what was learned, what Culture Blocks is currently doing, and the areas of potential enhancement.

The Arts Have Impact

What the research tells us:

Community arts programs such as Culture Blocks can impact individual participants and artists as well as communities. Literature shows that participating in community arts programs can provide people with a sense of belonging and identity with a community or group of people (Murray & Crummett, 2010, p. 783). Arts and culture have also been proven to have positive psychological outcomes on all generations. In studies conducted around the world, exposure to arts and culture increased happiness, self-esteem, and self-confidence.

Research on arts and culture exposure in the United States and the United Kingdom show that 52 percent of participants self-reported that after participating in community arts projects, they felt better or healthier, and 73 percent self-reported that they felt happier (Newman et al., 2001, p. 9). Research has also found that through arts and culture programming, social capital can be bolstered due to a variety of factors such as providing individuals the opportunity to engage with their communities, building relationships with fellow participants and providers, and through sharing knowledge of resources and opportunities in the community (Mueller, 2019).

From the benchmark survey, the Capstone class found that five of the eleven benchmark programs include “impact” as a criterion for gaining approval for funding. However, organizations vary in how they define impact. In further research, one of the impacts of Denver, Colorado’s IMAGINE 2020 program seeks to fund programs or projects that help ensure “arts, culture and creativity are fully integrated into daily life, work, and play” (Denver Arts & Venues, 2019). Under the ‘Engagement and Impact’ criteria for Cultural Development Grants, artists are asked about the diversity of the population served, the diversity of the artists, and evidence of any “presence/involvement in advocacy efforts to advance the cultural industry” (Arts Council of Hillsborough County, 2018). Research shows this added value to the arts nationwide (Grodach, 2010; Guetzkow, 2002; Newman et al., 2001; Ross, 2005; Stern & Seifert, 2007). In Portland, Oregon’s Project Grants final report, artists are asked to describe how the project impacted their professional development.



Collectively, research shows that for all generations it is important to offer arts and cultural events that are tied to the identity and values of residents in a community (Newman, Curtis, & Stephens, 2001). The literature indicates that the availability of arts and cultural activities is pertinent to the sustainability of the local community. Arts participation is a socially embedded process, in that participation in arts and cultural activities allows for those participants to engage with others and learn about themselves, and then take that knowledge to learn more about and

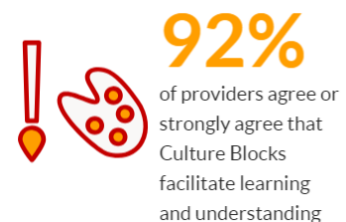
invest in their local community (Guetzkow, 2002; Stern & Seifert, 2007). Nationwide research proves that “shared or dynamic history and sense of identity in the activities is important,” (Mundell, Suess, Gold, & Simon, 2004, p. 2). As a result, cultural connections including religious practices, holiday traditions, and ancestral backgrounds will foster a greater amount of participation in the local arts.

Increased participation in community arts and cultural programs leads to financial benefits, which is recycled back into the community through networking and programming in the arts. Indianapolis’ Project Support Program said that one of their main goals in starting the program was to “provide investments in the arts and cultural community” (Arts Council of Indianapolis, n.d.). Grodach (2010) found that art spaces that specifically provided low-cost technical and professional assistance for artists to display and sell their work saw “increased interaction and networking within the regional arts scene. This provides both a springboard and safety net for artistic development” (Grodach, 2010, p. 16). Community arts programming strengthens the bond between neighborhood residents while establishing a safe and accepting cross-cultural environment. A sense of inclusivity and co-operation is created when neighbors collaborate by participating in an art project or attending a cultural event together (Mundell et al., 2004).

What Culture Blocks is accomplishing:

Culture Blocks and similar benchmark programs seek to have an impact on the communities they serve. The contents of arts programming must align with the culture of participants, otherwise, it creates a barrier to arts participation - which is where the community dialogues conducted by ASC becomes important.

Ninety-two percent of respondents from the provider survey agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that Culture Blocks facilitates learning an understanding of cultural life. Culture Blocks co-founder Robert Bush noted an important strength of Culture Blocks is its alignment with the community’s preference in cultural experiences; thus, giving community members a voice and positive experience with local arts programming.



Stakeholder interviewee Rosalia Torres-Weiner, a social activist and artist, stated she believes Culture Blocks was created to allow for ASC to collaborate with artists to bring art into communities in need. Through Torres-Weiner's Red Calaca Mobile, a mobile art studio, she has been able to engage with underserved communities throughout Mecklenburg County. In the interview, she shared the story of a collaboration she had with Discovery Place to bring the World of Bodies exhibit to a predominately Hispanic community. Torres-Weiner told of a young

"Ms. Rosalia, today was the best day of my life." The boy hugged Torres-Weiner and she said to him, "You know what? Today is the best day of my life, too."

Rosalia
Torres-
Weiner

boy, about seven or eight years old, who came up to her with tears in his eyes saying, "Ms. Rosalia, today was the best day of my life." The boy hugged Torres-Weiner and she said to him, "You know what? Today is the best day of my life, too." As a social activist, Torres-Weiner enjoyed the opportunity to work with Culture Blocks and bring positive, educational experiences into neighborhoods by interacting with young families to pass down the cultural experiences to younger generations (Torres-Weiner, personal communication, March 29, 2019).

While engaged in a focus group moderated by an MPA candidate, respondents from both the Hidden Valley and Northwest blocks stated that the people that they met in the programs formed a community for them. They were provided with emotional support, connections to help them in their careers, and introduction to new ideas through shared connections and conversations between program attendants and providers. For the senior citizens who were no longer in the workforce, Culture Blocks was a place where they felt they could continue to learn, explore new ideas, keep their minds active, and feel connected to others (Mueller, 2019) (Appendix G). Katherine Mooring, who played an integral role at the origin of Culture Blocks, emphasized the importance of simply asking the community what they prefer in terms of arts programming to meet their cultural needs to ensure a worthwhile experience for the artist and audience (Mooring, personal communication, March 26, 2019).

Audience members and participants are not the only ones who benefit from programs like Culture Blocks. The artists who lead these projects are also impacted by these programs, either creatively, professionally, or economically. Tiffany Waddell, a Culture Blocks stakeholder, emphasized the ability of the program to provide a space for individuals to come together and enjoy the arts, and to grow the artists' program and organization (T. Waddell, personal communication, March 1, 2019). Programs like Culture Blocks allow local artists to reach demographics and offer their cultural experiences in spaces where they may not otherwise have the opportunity. Culture Blocks, as well as other similar programs, allow funds to be used to pay providers, which is direct financial support to local artists. Forty percent of the providers surveyed mentioned that they experienced some sort of financial benefit by participating in the program. This sort of economic impact can be crucial for a working artist.

Where Culture Blocks can be enhanced:

In the final report that is uploaded after the program has taken place, Culture Blocks asks providers to speak to how the programming impacted the community and their organizations. The final report provides providers with the opportunity to provide ASC feedback from participants who attended the Culture Blocks event (Appendix H). It is evident that Culture Blocks has an impact on the designated geographic blocks, but this readily available data is not utilized in telling the Culture Blocks story. This is a missed opportunity when trying to describe the impact Culture Blocks has on community members and officials.

Access to Quality Arts Programming

What the research tells us:

In addition to the benefits of aligning arts programming with the values and traditions of community residents, it is important to utilize local resources when providing programming. Utilizing local facilities and public transportation helps eliminate classic barriers in accessing arts programs while also encouraging more engagement within families and between residents. Arts and cultural programs are often located in central urban areas such as Uptown Charlotte, which hinders individuals outside of these central urban areas from participating in arts programming due to limited public transportation. Arts and cultural organizations benefit most when transportation can be creatively designed for transit-dependent populations and when new and existing infrastructure investments connect communities in a culturally mindful and respectful way (Rose, 2017).

Access to arts and culture also speaks to the relationships cultivated between the organizations providing service and the communities being served. Research shows that organizations that invest in more structured engagement reap benefits that affect all areas of the business and have a long-term impact. Organizations that provide programming in a variety of mediums and styles of artistry, by more people of color, and within the contexts of diverse human experiences, can connect to communities in a meaningful way (Arts Consulting Group, 2017).

Four of the benchmark programs indicated that when looking at a program or project to fund, they wanted to ensure that the content was high quality and easily accessible. This perspective goes to the foundation of Culture Blocks - all people deserve access to quality arts and cultural programming (ASC, n.d.-c). While Culture Blocks require that any funded programs be free to the public, five of the benchmark programs indicated that they did allow a cost for participants. However, three of these went on to clarify that even though there could be a cost, the events must still be open to the public. Like Culture Blocks, the eleven benchmark programs are also concerned with meeting people where they are and offering programming in places people already live, work, and play. Those who listed “other” went on to specify that they included historical sites, and two mentioned that anywhere in the city limits were allowed.

What Culture Blocks is accomplishing:

Culture Blocks thrives on the ability to use local facilities to “meet people where they are” when offering cultural experiences (ASC, n.d.-a). Since Culture Blocks established their program as a partnership with Charlotte-Mecklenburg Library and Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation Department, they have successfully utilized these partnerships to bring programming to local community members. When considering how Culture Blocks interacts with access to the arts, Darryl Gaston, a local community leader and activist, noted that Culture Blocks has specifically addressed the discrepancies in racial or socioeconomic participation in the arts (D. Gatson, personal communication, March 1, 2019). Survey respondents echoed his sentiment, with 95 percent agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement that Culture Blocks expands access to the arts, and 86 percent agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement that Culture Blocks addresses barriers to participation (Figure 3).



Figure 3: Survey Responses

Culture Blocks hosts annual free community dinners to assess the interests, needs, and feedback of participants who live in underserved communities, with the purpose of expanding access to arts and culture throughout Mecklenburg County. At a community dinner provided in the southwest Charlotte neighborhood of Steele Creek, one of Culture Blocks’ newest geographic areas, it was observed that of the roughly 70 racially diverse attendees, the majority were senior citizens and had never heard of Culture Blocks except in the context of the dinner. The Culture Blocks staff was informed that access to arts and culture was limited, mostly due to the lack of transportation options, the distance to the nearest arts and culture offerings, and the overall lack of parking availability in Charlotte.



During the dinner, attendees were treated to a hot meal and two performances put on by Culture Blocks providers. The evening started with a welcome invitation and quick overview by the Culture Blocks team. The first performance also included an educational component that had attendees practicing some of the dance and exercise activities. The provider ensured that exercises were at a level appropriate for the primarily senior audience. After the performance, a moderator led small group discussion across tables asking questions about what sort of access the community currently had to cultural events and what types of programming they would like to see.

Another barrier to access that ASC addresses is cost. Based on research and results of focus groups conducted for this study, participants indicated that cost prohibited them from attending

arts events in Charlotte, and the fact that Culture Blocks is free of charge gave them access to new opportunities:

*“Most projects you have to pay, and with this being Arts and Science Council and free, it gives us the opportunity to do what we want to.”
(West Charlotte Recreation Center focus group)*

Stakeholders Mooring and Waddell noted that Culture Blocks provides all events free of charge in accordance with the funding requirements of Mecklenburg County. Offering free arts programming has expanded access to quality cultural events to even more Mecklenburg residents.

Members of the MPA class observed Culture Blocks events and learned first-hand the efforts of program administrators to make cultural experiences available for all. Culture Blocks conducts these no-cost events in multiple languages. For example, at the Nations Ford Multicultural Festival in the Southwest block, the posted event schedule, food sample labels, on-stage dialogue, and program content were translated into Spanish. This translation allowed for a quality experience for all attendees.

Additionally, three out of the four West Charlotte focus group participants were recipients of the Senior Nutrition Service program at the recreation center where the Culture Blocks program took place. Participation in this program implies that the participants were under financial hardship and would not have extra money to spend on recreational programs. Participants of the Hidden Valley block also indicated that the programs were conveniently located for them and about half of participants lived within a mile of the community center where activities in their block took place. All the participants from the Northwest block focus group were able to take public transportation to attend the program, and many were able to attain other services, such as free meals and healthcare, at the facility where the program took place. Participants felt very comfortable attending programs at the facility (Mueller, 2019).

Along with ensuring that they are reaching people in underserved communities, ASC is committed to providing quality programming to those areas. Michael Bryant, Mecklenburg County’s Management and Budget Director and ASC board member, states, “Health and human services is a core function of County Government, and I think [Culture Blocks] is one example of - given the size of our budget, and the amount we provide them - a huge return on investment to provide any type of programming in underserved communities. So, I think very highly of it and based on the programs that I’ve had the opportunity to observe in person, I’ve been very pleased with the quality.” Bryant continued to speak to the value of providing access to quality arts to underserved communities and the general support that Culture Blocks had garnered at the county level (M. Bryant, personal communication, March 29, 2019).

Others have noticed the impact Culture Blocks and other similar programs have on communities and, as a result, Culture Blocks was recognized as one of 10 national finalists for Americans for the Arts’ Robert E. Gard Award 2018. The Robert E. Gard Award celebrates exemplary work at

the intersection of the arts and community life. It aims to raise up projects from the last year lead by individuals or organizations working to cross the arts into other aspects of community life in meaningful, measurable ways (Americans for the Arts, 2015).

Where Culture Blocks can be enhanced:

One of the most notable observations of the community dinner members of the class attended was that an overwhelming majority of the attendees noted they were not familiar with the Culture Blocks program. As a new block, it is understandable that its residents had not previously attended an event, but many attendees were unfamiliar with ASC as a whole. With such a valuable program being offered to the county, it is unfortunate that more people are not aware of what is available. Culture Blocks should utilize new marketing strategies so that more people are able to benefit from its impact. Culture Blocks is doing a good job of making their programming accessible in different areas of the county, but awareness of the offered programming is also pertinent. ASC's website has the potential to be more user-friendly to a participant looking for events to attend. At present, the events are posted by block and not necessarily in chronological order. A master calendar displaying all available events would enhance the accessibility of the programs. Growing Culture Blocks' social media presence and partnering with the facilities they utilize could be useful to leverage visibility by means of increased promotional materials.

Currently, Culture Blocks has nine designated blocks where they provide funding. One key stakeholder indicated that they would like to see the program grow so that the full county would have access to Culture Blocks programming. Right now, the northern part of Mecklenburg County is not included in one of the existing blocks. To sustain county support for the program, it may be important to ensure that the entire county has access to Culture Blocks programs.

It is important to note that the current mission of Culture Blocks is to provide access to the arts to historically underserved communities in Mecklenburg County. While several stakeholders indicated their desire to grow, it is crucial that Culture Blocks have conversations about whether full county access is in alignment with the mission. Resources must be allocated in a way that supports the mission, and while "Culture for All" is ASC's mission, the Culture Blocks team must decide whether continuing the geographic blocks model or providing full county access lines up with the strategic goals of the program.

As Culture Blocks continues to grow, the relationship with the Mecklenburg Co. Library and the Mecklenburg County Parks and Recreation Dept. will be critical. One might assume that growth in Culture Blocks will also mean growth in the need for facilities to host the programs. It might be helpful for Culture Blocks to provide an onboarding packet of materials, which would be provided to new facility managers. Ideally, this would be a living document which could be reviewed on an annual basis and revised based on feedback from facility manager partners. One Stakeholder mentioned that they wished they had a better handle on the process that providers and facilities go through to execute the programming (Anonymous personal communication, April 8, 2019).

Program Administration

What the research tells us:

Administrative procedures are critical to operating a successful community program. The analysis of the benchmarking survey revealed that there are many administrative standards put in place by programs similar to Culture Blocks that could be replicated. For example, all the benchmark programs utilize a fully online application and reporting process. Examples of software used for the online application include WebGrants, WizeHive, SurveyMonkey Apply, and others. Over 80 percent of the benchmarking programs responded that they also include an application checklist as well as budget templates to ensure applicants have all the tools and standardization they need to submit a successful application and run a successful program.

Based on their websites and guidelines, the eleven benchmark programs operate on one to three application cycles a fiscal year. As standardization improves, staff members experience more time and flexibility to tackle new projects as programs grow. For example, ten out of eleven benchmark programs have been able to offer workshops and webinars for prospective providers, while four programs also offer multiple languages across the guidelines and application process, which is something one survey respondent mentioned would be helpful.

What Culture Blocks is accomplishing:

The provider survey revealed that community members are very happy with the way the program is currently run. For example, when asked in the provider survey, over half of respondents said they agreed that ASC Culture Blocks provides enough financial support for respondents to conduct their program, and all respondents noted that they foresaw themselves continuing to participate in the program. When asked how the Culture Blocks team could better support the program, respondents were overall positive in their feedback, stating that ASC is very supportive.

At present, provider applications are accepted on a rolling basis, and when an individual or organization is interested in becoming a new provider, they reach out through a general Culture Blocks email to request an application from the program managers (Appendix I). Providers must ensure that their programs fall in line with the guidelines and restrictions outlined in Application Guidelines (Appendix J). After an initial review and approval, Culture Blocks staff grants access to GIFTS, an online grant management portal, where providers can upload their Proposal Narrative and Budget Forms. Once the initial paperwork is accepted, the first installment is paid to the provider (ASC, n.d.-b). Payment schedules vary depending on the program but final installments are always dependent upon receipt of the final reports.

Does ASC provide enough financial support?

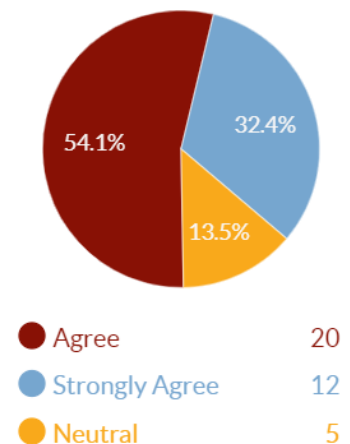


Figure 4: Survey Responses

Where Culture Blocks can be enhanced:

When asked how the Culture Blocks team could better support the program, or if additional resources would be needed in the future, respondents advocated for improvements in marketing, outreach and visibility, clear-cut requirements and streamlining of application and website resources, a larger budget, and the need for information to be provided in Spanish (11.1 percent of Mecklenburg County citizens speak only Spanish). If the program has a goal of cultural diversity and meeting people where they are, then it may be beneficial to have the application guidelines available in Spanish.

Rather than having a rolling application deadline, it may be helpful for the Culture Blocks staff to have two to three windows a fiscal year where applications are accepted. This could help the staff provide workshops similar to the benchmark programs where interested parties can learn more about the process. This standardized timeline could also open time in between the application windows for any new initiatives that may be associated with program growth. Also, this standard window will allow for a more consistent provider experience allowing staff members to focus on answering questions and giving full attention to applications at specific times during the year.

Though Culture Blocks utilizes an online submission portal, they are still relying on the providers to complete the Microsoft Word and Excel files and then upload them to GIFTS. While the team was unable to evaluate the data from the Excel files and the usability of GIFTS, there is other software available that would allow the providers to simply input the information online, and take out the upload step.

Program Evaluation

What the research tells us:

Defining the success of programs like Culture Blocks can be difficult, given the subjective nature of their goals. However, program evaluation can help quantify a program's success. In the literature, the impacts of arts and culture programs are often measured through best practices - or, procedures that are accepted or prescribed as being correct or most effective. These best practices include the strategic planning of a program's mission, vision, and values. Strategic plans map out the vision and goals of an organization, usually through stakeholder discussion and feedback (Appendix K, Appendix L). A good strategic planning process begins with alignment - or, the arrangement of items in relationship to each other and an agreement on a common purpose. Next, a good strategy contains a diagnosis of the issues being addressed by the organization or program. Actions to solve the diagnosed issue are then selected, but it is important to ensure that these actions are achievable, rather than overly ambitious (Arts Consulting Group, 2017).

In addition, best practices can include the formation of a "Theory of Change". A Theory of Change, also known as a logic model, illustrates the relationship between what initially goes into the program providing arts and culture, to the long-term goals and objectives of the program (Wright, 2007, p. 127). Organizations can identify their own logic model by finding the logical

progression from the initial resources and activities put into the program, to the data collection and analysis of program outcomes, and finally to the resulting standard operating procedures that are born from the data analysis conducted prior. In contrast to the broader strategic plan, the logic model is more program specific.

Organizations and programs similar to Culture Blocks – which can be found in Atlanta, Georgia and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania – often utilize specific data metrics to measure the success of their work. This data often ranges from demographics and number of participants to expenditure and budgetary reporting. The benchmarking survey revealed that out of the eleven programs contacted, eleven require attendance numbers, eight require demographic information, eight require an itemized list of expenditures, four request participant feedback, and three request a program narrative (Figure 5).

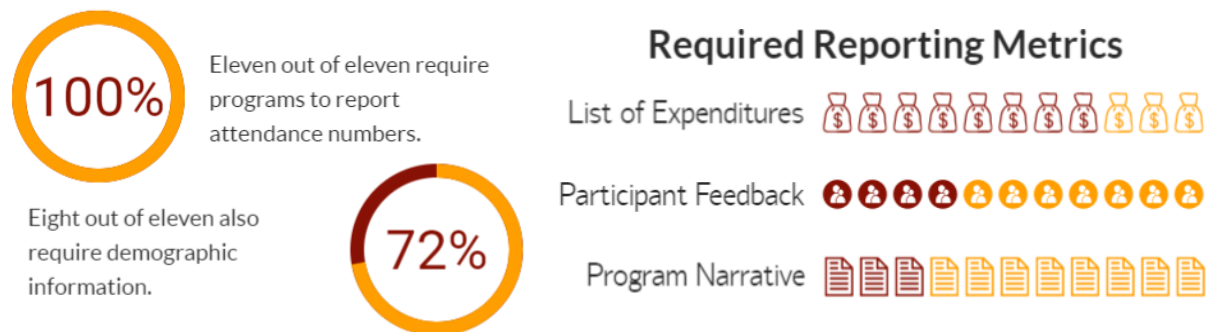


Figure 5: Benchmark Results

Along with this information, two of the organizations also wanted data on whether any individual artists were paid. Two of the eleven organizations also mentioned that they wanted the artist or organization to reflect on the successes and challenges of the program, and a third wanted to hear about how the program impacted the artist’s professional development.

Collecting, measuring and understanding programmatic data can be straightforward when utilizing best practices. Weiss (1972) encourages organizations to create logic models, showing all the steps between a program’s activities and the desired outcomes. An assessment may be used to determine whether a program is linking activities to outcomes (Cooksy, Gill, & Kelly, 2001). Building a logic model requires stakeholders to explicitly explain how they expect program activities to lead to desired outcomes.

As discovered through the benchmarking survey, only two of the benchmark organizations currently utilize logic models, with a third indicating that they plan on beginning to utilize logic models. One of the programs that indicated they use a logic model also commented that they partner with private assessors to help create the models. Apart from the arts councils and Offices of Cultural Affairs that the class spoke with, there are several examples of arts organizations that utilize logic models. ArtsRising in Philadelphia contracted a third party to help create their logic model to evaluate their program (Culbert, 2011). EPACenter Arts in East Palo Alto, California created a logic model to help “guide [their] work and assessment as [their] programs grow” (EPACENTER Arts, n.d.) (Appendix M). Americans for the Arts, one of the premier professional organizations in the arts, has multiple resources indicating the importance of logic models, one of which is a guide to helping develop a model (Appendix N). As these

organizations will attest, without a logic model it is difficult to assess how faithfully the program is remaining to the intended design (Holliday, 2014).

What Culture Blocks is accomplishing:

Culture Blocks currently collects data in the form of programs offered and participants in each program. Providers self-report these numbers to the Culture Blocks staff. These results are submitted to the county on a quarterly basis. Data from past quarters can be seen below (Figure 6):

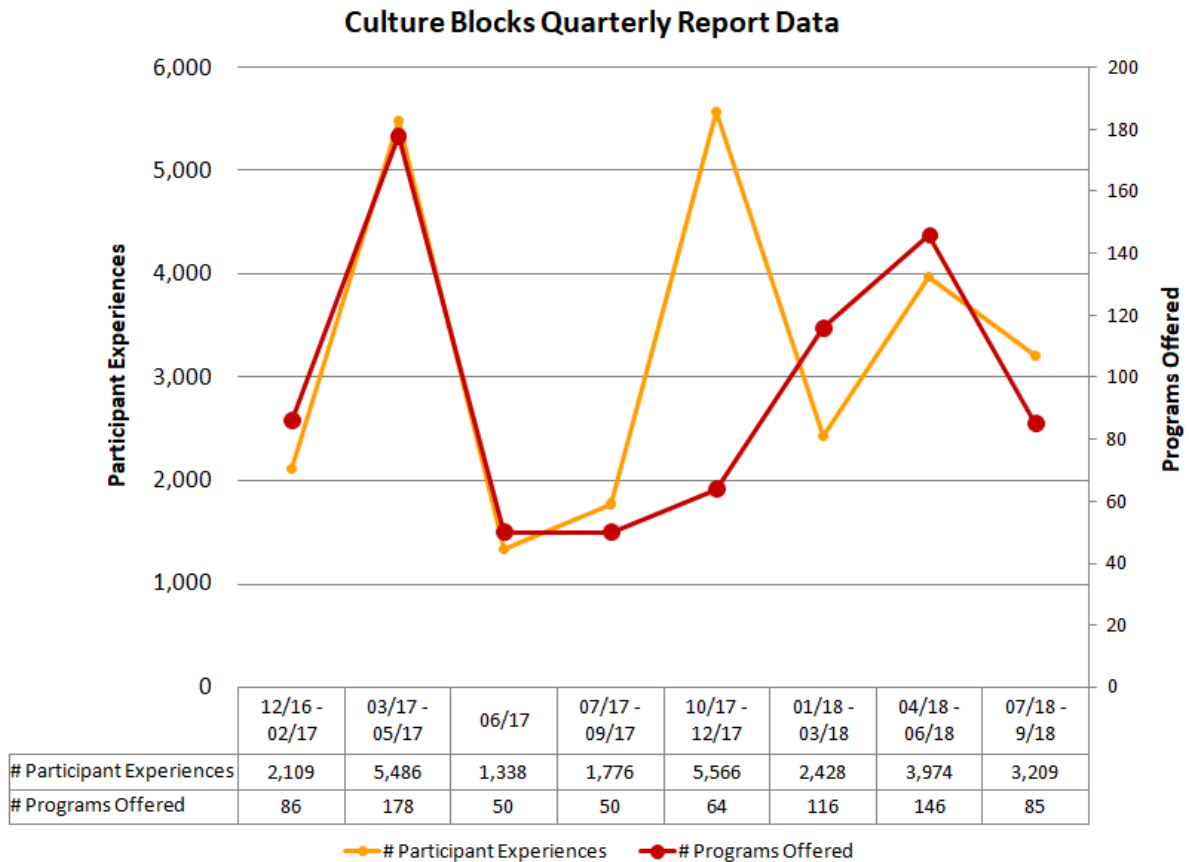


Figure 6: Quarterly Report Data

The methods Culture Blocks currently uses to collect data are twofold: providers submit quarterly reports on the progress of their program, then provide a final report after the program is complete. However, the time frame is not always based on county fiscal years. Instead, the timeline of the program itself dictates the providers’ reporting. For example, the provider of a program offering services to community members in October and November has until the end of December to submit the report. Quarterly reporting is directly tied to funding, meaning a provider will not get all their requesting funding upfront. Instead, they receive portions of their funds each quarter upon submittal of their report. To trigger the payment sooner than later, providers do have the option of submitting reports as soon as their programs end. Culture Blocks also incorporates qualitative data in the form of both provider and community feedback through community meals, surveys, and programmatic reporting.

Where Culture Blocks can be enhanced:

The quarterly data does not provide concrete information as to why some events were well attended and others were not. For example, the data shows that 64 programs in October 2017 through December 2017 yielded a turnout of over 5,500 participants; while in other periods, such as April 2018 through June 2018, 146 programs were offered but only yielded 3,900 participants. Part of Culture Blocks' mission is to reach underserved populations and demographics; however, it is hard to evaluate if they are achieving this goal with the current data collected. It would be ideal for providers to collect demographic data such as their home zip codes, ethnicity, and gender. Additionally, there is a lack of data surrounding the goal of Culture Blocks to serve communities that do not currently have access, whether based on financial or transportation barriers. Culture Blocks could ask how participants got to each event - by car, by foot, by bus - to determine transportation barriers and to establish a baseline of comparison over time. It is imperative to have metrics in place to evaluate whether they are achieving their mission of reaching underserved communities.

Overall, it seems that the collection of quantitative data is often overlooked and there is a dependence on qualitative outputs such as participant feedback regarding social and emotional impacts of Culture Blocks events. Although these bring a powerful voice to the success of the program, they are not measurable. Having quantifiable data is useful to track the growth, success, and areas for improvement in the program. This data should be used to make strategic decisions for the program. For instance, if a location continually brings in low participant numbers, staff should evaluate whether it is a problem of location or if there are additional barriers that need to be addressed. If a certain program continually brought in high participant numbers, staff would want to make decisions on larger venues to reach more people strategically. The power of this data to communicate the value of Culture Blocks will be essential with new political actors coming to office, Robert Bush's upcoming departure, and the continuing growth of Culture Blocks. Implementing the use of a logic model would help the Culture Blocks team define and measure inputs, outputs, and outcomes (Appendix O). It would benefit the Culture Blocks team to implement this tool and develop a tailored strategic plan to determine what data should be collected and how it should be measured. Doing so will provide insight into areas in need of improvement to ensure Culture Blocks operates and grows to its full potential.

While ASC has a strategic plan, it was updated in 2015 before the inception of Culture Blocks, so the mission and vision of Culture Blocks are effectively absent from the overall strategic plan. As Culture Blocks grows, a strategic plan will be useful in redefining the goals of the program, the targets, audience, and parameters of the program's outcome, and provide a framework for uniformity in programmatic administration and evaluation. Regarding the strategic plan, Culture Blocks should define their vision for success in the long term. While the 2015 ASC Strategic Plan did not name Culture Blocks specifically, the next ASC Strategic Plan is likely to include the program, and it will be important for program staff to work in close collaboration with ASC leadership and stakeholders to align their vision.

Continued Success and Growth

Based on the above research and program evaluation by the MPA class, it is evident that Culture Blocks has accomplished much and is having deep impact on the Charlotte-Mecklenburg community in a short span of time. With the solid foundation the program built over the last four years, the research shows Culture Blocks' impact is noticed by community members and local government leaders alike. Culture Blocks is a thoroughly impressive program with a significant return on investment for the community. However, due to its rapid growth in such a short time, there are opportunities for enhancement. After the MPA class conducted a thorough program evaluation by means of analyzing community impact of Culture Blocks and analyzing the outcomes and objectives of the program, the class outlined several recommendations to aid in the sustainability and growth of Culture Blocks. The recommendations as determined by best practices and community feedback are listed below.

Recommendations

Based on the research and subsequent findings, the following recommendations are proposed for the enhancements to the Culture Blocks program:

The Arts Have Impact

Recommendation I: Enhance data collection

Through the provider survey, focus groups, and stakeholder interviews, it is evident that Culture Blocks has a deeply positive impact in Mecklenburg County. Impact could be communicated to the community and its leaders more effectively by using data collected through the required reporting system to ensure Culture Blocks is reaching its target audience and providing services at its full potential. This recommendation is further supported by additional recommendations.

Access to Quality Arts Programming

Recommendation II: Increase marketing capacity

Culture Blocks should consider making a marketing position full-time instead of part-time. This staff member would solely handle marketing, branding, and promotional aspects of the program. In addition to traditional marketing efforts, this staff member could help to foster relationships with venues, county and city staff, schools, and other community organizations to foster awareness and increase visibility. Survey respondents indicated that increased marketing would be helpful in further outreach and visibility of Culture Blocks' offered programming. Cost-effective ways to increase marketing capabilities could include the following:

- *Create a master calendar online* – Creating an easy-to-use master calendar incorporating activities from all blocks would enable users to have greater ease of access to discover Culture Blocks programming. Currently, on Culture Blocks' website, programs are only shown at the geographic block level, rather than by date, time, and program.

- *Boost social media presence* – Culture Blocks should utilize Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter more often to provide free or low-cost advertising for Culture Blocks programming.
- *Leverage venue marketing* – Currently, Culture Blocks leaves flyers and signage at Culture Blocks venues. It would be useful, however, if venues promoted Culture Blocks programs through their own digital and social media marketing efforts.

Recommendation III: Provide guidelines in Spanish

While Culture Blocks provides access to quality arts programming to communities in need, some survey respondents remarked that access for the artists *themselves* is limited. Respondents of the survey distributed to providers requested that culture blocks offer resources in additional languages, a more streamlined application process, and additional website capabilities. It is, therefore, the class’ recommendation that ASC offers more Spanish language options on their website, within the application process, and as part of the program offerings.

Recommendation IV: Identify future program locations

As Culture Blocks moves forward, it is imperative that they assess whether they plan on maintaining a model of identifying underserved areas and providing programming to those areas or expanding Culture Blocks to cover the full county. This will be an important factor to consider as the program continues to grow, and as resources and demographics in various Charlotte neighborhoods shift over time.

Recommendation V: Create onboarding packet for new facility managers

As new facilities are being onboarded, it would be useful to have an onboarding or orientation packet to provide to facility managers so they understand the process. With this document, facility managers will understand the goals and processes of Culture Blocks. This will also aid in smooth transition when facilities hire new managers.

Recommendation VI: Enhance access to transportation

Culture Blocks and Mecklenburg County could consider providing transportation for residents to attend programming through LYNX or CATS. This would help increase access to those who have budgetary restraints or live outside of the block areas where programming is currently offered. This could be accomplished by giving vouchers or passes to members of the community that want to participate in a Culture Blocks event, but do not have the transportation to attend.

Program Administration

Recommendation VII: Provide application workshops/webinars for interested providers

Culture Blocks should consider providing application workshops or webinars to interested providers to save time fielding questions and issues with applications. These sessions could include a “FAQ” section to eliminate duplication of effort answering multiple phone calls about similar questions. Additionally, incorporating a specialized class that outlines expectations would save hours of staff time spend coaching applicants individually and dealing with the submission of several drafts of applications.

Recommendation VIII: Use application windows rather than a rolling deadline

Culture Blocks currently accepts rolling applications from local artists and organizations. Culture Blocks could benefit from offering two to three application windows throughout the year. Doing so will allow more flexibility and structure for the application review process conducted by the Culture Blocks staff by allowing breaks of time between application deadlines to focus on other administrative tasks. In contrast to the current process, this is another administrative shift to maximize the use of Culture Blocks’ resources as the program expands throughout Mecklenburg County.

Recommendation IX: Consider a more streamlined application process

Currently, to apply to be a program provider for Culture Blocks, providers fill out forms emailed to them from Culture Blocks staff, have staff review their submissions, then upload them to a GIFTS portal once approved by the Culture Blocks team. The team should consider using a program where providers can input information to the page directly rather than uploading separate worksheets. This could include a licensed program such as Survey Monkey or Submittable, or it could be as easy as using Google Forms. Furthermore, these programs can automatically provide useful tasks such as aggregating the data for easier analysis and setting up alerts to know when people have updated forms.

Program Evaluation

Recommendation X:Reconstruct reporting process

Based on benchmarking programs and other research, the Capstone class recommends that Culture Blocks strive to reconstruct their reporting process. The current process requires staff members to review and evaluate provider information constantly. ASC could work towards changing the current reporting process to a quarterly basis that aligns with the county’s fiscal calendar. Doing so will allocate the efforts of staff and resources to focus on other aspects of the program. Additionally, aligning the reporting times with the county fiscal year will simplify the budgetary reporting that is necessary at the county level.

Recommendation XI: Implement strategic decision making

Culture Blocks should consider implementing strategic decision making into their short-term and long-term goals. Culture Blocks should use strategic thinking to define their vision for success to demonstrate how they will be sustainable during times of growth and successfully communicate their mission to incoming stakeholders. Going a step further, Culture Blocks should consider implementing a program-specific strategic plan that is in alignment with ASC's strategic plan via input from stakeholders. The strategic plan would help position Culture Blocks into the greater strategy and goals of ASC as a whole. Having a defined strategic plan and vision will be especially important as the program faces growth and change over the next five years, especially considering the leadership changes within the County and ASC in the near future. See Appendix K for a sample and Appendix L for tools to assist in the creation of a strategic plan.

Recommendation XII: Develop a logic model

Culture Blocks would greatly benefit from crafting a "Theory of Change", otherwise known as a logic model. A logic model is a mapping tool that helps administrators incorporate the current inputs, activities performed by Culture Blocks' staff, and the outputs that come from those activities into an easy-to-understand visual model. Based on the benchmark findings, this tool is useful in assessing and upholding the program's intent of providing "culture for all." Creating a logic model to define the program's resources and the impact of those resources on the community and stakeholders will allow for a better understanding of what is needed for Culture Blocks to not only define their long-term goals but also to reach those goals as the program expands throughout Mecklenburg County. The sample logic model provided in Appendix N can work as a springboard for the Culture Blocks team in the creation of their own defined logic model.

Recommendation XIII: Enhance data collection

There are a few essential data pieces that are not currently being captured that have the potential to determine a more comprehensive analysis of the current reporting results:

- The Culture Blocks team should consider capturing participant demographics such as race, income levels, neighborhood, and gender to ensure that Culture Blocks programming is reaching their target audience and reaching their goal to provide equitable arts access to all Charlotte-Mecklenburg residents. The limited data collected in the two focus groups indicate that Culture Blocks is indeed reaching underserved demographics. A greater survey of this information would tell a compelling story of the success of Culture Blocks to provide arts access to participants.
- Additionally, the Culture Blocks team should collect more quantitative data in addition to the qualitative data collected through the final reporting documents. Administrators can use quantitative data to communicate the successes and growth of Culture Blocks using percentages and numbers, which comes across as more "factual" and may appeal to some funders and stakeholders. Using a program such as Survey Monkey or Qualmetrics would allow ASC to collect this data and compile results easily and with minimal staff time.

Recommendation XIV: Gather feedback from facilities

It would be useful to collect data from the various facilities and venues that host programming. Hearing that foot traffic increases for facilities as a result of hosting a Culture Blocks program is useful to show yet another positive impact of the program on communities, especially if it provides a return on investment to facilities that generate revenue for the County.

Recommendation XV: Enhance data analysis

After collecting data, the Culture Blocks team should use this data to implement the strategic plan and make other programmatic decisions. For example, administrators can use participant data to determine the size of venues needed, and what type of cultural programming is most popular in the specific blocks. Additionally, aligning the reporting times with the county fiscal year will simplify the budgetary reporting that is necessary at the county level.

Summary

After conducting research consisting of a thorough literature review, gathering public feedback, and analyzing comparable programs and relevant data, the class completed a comprehensive program evaluation of Culture Blocks. Based on the findings, the class made several recommendations to aid in administrative improvements as the Culture Blocks program seeks to expand and ASC experiences leadership changes.

Culture Blocks is currently reaching nine geographical areas of Charlotte-Mecklenburg County with its cultural experience programming. To best utilize its current data and reporting mechanisms, Culture Blocks would benefit from analyzing that data to have a means of reporting the qualitative measurements of community impact. Restructuring the current application and data reporting processes will allow for better resource management to ensure Culture Blocks is providing quality service to providers and program attendees alike. By boosting their marketing presence, Culture Blocks can continue to grow their reach of positive impact. In addition, Culture Blocks can address one of its top barriers to access, transportation, by providing some form of public transportation to individuals in the community to attend events. Lastly, creating various models of evaluation such as a logic model and strategic plan will provide Culture Blocks with tools to address and ensure its sustainability as the program grows.

Based on the presented recommendations, this program can be sustainable in the future with additional administrative procedures to ensure long term goals are met and the local community continues to benefit from the cultural experiences provided by Culture Blocks.

Acknowledgments

The UNCC Master of Public Administration Advanced Seminar Class would like to thank the following people and organizations for their invaluable assistance, information, and impact on this evaluation:

Robert Bush, ASC President and UNCC MPA Adjunct Professor

Holly Whisman, ASC Vice President, Grants & Services

Eboni Lewis, Program Director, ASC Culture Blocks

Megan Walsh, Program Specialist, ASC Culture Blocks

ASC Culture Blocks providers, participants, and facility managers

Mecklenburg County Board of County Commissioners

Clayton Lord, Vice President of Local Arts Advancement, Americans for the Arts

Appendix

A. Scope of Work



Project Overview

Arts and Science Council (ASC) serves as the designated “Office of Cultural Resources” for the City of Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, and six suburban towns by providing advocacy, cultural education programs, cultural planning, fundraising, grant making, public art and workshops and trainings for the cultural community.

ASC fulfills its mission of “Culture for All” through serving as a resource hub, advocate, and funder. Programs and services are administered by professional staff, independent contractors, and other organizations which receive funding from ASC. Funding for ASC is provided by local and state government along with private gifts from individuals and corporations.

ASC’s 2015 Strategic Plan is the most current guiding document which includes significant areas of focus around community engagement. One element of this heightened level of engagement is the Culture Blocks Program. Developed as an outgrowth of the Community Engagement Plan and fully funded by Mecklenburg County, Culture Blocks makes funding available for nine designated “blocks” or zones. Artists, organizations, practitioners, and other providers apply for funding through ASC to bring services to one of the nine zones. Providers are then reimbursed for marketing, materials, and other qualified expenses following execution and submission of required documentation.

ASC has contracted with the Master of Public Administration (MPA) Capstone Class at UNC Charlotte to develop a program evaluation of the Culture Blocks Program. This eight-member class, comprised of students in the MPA program, shall be responsible for producing a professional and comprehensive report analyzing the program.

Scope

Analyze Community Impact

The class shall present data on the impact of the Culture Blocks program. This can include economic, social, or other metrics of impact to be determined through a review of the intended outcomes of the program. This data may include statistics provided by ASC, participant feedback, stakeholder interviews, or a survey of providers.

Analyze Outcomes and Objectives

The class will review stated objectives and outcomes of the program and evaluate data collection methods, providing opportunities for growth and evolution.

Provide Recommendations for Continued Growth of Program

Using current ASC data and research collected during the course of the project the class shall provide recommendations for continued program growth and improvement.

Tasks

Plan the Project and Conduct Initial Research

The project shall begin with the collection of relevant data, documents, and other information necessary for the class to become familiar with the Culture Blocks program. Representatives from ASC presented the basic framework of the project to the class early in the semester. This phase includes implementing tools for effective project management, building teams, and appointing special roles.

Collect Data and Benchmark Similar Programs

To provide a comprehensive analysis of current and potential future impact, the class shall collect relevant data and documentation from ASC and other comparable programs. This data will provide insight into current processes and realities including potential areas of enhancement and evolution.

Meet with Critical Stakeholders

The class will meet with staff, providers, participants, and/or other stakeholders who are identified by ASC as pertinent to the project. The visits will focus on learning more about the stakeholder's long-term goals, objectives, and feelings about the Culture Blocks program.

Conduct a Provider Survey

With assistance from ASC, the MPA Capstone Class will design and implement a survey to investigate provider satisfaction and/or feelings about the impact of the Culture Blocks program. Questions may include items related to administration, execution, and potential recommendations for improvement of the Culture Blocks program.

Conduct a Comprehensive Literature Review

The class will collect and review relevant academic and non-academic literature, including program evaluations, and literature from municipal and nongovernmental arts programs. The class will synthesize the literature review into the final report to provide evidence of current and potential future impact of the program on the defined service areas.

Submit a Draft Report

The MPA Capstone Class will submit an electronic version of the final report to ASC. This draft report will present:

- The community and participant impact of the Culture Blocks program.
- Outcomes of the Culture Blocks program which may or may not have presented themselves during the "founding" of the program.
- Recommendations utilizing research-based best practices for growth and continued evolution of the Culture Blocks program and identification of outcomes assessment best practices for future evaluation needs.

ASC will have one (1) week to provide feedback to the MPA Capstone Class to consider and incorporate into the final version, if possible.

Submit the Final Report

The MPA Capstone Class shall deliver both hard and electronic copies of the final report to ASC and other interested parties.

Present Findings

The class shall create a PowerPoint presentation to summarize the key points of the final report, and present this document to ASC employees, board members, and any other interested parties.

Timeline

Please note that the following is a preliminary schedule, designed to provide a final report and presentation to ASC by May 2019.

- January 14, 2019: ASC presents the project to the MPA Capstone Class.
- February 4, 2019: Finalize scope of work.
- April 22, 2019: Submit final draft report for ASC to review.
- Between April 29, 2019 and May 8, 2019: Presentation to ASC staff, board, or other officials (specific date pending confirmation).

Limitations

The MPA Capstone Class noted several limitations of the project:

- Time: The timeframe of the study is limited to the spring semester, or January 14, 2019 through May 8, 2018.
- Statistical Significance of Data: Due to time limitations of the study, some of the data collected through survey research or other methods will not meet the necessary level of statistical significance to draw scientific conclusions.
- Staff Tenure: Due to the nature of the program, the current staff were not at ASC when the program started. This may present additional barriers in data gathering, historical information, or other data which would otherwise assist in the completion of the project

Changes to the Scope of Work

Once signed by representatives of the MPA Capstone Class and ASC, proposed changes to this scope of work must be submitted in writing to the MPA Capstone Class professors and agreed upon by both parties.

Ebony Lewis,
Culture Blocks Program Director
Arts and Science Council

Date

Jillian Mueller,
UNC Charlotte MPA Capstone Class
Class Liaison

Date

B. Literature Review

To better understand the impacts of the Culture Blocks program of ASC, the class analyzed several academic and professional studies around the following topics: culture relatability, community and neighborhood benefits, impact of involvement, attainable knowledge, psychological benefits, economic role, and best practices for evaluability. The topics were gathered based on common themes of what the Capstone class saw through relevant literature.

C. Provider Survey

To better gauge provider feedback on the program, the Capstone team employed a 10-question survey that was dispersed to 57 active Culture Blocks providers. Seven out of the ten questions were multiple choice, while the last three were open-ended. A total of 37 respondents provided feedback through the survey, representing a 65 percent response rate. The survey saw 100 percent participation in questions one through seven, while question eight, the first open-ended question, received 91 percent participation and questions nine and ten received 79 percent and 85 percent participation, respectively. Below is the survey that was distributed:

ASC Culture Blocks
ASC Culture Blocks

Culture Blocks Programming embraces and celebrates the cultural life and desires of residents, connects communities to arts and culture activities that speak to their interests, and seeks to break down barriers to participation with cultural organizations. The following survey is to help us know the providers' perspective on how the Culture Blocks program is performing as we strive to implement this goal of connecting Mecklenburg County residents with the arts. Please be assured that your responses will be anonymous.

Please rate the following statements from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree" based on your experience with Culture Blocks.

* 1. ASC Culture Blocks facilitates learning and understanding of cultural life and desires in Mecklenburg County.

strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree

* 2. ASC Culture Blocks introduces new programs and expands existing cultural program accessibility in local neighborhoods for both providers and participants.

strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree

* 3. ASC Culture Blocks addresses barriers to participation in the arts within Mecklenburg County.

strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree

* 4. ASC Culture Blocks program provides enough financial support for your organization/project to conduct your Culture Blocks program.

strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree

* 5. I experience a financial benefit by participating in the ASC Culture Blocks program.

- strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree

6. Do you foresee yourself or your organization continuing to participate in the ASC Culture Blocks program?

- yes
 no

7. Do you foresee yourself or your organization working in additional communities?

- yes
 no

8. Do you foresee yourself or your organization needing additional resources?

9. Are there ways the Culture Blocks team could better support the program?

10. How do you think the Culture Blocks program is having an impact on individuals and/or their community?

D. Benchmarking Survey

In order to provide a comprehensive view of potential future impact, the Capstone team analyzed comparable benchmark programs nationwide. The students researched similar arts councils or offices of Cultural Affairs within the fifty cities identified in the Chetty study for economic mobility (Chetty, Hendren, Kline, & Saez, 2014). A survey regarding the methods related to administration, measuring program effectiveness, and program evaluation was sent out to assess the best practices of these programs. Once returned, the students analyzed the survey responses, finding ways to incorporate other programs' administration practices with Culture Blocks. Eleven organizations participated and provided benchmark information. The eleven organizations are as follows: San Francisco Arts Commission, Sacramento Metropolitan Arts Commission, Denver County Cultural Council, Regional Arts & Culture Council, Get Creative San Antonio, Office of Cultural Affairs, City of Dallas, Arts Council of Hillsborough County,

United Arts of Central Florida, St. Lucie Cultural Alliance, Arts Council of Indianapolis, and Georgia Council for the Arts. The list of questions is as follows:

Capstone Benchmarking Benchmarking Questions

Culture Blocks embraces and celebrates the cultural life and desires of residents, connects communities to arts and culture activities that speak to their interests, and seeks to break down barriers to participation with cultural organizations.

This survey is to collect data on programs similar to the Arts and Science Council's Culture Blocks program to provide a comprehensive analysis of current and potential future impact. This data will provide insight into current processes and realities including potential areas of enhancement and evolution.

* 1. Are grantees required to have 501(c)(3) standing?

- Yes
- No
- Other (please specify)

* 2. How do you determine whether a project/program should receive funding? (i.e. based on mission statement, value to community, programmatic themes, etc.)

* 3. Are there any budgetary requirements for programs/projects? Check all that apply.

- Minimum annual program budget
- Maximum annual program budget
- 1:1 funding match
- Only eligible for %age of annual operating budget

Other (please specify)

4. What is your annual budget to allocate to grantees and/or what is the average grant amount?

* 5. Which, if any, of the following do you incorporate into your application process? Check all that apply

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Guidelines/application available in multiple languages | <input type="checkbox"/> Online application process |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Workshops/webinars available for applicants | <input type="checkbox"/> Application checklist |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Budget templates provided | |

Other (please specify)

6. What was the original goal/drive behind creating this grant program and how do you ensure programs are in line with this goal?

* 7. Do you require that funded programs be offered to the public free of cost?

- Yes
- No
- At limited cost
- Other (please specify)

* 8. Once funded, where are programs typically delivered? Check all that apply.

Cultural institutions (museums, theaters, etc.) Public libraries

Senior centers

Public schools

Parks and recreation centers

Other (please specify)

* 9. How do you measure program effectiveness? What metrics do you capture in your program reports? (e.g. number of attendees, demographics, expenditures/receipts, participant feedback, etc.)

10. Do you utilize logic models or a similar program evaluation model for your program(s)? If so, what? Do you recommend?

E. Stakeholder Interviews

To obtain a better understanding of the origin of the ASC’s Culture Blocks program, the Capstone team members conducted interviews with ASC-identified stakeholder, individuals with prior and current significant connection to the Culture Blocks program. These individuals include those who were at the helm of the program when it originated, program providers, and local elected officials. The students created a list of interview questions to be used to help gauge the “how and why” of the Culture Blocks program. The list of questions is as follows:

1. What is your personal connection to the Culture Blocks program? How did you become interested or involved?
2. From your perspective (position), why was Culture Blocks created?
3. What are some of the most important strengths of Culture Blocks?
4. How would you define success for Culture Blocks? What are the important driving factors for Culture Blocks to continue to be successful throughout the community?
5. Where would like to see Culture Blocks in the next 5-10 years?
6. Are there areas/opportunities for growth for Culture Blocks? If so, what?
7. How does Culture Blocks meet the needs of the Mecklenburg County community?
8. Do you recommend other key stakeholders to speak with?

9. What question should I have asked?
10. Are there any benchmark programs throughout the country you are aware of?

Through these interviews, students were able to gain further insight into the program's impact on the Mecklenburg community. These findings, along with those from field research, literature review and data analysis guided the program evaluation and led to recommendations. The stakeholders that were a part of the interviews are as follows:

- Robert Bush (ASC President)
- Katherine Mooring (ASC SVP, Community Investment)
- Darryl Gaston (Local social and arts advocate)
- Rosalia Torres-Weiner (Local artist and social activist)
- Ryan Deal (ASC Vice President)
- Tiffany Waddell (ASC Board Member)
- Michael Bryant (Management and Budget Director, Mecklenburg County).

F. Event Participant Observation

Several members of the class gathered qualitative research with visits into the community to see Culture Blocks programs in action. These visits spanned multiple blocks, including various programs and community dinners. Attending either Culture Block's marketing event of a community dinner or an arts experience, gave the students a sense of the intent and goals of the programs. Observing how each aspect of Culture Blocks looks from an audience perspective was a critical component to the program evaluation. With this means of qualitative research points, the students were able to observe and analyze all aspects of the program and offer a complete evaluation. Specific events and dates attended were:

- Community Dinner for future block in Steele Creek (March 14)
- Nation's Ford Multicultural Festival in the SouthWest Block (April 6)
- Using Your Unique Songwriting Workshop + Showcase in the North End/Sugar Creek/Hidden Valley Block (February 1)
- Beauty of Science event in the Northwest Block (February 7)

G. Focus Groups

A researcher conducted two focus groups after two separate Culture Blocks programs to examine the impact that attending Culture Blocks programming has on attendants. The researcher had no relationships with any of nine participants in either of the focus groups and communicated her affiliation with UNC Charlotte as a student to all participants.

The first focus group took place in the Sugar Creek block before a Using Your Unique Songwriting Workshop + Showcase program. There were five focus group participants, consisting of three women and two men. Three of the women and one of the men were college students, and all of them were African-American. The second case study took place after the Beauty of Science event in the Northwest block. All four participants in this focus group were

African-American senior citizens. Two were male and two were female, and the researcher learned from the group discussion that all were retired from the work.

Focus Group Script Outline

Welcome and Introduce Moderator

In this focus group, we are going to discuss your experiences with the Culture Blocks Program you attended today and your participation in the arts and culture in the Charlotte area. I will not be participating in the discussion but will be moderating by asking questions and making sure that we discuss all important issues related to the study in a timely fashion. Before we begin, I will ask you to fill out a piece of paper with your demographic information. Completion of this information is optional but greatly appreciated. I will collect these papers at the end of the focus group.

I will be recording the conversation, but your identities will remain confidential and all contributions to the study will be anonymous.

Questions

1. What brought you to Culture Blocks today?
2. What other arts activities do you participate in and why? Is this your first time attending an ASC event?
3. Do you face issues with participating in arts and cultural events in the Charlotte area?
4. How accessible was today's Culture Blocks program? How far did you travel to get here?
5. How did you relate to the programming?
6. Can you describe the impact that participating in Culture Blocks had on you as an individual?
7. Can you describe the impact that Culture Blocks has on your community? How do you define community?
8. What would you like to see in future programming?

H. Existing Culture Blocks Data and Reporting Analysis

The final report, final budget template, and participation reports that must be completed by providers are displayed below:



CULTURE BLOCKS PROGRAM INVESTMENT FINAL REPORT

Culture For All.
Organization Name:

In reflection of your initial application submission, please respond to the following:

1. **Your organization provided an overview of the program content, frequency, and target audience. Please describe any:**
 - a. Positive or negative factors that may have impacted this plan or your organization's ability to implement it.
 - b. Program elements you would do the same and/or differently.
2. **Your organization outlined why it was interested in presenting this program and how the program could respond to community feedback. Please describe:**
 - a. How the programming impacted the community and your organization and the success indicators used.
 - b. Accomplishments and success stories.
 - c. Knowledge gained and/or lessons learned that could be incorporated into your future programming or shared with other organizations engaged in similar work.
3. **Your organization provided a list of the administrative (including marketing and development) and creative staff who would be involved in the program and a description of their contributions. Please describe any:**
 - a. Changes to the staff and/or their contributions.
 - b. Would you do anything differently?
4. **Your organization described the communications and promotions plan you would implement.**
 - a. Did it go as planned?
 - b. Would you do anything differently?
5. **Provide any additional feedback on your organization's experience providing programming through ASC Culture Blocks (e.g., application process, level of funding, staff interactions, website).**

I. Culture Blocks Application



Culture For All.

CULTURE BLOCKS APPLICATION PROPOSAL NARRATIVE

Organization Name:

Program Title: *(Note– If approved, this title will be used on ASC channels)*

Program Overview: Provide a detailed description of the proposed programming including

- a. Dates, times, and locations:
- b. Content:
- c. Age appropriateness:
- d. Additional details, etc:

Program & Organizational Alignment:

- a. To which of the Culture Blocks Program Themes, does the proposed programming respond?
(Note – Click [here](#) to download the themes or type <https://goo.gl/Vdhkyx> into your web browser)
- b. Why is your organization is interested in presenting this specific program to the community?

Program Staff: Provide a list of the administrative (including marketing and/or development) and creative staff involved in the program and a brief description of their contributions.

Marketing Overview: *(Note – If approved, you are required to post program events on CharlotteCultureGuide.com)* Outline the communications and promotions plan and timeline for the program. 1) What communication channels will you leverage? 2) How will your efforts reach residents with no access to technology? 3) What other barriers have been taken into consideration in the marketing strategy?

Final submission of this document should be no more than 4 pages.

J. Culture Blocks Application Guidelines



Culture For All.

CULTURE BLOCKS APPLICATION GUIDELINES and FAQs

Purpose: ASC Culture Blocks connects communities with responsive arts, science, and history experiences closer to where residents live. The program engages with creative individuals and organizations with a primary mission of arts, science, and/or history to present programs in specific geographic areas. Culture Blocks, funded by Mecklenburg County, supports cultural experiences that are planned with resident involvement and/or take place at libraries, recreation centers, parks, and relevant community spaces.

Eligibility:

Successful applicants will demonstrate a commitment to collaboration with ASC, community partners, and program participants.

Please consider applying if your program meets the following criteria:

- The programming explicitly integrates arts, science, and/or history experiences with community feedback as listed within the Culture Blocks Program Themes.
- The programming is open to the public and the purpose is to increase access to creative programming for residents living in one or more of the geographic areas.
- The programming will begin and end within a 12 month time span. Note: Applications must be submitted at least 90 days prior to the date of the first program.
- The program provider is a creative individual, a 501(c)(3) organization in good standing with the IRS, or another form of incorporated organization not driven by stakeholder profits.
- The program provider has a primary mission of arts, science, and/or history.
- The program provider has a recent history of successful public programming (a minimum of twelve months preferred).
- Collaborative programming is welcomed. Organizations working together must identify a single organization to serve as the applicant.
- Religious organizations and institutions of higher education can apply provided the programming reaches a broader audience (not only church membership or faculty/student body) and does not contain proselytizing religious content.
- Neighborhood organizations can apply and request the direct – cost of a creative individual and/or cultural organization.

Restrictions:

Prior to applying, please consider the following list of requests that are not supported:

- Programming that involves work with Pre-K-12 children during the school day is not eligible.
- Programming designed to serve as a fundraiser is not eligible.
- Programming that occurs outside of Mecklenburg County is not eligible (e.g. touring, travel).
- Organizations or individuals with delinquent paperwork for a previously-funded ASC grant are not eligible to apply.
- Requests for capital expenditures are generally not eligible (e.g. laptops, digital cameras, kiln).
- Requests to support an organization's ongoing staff or faculty salaries are not eligible.
- Requests for more than 20% of the organization's total annual operating expenditures may require additional documentation to confirm program feasibility.

Request Amount: Varies. Average requests are between \$250 to \$10,000.

Requests for more than \$10,000 should generally represent programming that includes multiple events and/or spans several months.

Application Deadline: Rolling. Applications must be received at least 90 days prior to the date of the first program. Program locations must be identified prior to applying.

Application Assistance: Applicants are required to apply through our online application system. To request access to the online application form, please email cultureblocks@artsandscience.org to schedule a phone or in-person conversation with staff.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: How will my application be reviewed?

A: Applications will be reviewed by your responses to open-ended style questions within the application and submission of required attachments. Applicants will submit a budget and/or itemized invoice using the template provided. As you prepare your application, it is important to clearly articulate the value and impact of the programming and how it responds to community feedback as listed within the Culture Blocks Program Themes.

Q: How much can I request?

A: Applicants will be asked to provide information about anticipated budget and/or sources of financial support when submitting their application. Applicants are encouraged to develop a strong application and be realistic about contract expectations. Applicants are discouraged from attempting to create a \$10,000 program that does not match organizational capacity or would be most impactful and successfully executed with a smaller budget. Every application will not be approved and every approved application will not receive the full funding requested.

Q: How will I receive payment, if contracted?

A: Payment schedules will vary, depending on both the scope and duration of the contracted programming. Submission of initial paperwork will be required for a first installment and final report submission will be required before final payments are made.

For organizations applying to partner with a creative individual or cultural organization, ASC will provide the fees and payment schedule to the program provider.

Q: What types of programs have been contracted in the past?

A: To view a listing of current ASC Culture Blocks programming, [click here](#). This listing is not an exhaustive representation of eligible programs.

Q: What costs can I include in my Culture Blocks proposal?

A: Culture Blocks proposals can include program-related fees & contracts, marketing & advertising expenses, expendable supplies & materials, space rental, etc.

If you are unsure if you can include a specific expense in your proposal, please see the list of ineligible costs below or contact ASC staff at cultureblocks@artsandscience.org or 704-335-3030.

Q: Can Culture Blocks funding support Public Art Projects?

A: ASC happily accepts proposals to support Public Art projects, provided they meet the above stated criteria. Public Art provides a sense of place by evoking memories, making connections between cultures, exploring differences, telling stories, and provoking thought and discussion. Public Art is not a tool for PR or Marketing or merely beautification or decoration. ASC believes that much of the value of Public Art lies in the process.

- Therefore, requests for funding to support Public Art projects must:
- Define the community that will engage in and be the beneficiary of the project.
- Display evidence that the community will be involved in the identification of the project purpose and concept.
- Display evidence that the community will be involved in the artist selection process.
- Display evidence that the selected artist will engage the community in the development and/or fabrication of the work.

Requests that do not follow this process will be considered ineligible. Additionally, please note that a common obstacle faced by these type projects is securing a suitable location for the work, especially if the proposed location is publicly owned. If funding is awarded for a Public Art project, the applicant must submit proof that a location has been secured prior to the disbursement of the first payment.

Q: Other than the online application information, can I submit any additional support material?

A: No.

Q: Q: I have more questions. Where can I get help?

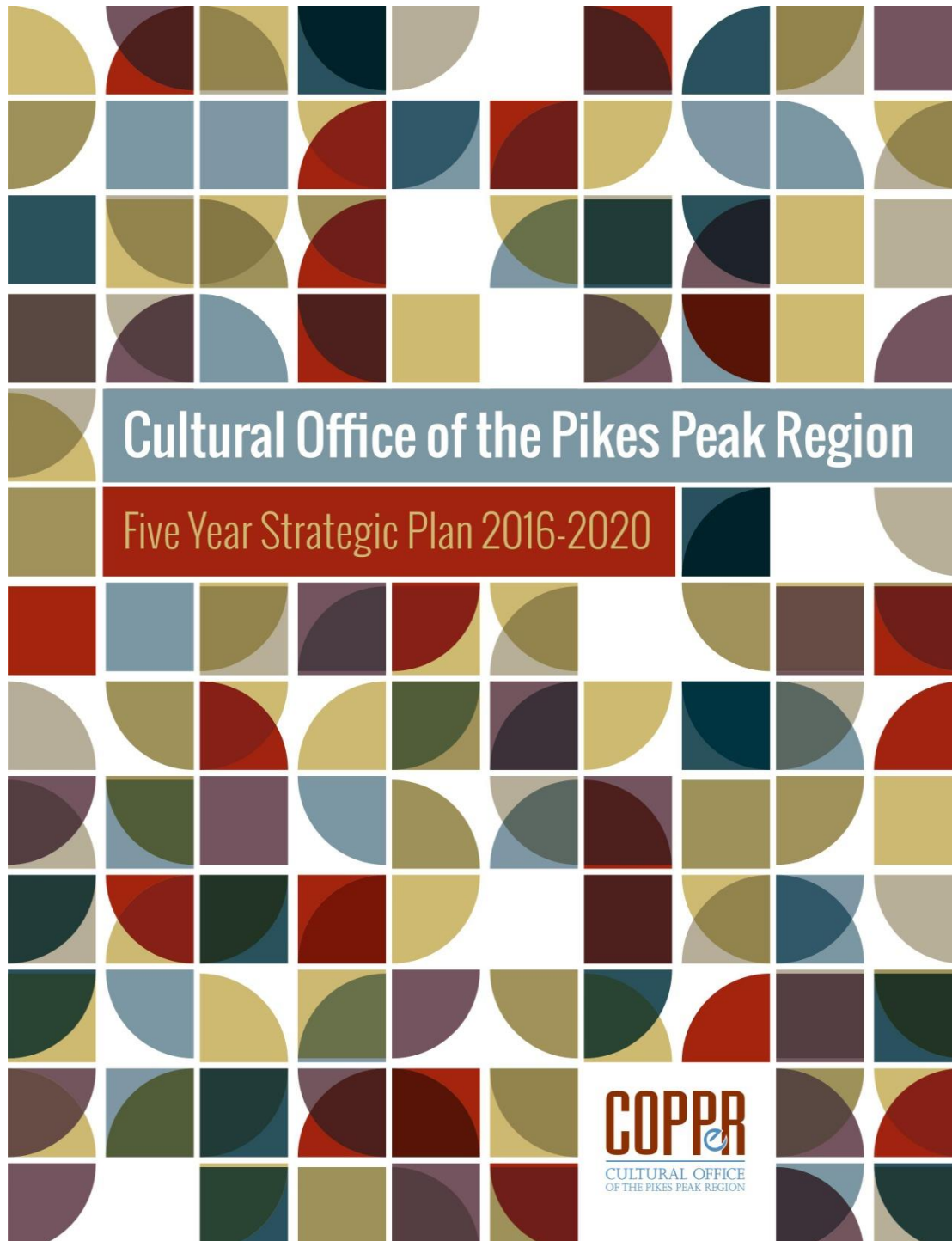
A: ASC Culture Blocks staff are available to answer questions as you develop your application. Please contact ASC staff at 704-335-3030 or email cultureblocks@artsandscience.org

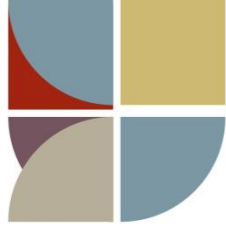
The following is a list of ineligible costs:

- Prizes, including scholarships, tuition or financial awards.
- Purchase of artifacts or artwork.
- Capital expenditures – funds for expenses for purchase of buildings or real estate, renovations or improvements involving structural changes, payments for roads, driveways or parking lots, or permanent and generally immobile equipment such as grid systems or central air conditioning. This also includes acquisitions, which are expenses for additions to a collection of art.
- Contingency funds – funds for an event that may occur but that is not likely or intended.
- Costs for selling and/or marketing any products or services of the organization unrelated to the funded programming.
- Deficit reduction, bad debts, interest on loans, indirect cost rate expenses, losses on other awards or contracts, or fines, penalties, or litigation costs.
- Donations and contributions to other organizations.
- Fundraising and investment management costs.
- Events specifically designed to fundraise.
- Goods or services for personal use of the organization's employees.
- Lobbying expenses.
- Organizational establishment or reorganization costs.

K. Sample Strategic Plan

Below is a five-year strategic plan from the Cultural Office of the Pikes Peak Region (COPPeR) in Colorado Springs, Colorado (Cultural Office of the Pikes Peak Region, 2015).





Introduction

The Cultural Office of the Pikes Peak Region (COPPeR) is pleased to share our newest strategic plan, which will guide our organizational efforts through the year 2020. Developed in cooperation with Rader Consulting LLC, and formulated with valuable input from a diverse group of community stakeholders throughout our service area, this plan clearly articulates COPPeR's vision and goals for building "a thriving community united by creativity." In addition to stating our four strategic goals and their associated strategies, the plan highlights our overarching five-year priorities, and establishes important "boundaries" that will help to remind the COPPeR Board and staff what we should *not* be doing over the next five years. Lastly, this document also summarizes some of the key findings from the grass-roots research that was used to develop the substance of this strategic plan. All in all, we hope you'll agree that this new strategic plan is a powerful tool that will help COPPeR to continue its important work in our community. Thank you for your continued enthusiasm and support for arts & culture here in the Pikes Peak region, and please know that we are always available should you have any questions, comments, or suggestions.

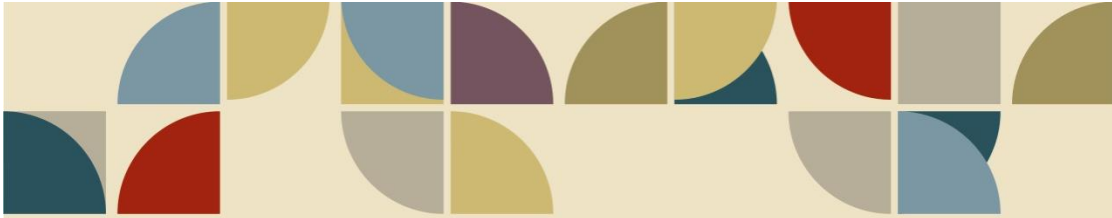


Andy Vick
Executive Director



Herman Tiemens
Board President
2015 - 2016





Vision

A thriving community united by creativity.

Mission

Connecting residents and visitors with arts & culture to enrich the Pikes Peak region.

"COPPeR represents a single, powerful voice among the thousands of arts & cultural treasures, creative industries and artists of our region. For nearly 10 years, the organization has been advancing the creative movement locally and connecting visitors and residents to our rich cultural landscape. COPPeR plays a critical role in bringing color to the region and elevating the impact that arts & culture have on our lives."

- Susan Edmondson
Downtown Partnership CEO

Culture Office of the Pikes Peak Region 2015 Board of Directors

Herman Tiemens, <i>Chair</i>	Gary Bain	Andrew Hershberger	Nathan Newbrough
Amy Triandiflou, <i>Vice Chair</i>	Andrea Barker	Christine Lowenberg	Allie Romo
Brenda Speer, <i>Treasurer</i>	Al Buettner	Deborah Mahan	David Siegel
Sally Hybl, <i>Secretary</i>	Randy Doersch	Martha Marzolf	
	Lara Garritano	Deb Muehleisen	

The COPPeR Guild

The COPPeR Guild is a group of arts patrons and community advocates from across the Pikes Peak region, who believe that a vibrant and dynamic creative sector requires the strong, effective and trusted leadership provided by a local arts agency like COPPeR.

Gary and Kelly Bain	Kyle and Sally Hybl	Edward and Mary Osborne
Brian Blankenship and Victoria Selfridge	Phil and Meg Kendall	Brenda Speer and Greg Ward
Al and Leigh Buettner	Kevin and Jamie Kratt	Herman and Tang-Lin Tiemens
Susie Burghart and Rich Tosches	Phil and Anita Lane	Jean Tiemens and Herb Comet
Judy Casey	Kathy Loo and Jim Raughton	Lois Vick
Ben and Kate Faricy	Christine Lowenberg	Josh and Melissa Waymire
Sam and Kathy Guadagnoli	Mike and Robin McGrath	Welkin Sciences, LLC

Guild Membership as of 12.31.15





Cultural Office of the Pikes Peak Region: Customers

- Residents of the Pikes Peak region
 - Artists
 - Arts organizations
 - Arts patrons
 - Creative businesses
 - Cultural audiences
- Visitors to the Pikes Peak region



Cultural Office of the Pikes Peak Region: Partners

- Artists
- Arts organizations
- Businesses
- Civic leaders
- Colleges/universities
- Colorado Springs Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB) and other tourism offices
- Colorado Springs Regional Business Alliance (RBA) and other chambers of commerce
- Community/cultural attractions & organizations
- Cultural venues
- Elected officials
- Funders
- K-12 education
- Media





Goals

1. *Cultivate* robust **participation** in arts & cultural experiences throughout the Pikes Peak region
2. *Advocate* for **investment** in the region's cultural vitality
3. *Leverage* arts & cultural assets to help **brand** our community as an innovative and vibrant destination
4. *Foster* **collaboration** and cross-sector partnerships

Goal 1. Cultivate robust participation in arts & cultural experiences throughout the Pikes Peak region

Strategies

- PeakRadar
 - Website/social media
 - Peak Radar Pages
 - Peak Radar Guides: Galleries, Summer Concerts, Theatre, etc.
 - Peak Radar Lodging Picks
 - Peak Radar support line
- Summer arts outreach booth
- Office & Arts Information Space
- Arts Month
- Public presentations and engaged community presence

Goal 2. Advocate for investment in the region's cultural vitality

Strategies

- Ensure COPPeR's sustainability
 - Increase individual giving
 - Grow public sector funding
 - Grow corporate support
 - Grow foundation support
 - Increase & diversify earned revenue
 - Where appropriate, and based on available financial resources, distribute funds to support individual artists, arts organizations, and/or artistic programming



- Implement a successful annual appeal campaign
- Launch & Grow *The COPPeR Guild*
- Prepare the Arts & Economic Prosperity Report
- Advocate for public sector funding for arts & culture
- Be present and engaged with the business and political communities to encourage investment in the creative sector

Goal 3. Leverage arts & cultural assets to help brand our community as an innovative and vibrant destination

Strategies

- Capitalize on high visibility opportunities to leverage the regional brand
- Promote local successes in the creative community
- Build closer communications with partners to identify and promote partner assets and encourage collaboration
- Tie arts & culture with other sectors working to elevate the regional brand
- Identify creative ways to weave arts & culture into the fabric of our community

Goal 4. Foster collaboration and cross-sector partnerships

Strategies

- Create MOUs with other organizations to provide content for PeakRadar.com and to promote the website to their constituencies
- Promote a collaborative environment amongst arts & cultural organizations and across artistic disciplines
- Convene & facilitate on behalf of arts & cultural interests
- Identify sectors to engage, e.g., health & wellness, tourism, military, sports, workforce development
- COPPeR Board & staff members maintain active presence in community
 - Serve on key organizational boards & committees
 - Participate in the arts
 - Volunteer in the arts
- Encourage arts enthusiasts and leaders to serve on key boards & committees





Five-Year Priorities

- Continue to invest in Peak Radar and Arts Month
- Steward a public sector funding mechanism that supports the broader arts & cultural community
- Cultivate an engaged individual and corporate giving community in support of COPPeR's financial sustainability
- Foster strategic partnerships for philanthropic giving and support of arts & culture
- Support & find creative ways to infuse the community's brand with arts & culture



Boundaries

- Don't build bricks & mortar projects
- Don't produce artistic programming
- Don't provide artist training
- Don't do critical review





Stakeholder Research Highlights

COPPeR engaged Rader Consulting, LLC, a local firm, to conduct research with arts enthusiasts to inform its strategic planning process. The research included:

- Two focus groups in June 2015
- An online survey in July 2015, with more than 600 people responding
- Three town hall style meetings in August 2015 with “Arts Partners” at the Tri-Lakes Center for the Arts, Cottonwood Center for the Arts, and the Manitou Art Center

Key Findings

Focus Groups

Participants voiced their opinions and suggestions about what they believe COPPeR should do to enhance arts & culture in the Pikes Peak region. Major themes included:

- Continue to build collaborative partnerships, and be a connector and facilitator with key organizations and individuals
- Inspire community pride, investment and participation
- Increase promotion of arts events and activities
- Encourage arts education
- Include everyone in arts activities and offer arts everywhere in the region
- Enhance COPPeR/Peak Radar branding

Online Survey

Survey respondents weighed-in on various aspects of the arts & cultural scene and COPPeR's roles. Major themes included:

- 95% of survey respondents believe it is highly important that COPPeR promote the local arts & cultural scene
- Most (8.9 on a 0-10 pt. scale) agree arts & culture are important to the local economy (77% say COPPeR should help measure economic impact)
- 84% believe COPPeR should advocate for arts & culture to business and political communities



- 84% believe COPPeR should cultivate collaboration in the arts & cultural community
- 83% believe COPPeR should collaborate on visitor promotion with the CVB
- 82% believe COPPeR should build cross-sector partnerships
- 79% say it is very or extremely important that the Pikes Peak region has a centralized source of arts & culture information like PeakRadar.com
- 90% say that it is very or extremely important to have arts & cultural local media coverage
- Word of mouth (72%) is identified as the most important source for arts & cultural information, followed by local print media (65%), communication from other arts & cultural organizations (57%), social media (53%) and local radio (43%)

Arts Partners Meetings

Artists and other individuals affiliated with the creative industry gathered in three communities to discuss what is important to them and to tell COPPeR how it might assist their efforts. Major themes included:

- Grow brand awareness for COPPeR & PeakRadar.com
- Continue to promote the local arts & culture scene
- Continue to provide centralized arts information
- Enhance technology
 - Website
 - Social media
- Continue advocacy for arts & culture
- Continue to connect & coordinate organizations and individuals
- Encourage artist development

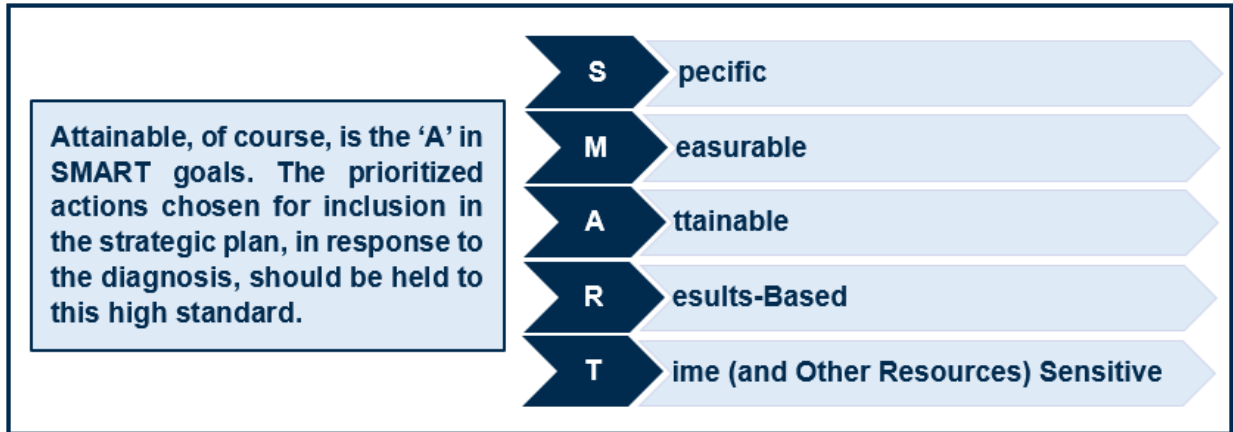
 **Cultural Office of the Pikes Peak Region (COPPeR)**
(719) 634-2204
 info@CulturalOffice.org
 PO Box 190
 Colorado Springs, CO 80901
www.CulturalOffice.org

Andrew Hershberger Creative  A Marketing Agency  Design provided by Andrew Hershberger Creative
www.AHershbergerCreative.com



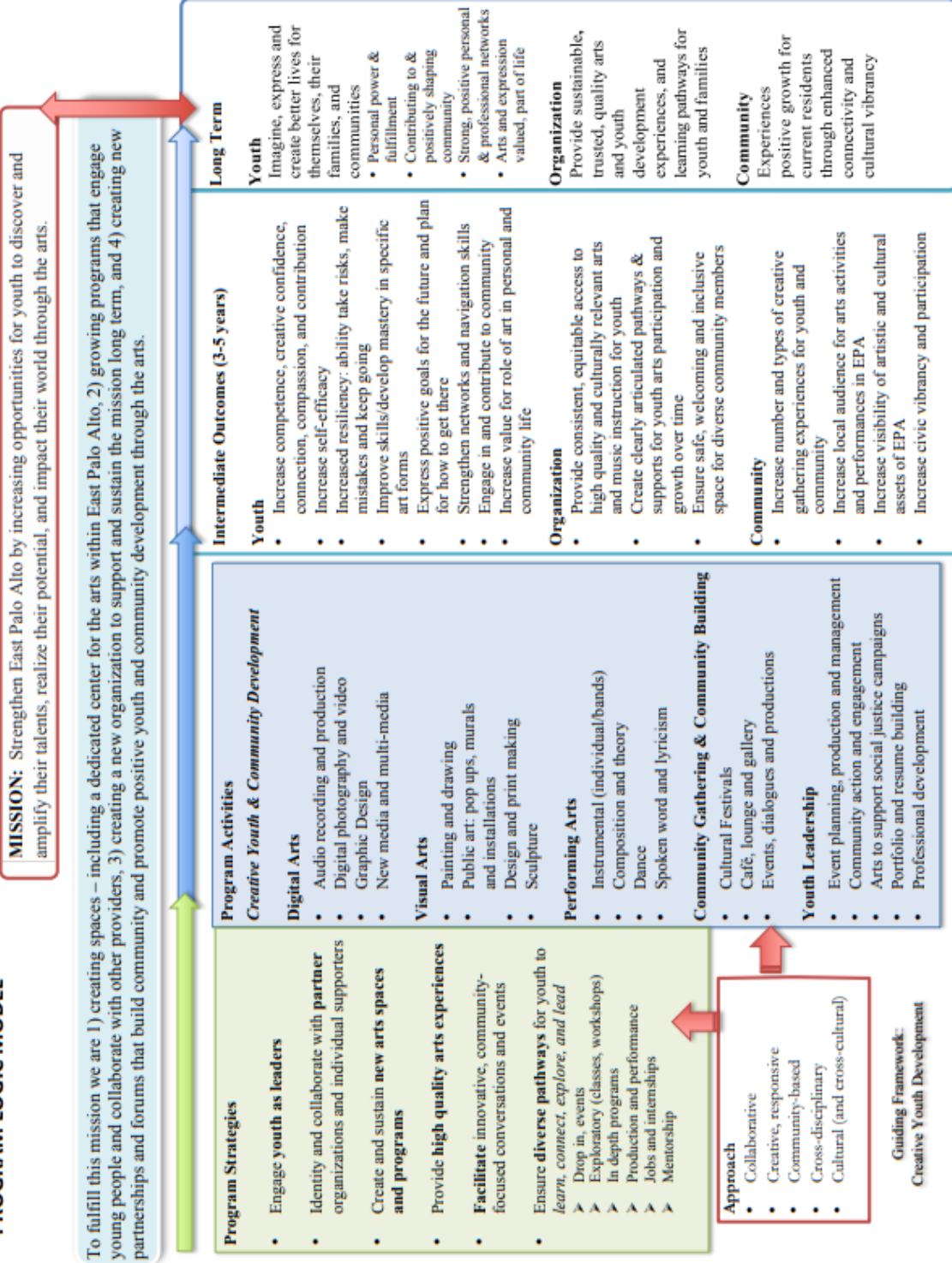
L. Strategic Plan Tools

Below are two infographic tools courtesy of the Arts Consulting Group to help organizations begin formulating a strategic plan (Lambert, 2017).



M. EPA Center Arts Logic Model

PROGRAM LOGIC MODEL



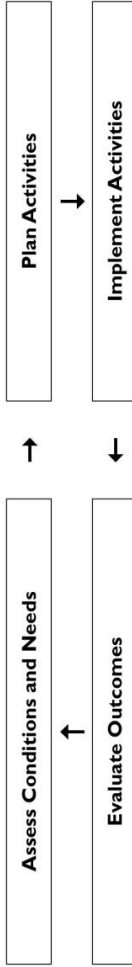
N. Developing a Logic Model

Below is a tool designed to help organizations walk through the steps of developing a logic model (Animating Democracy, 2011).

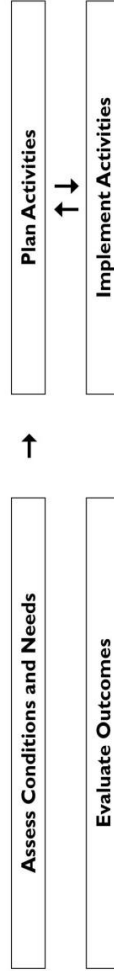
Developing a Logic Model

A logic model is a systematic and visual way to present and share understanding of the relationships among the resources you have to operate your program, the activities you plan, and the changes you hope to achieve. It is useful as a planning tool as well as a basis for program evaluation.

THE PLANNING CYCLE



THE “DO” LOOP (what happens without evaluation)

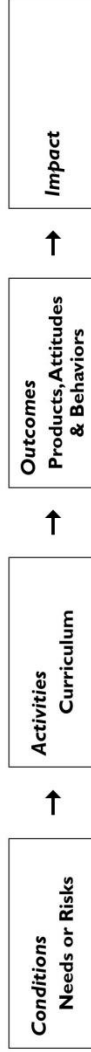


COOPERATIVE EVALUATION

Cooperative evaluation aims for continual program improvement from within (rather than judgment of success or failure from outside) by bringing the evaluator into partnership with the program, and putting the program in charge of the evaluation. Program planners and staff decide the program goals, how performance will be measured, and what data they will collect.

ORGANIZING A PLAN USING A LOGIC MODEL

Here are the four basic segments of a logic model plan:



Conditions are the needs or risk factors that the program is designed to address. They might include situations such as a change in local public policy, or a lack of communication between different segments of the community.

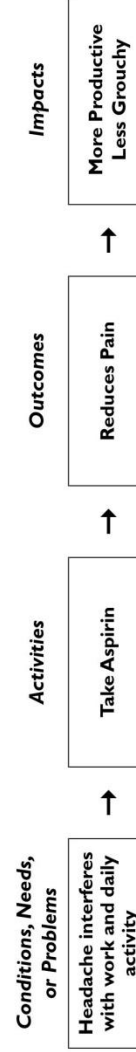
Activities describe the key elements of the art-based civic dialog program itself, the method by which it is implemented, and include the preparation for activities, their frequency and duration, the number of participants, qualities of the artists and any collaborators.

Outcomes are changes in the participants and audience that result from the activity, either in attitudes or behaviors. Also include any product that results from the activity.

Impact is a statement of the long-term desired effect of the program: where the program is ultimately going. It should clearly relate to the initial conditions that the program is designed to address.

LINKING THE STEPS OF A PROGRAM

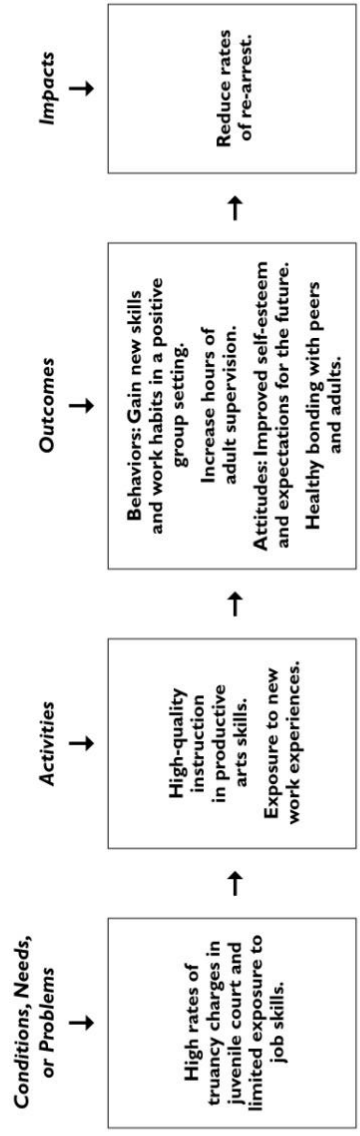
The links between each step of the program should be defined in ways that make sense. These links are called the **theory of change** for the program.



The theory of change for this "headache reduction program" is that headache pain causes decline in productivity and mood, therefore a pain reducer (aspirin) will result in the desired impact of increasing productivity and reducing grouchiness.

The challenge in using a logic model is to expose the assumptions and logical links behind the program so that the theory of change is clearly revealed.

Example: The Art-at-Work Program (a demonstration project of the Fulton County Arts Council) was designed to work with children who had been adjudicated for truancy (indicating their risk for school failure and delinquency) and increase their expectations for future employment. The program provided high-quality instruction in arts disciplines, business, and entrepreneurial aspects of the arts in a positive social setting.



Assumptions: A number of youth in Atlanta who are adjudicated truant have a limited vision of their future, have experiences of academic failure, and face other risks that increase the chance of further court involvement. Further, they have few opportunities to learn and master productive new skills. Consequently, they rarely experience recognition and reinforcement for their constructive efforts, for acting responsibly, or for contributing to the community.

Art-at-Work provided these opportunities, to raise the self-esteem of participants and develop good work habits, which in turn improved the youths' expectations for future employment, increased their school attendance, and prevented them from becoming more deeply involved with the juvenile justice system. So the theory of change clearly links the activities of the program to its outcomes and impacts.

EXERCISES FOR CONSTRUCTING A LOGIC MODEL

These exercises will help you begin to think of the basic components of your own logic model. Plan to collect input from the key people who will be participating in delivering the program (e.g., artists, collaborators, arts administrators).

First, identify the **conditions or needs** that the program is designed to address and write a "program statement." Begin by answering the following questions:

Program Conditions or Needs

What is the target audience you want to address? (neighborhood, age group, etc.)	
What are the problems that are likely to occur if the changes do not happen?	
What skills, resources, or experiences could the program audience use to reduce the chance of a negative outcome?	

Put the answers to the above questions together into a program statement such as:

Target audience face the risk of... **Likely problems** are and they lack ... **Skills, resources, or experiences** are...

EXAMPLE: Program Conditions or Needs

Target audience	Elected officials, developers, and business, community, and neighborhood residents
Likely problems	Groups are not working together to develop plans and policies for neighborhood revitalization. Neighborhood character will change. Current residents will be forced out.
Skills, resources, or experiences	A neutral space and creative opportunities for parties to meet and mix and have dialogue; theater presentations that can portray multiple perspectives and depict the results of various policies and plans.

Second, list the **program activities**. Activities include the major elements of planning, creative work, program development, and the participatory activities, performances, and exhibitions that the audience experiences. Examples include: a steering committee is created to guide the project; a visual artist collaborates with a folklorist to collect stories and images from members of the community; an exhibition is mounted; special events and dialogues are held; or a video documentary is made and shown throughout the community. Different activities in the same project can support the same outcome or lead to different outcomes.

Program Activities

What are the major elements of the program?	What are the sub-activities?
•	•
•	•
•	•
•	•
•	•
•	•
•	•

Third, identify the **outcomes** of the program.

Descriptive Reporting

- How was planning accomplished and who participated?
- How were time and money spent?
- Did the activities happen as planned? How many events took place?
- Who (including audience and artist) participated? How many and for how long? Did the project attract participation from a diverse group?
- What was the experience of the planners? Artists? Partners? Participants?

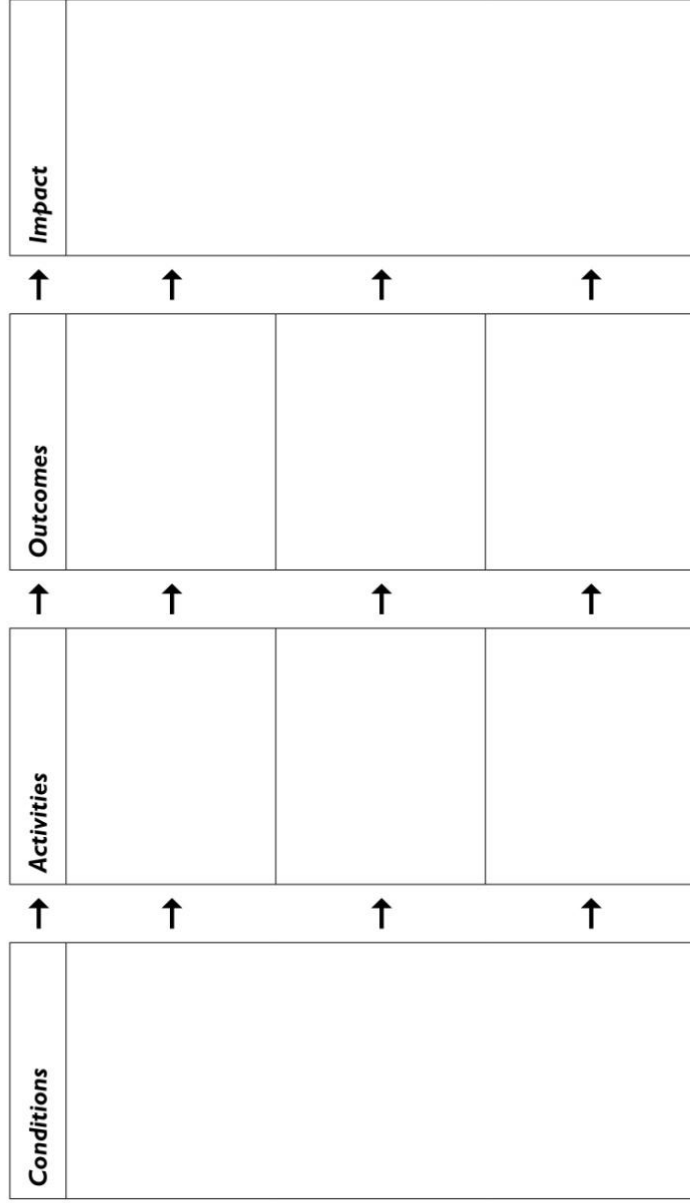
Outcomes also **include changes in the participants, in the organization, the artists, and community** that mark progress towards the intended program impacts. These outcomes occur as a result of creating, facilitating, participating in, or experiencing the program. Ask what changes you expect to see that will affect the conditions and needs (above) that the program addresses. Do participants work better with a group, gain new forms of expression and communication, or become more motivated to participate in dialog in the future? Outcomes can be thought of in terms of changes in attitudes and behaviors.

Outcomes	
Changes in Attitudes	Changes in Attitudes
•	•
•	•
•	•
•	•
•	•
•	•

The **impact** of the program is a statement of the long-range intended effect. The impact statement should follow from the outcomes you have listed, and it should also be clearly related to the conditions that the program is designed to address. The impact statement for Animating Democracy as a whole, for example, is "Animating Democracy fosters artistic activity that encourages civic dialog on important contemporary issues."

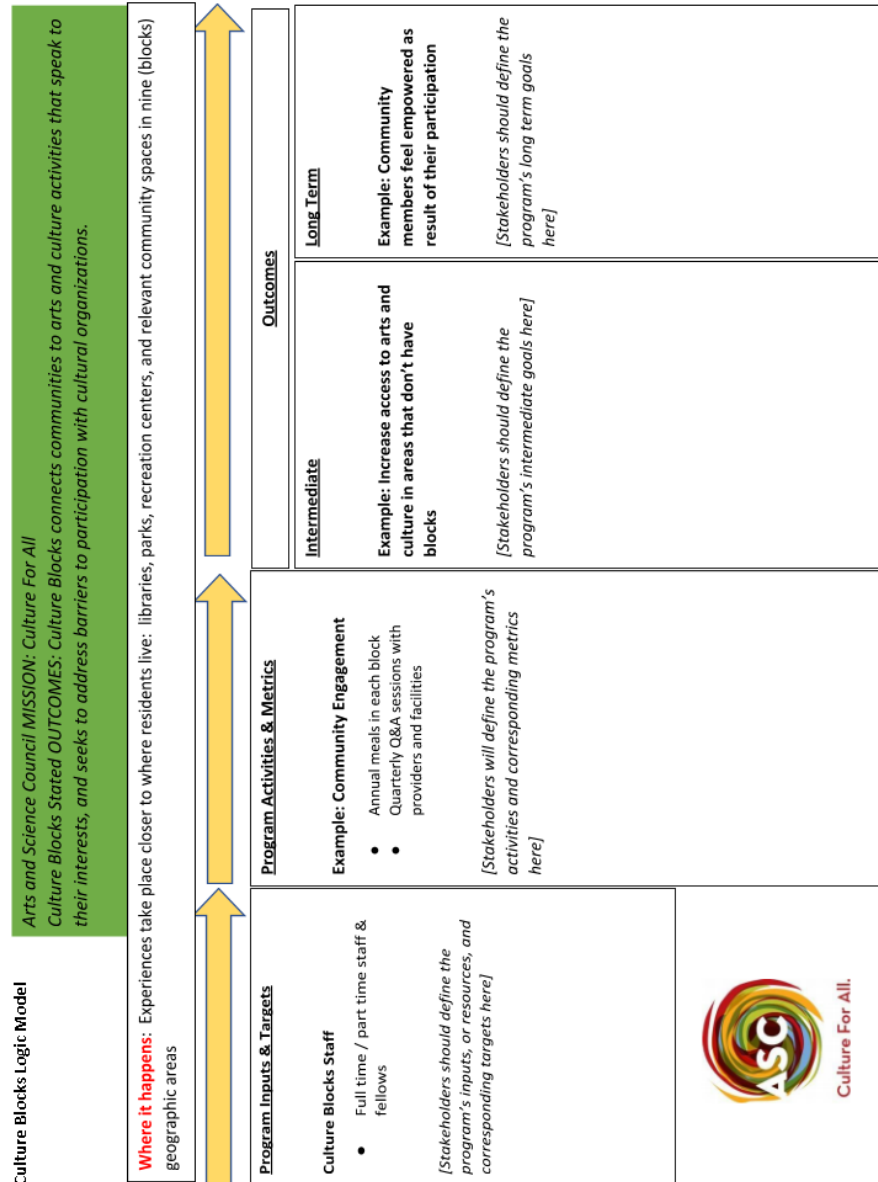
Impact
The program will improve the conditions (needs) for audience, artists, institutions, and communities by ...

Finally, the **theory of change** is illustrated by the way each of these elements is linked together. Start by putting your Conditions, Activities, Outcomes, and Impacts into a matrix like the one below. Make as many boxes as you need by making extra copies of this sheet, but make sure each activity has an outcome and they make sense together.



O. Draft Logic Model Template

Per the best practices outlined in our paper, below is a sample logic model that could be employed by the Culture Blocks team:



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