Grantmakers in the Arts
Proceedings from the
1999 Conference

Strengthening the Arts
Through Policy, Performance and Practice

November 14-17, 1999 San Francisco

Getting Value From Evaluations

Many smart arts foundation officers evaluate their programs to add value to their grantmaking, yet they often find that evaluations produce little of value. The moral: it pays to be informed, selective and focused on value when you are a manager and client of evaluations. This session offered views and discussion of the challenges facing arts grantmakers who want to gain value from evaluation efforts. Topics included ways to focus evaluations on learning opportunities rather than auditing, on strengthening evaluations by involving grantees in their design and implementation, and on linking program design with evaluation design to strengthen both program outcomes and evaluation products.

Moderator: Edward Pauly,
Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund

Panelists: John Bare,
John S. and James L. Knight Foundation
Elizabeth Boris,
The Urban Institute;
Michael O'Hare,
University of California, Berkeley

November 15, 1999, 2:30 p.m.

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In 1999 Grantmakers in the Arts celebrated its fifteenth anniversary and, as organizations periodically do, we took this opportunity to stand back, take stock of our work as grantmakers, and look to the future. As part of this process, we surveyed our membership and also asked a number of you to tell us what you were working on, how you were doing, and what was keeping you awake at night.

In fact, we found very few surprises. You talked about the need to sustain arts organizations and leaders, increase public participation, and support individual artists and their work. You also talked about your desire for more informed arts policy, better evaluation, and new linkages to the for-profit sector. These ideas formed the content of the 1999 conference.

But the spirit of the conference came from another place, another vision, that is equally a part of the essential GIA. John Gardner, the founder of Independent Sector, gave a speech in Oakland in 1998, in which he spoke of the immense promise and possibility of the work of philanthropy and the nonprofit sector. He said of our work:

> *We are allowed to pursue truth, even if we are going in the wrong direction – allowed to experiment even if we're bound to fail, to map unknown territory even if we get lost. We are committed to alleviate misery and redress grievances, to give reign to the mind's curiosity and the soul's longing, to seek beauty where we can and defend truth where we must, to honor the worthy and smite the rascals with everyone free to define worthiness and rascality, to find cures and to console the incurable, to deal with the ancient impulse to hate and fear the tribe in the next valley, to prepare for tomorrow's crisis and preserve yesterday's wisdom, and to pursue the questions that others won't because they are too busy or too lazy or fearful or jaded. It is a sector for seed planting and path finding, for lost causes and causes that yet may win. This is the vision.*

Although he wasn't speaking of our work specifically, I have not encountered a more eloquent expression of what it means to be a grantmaker in the arts. The 1999 conference began with its content firmly in hand and with this vision offered as a guide. Hopefully along the way, we explored each other's best funding efforts, shared lessons from our failures, and drew courage from our commitment to artists, art forms, and community.

Cora Mirikitani
1999 GIA Conference Chair

Pauly: What we have to discuss today was encapsulated in a couple of exchanges at the plenary session this morning. I'm sorry for those of you who weren't there.

The question was raised with several extremely experienced and thoughtful foundation leaders, so are you doing more evaluation in your arts-related work? The response was, well, why in the world would we do that? This is arts work. You wouldn't want to run the risk of measuring the wrong things or counting things mindlessly, or minutely tracking the wrong things over too short a period of time to figure out what was really going on. In my view that's a profound observation that accurately characterizes a lot of silly studies that have been done.

Another view that I tried to raise was to ask the "so what next?" question. If we're not going to collectively waste money doing the wrong studies, are there things that we want to learn that we want other people to know about the work that grantmakers who support the arts are supporting? Are there important lessons and ideas that need to reach a broader audience and can do so through systematic gathering of ideas, accomplishments, information, lessons, challenges, responses, and other aspects of the thoughtful work that the grantee organizations are doing? I'm obviously an advocate for the view that the answer to that question is, yes. I think there are a lot of ways to do that work badly, and also, fortunately, a lot of ways to do that work well.

This panel was organized to respond to the high level of dissatisfaction with evaluations that many foundations experience. Just to give a great example of that, earlier this year The Kellogg Foundation released a report titled *Evaluation in Foundations: The Unrealized Potential*. The subtitle really tells the story. The authors were Patricia Patrisi and Bernard McMullen. They surveyed 21 large foundations, some national, some regional, all of which had extensive experience with evaluation. According to the reports from senior foundation staff, they frequently encounter complaints from their colleagues that the evaluations they commission are frequently too late to be useful; too academic and irrelevant to issues of programming and practice; too inflexible to adjust to the normal changes in the focus and the structure of grants to be worth anything. Generally, evaluations were felt by many of their colleagues to be quite unhelpful for foundation staff and for the fields that they seek to support.

These are obviously devastating criticisms, and the fact that they are made by senior foundation officials who have been doing the work the longest and in the biggest way is especially revealing about the challenges in this field. What they reflect is a widespread failure of evaluators to meet their foundation clients' needs, and they also reflect a lack of clarity on the part of foundations about what kind of evaluations would be useful for them and how they can get those evaluations.

The experience of the panelists today includes people who have personally experienced all of those dissatisfactions; it also includes lots of positive experiences as well that I hope will point to some powerful strategies that can help foundations get value from their evaluations. Two of the panelists represent foundations that use evaluation extensively and usefully, we think; two panelists are evaluators whose work avoids the traps that I've mentioned. We've tried to structure the session to leave plenty of time for discussion and exchange with the people who think this work is of sufficient interest to use their scarce time here at GIA to be part of the discussion on this topic.

I want to introduce the panelists and spend a moment talking about their background, not just for the purpose of introduction but to reflect a bit on the range of experience that is relevant to this discussion.

I'm Ed Pauly; I'm Director of Evaluation at the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund. My personal project at the fund is to figure out how to usefully integrate the fund's evaluation work into its grantmaking, so that the evaluation doesn't come afterwards but is built in, in a useful way, from the beginning. We feel that we've made some progress on that.

John Bare is Director of Evaluation at the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, based in Miami. He directs research planning and evaluation for the foundation's core grantmaking programs in arts and culture, journalism, education, and community initiatives. His past work before joining Knight includes many years working as a journalist and columnist and as a writer/researcher in Washington.

Next to John is Elizabeth Boris, who in 1996 became the first Director of the Center on Nonprofits and Philanthropy at the Urban Institute in Washington. Among her current projects is the national evaluation of the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund's initiative called Community Partnerships for Cultural Progress. Previously, she directed the Aspen Institute's Nonprofit Sector Research Fund, and she was also vice president for research at the Council on Foundations where for 12 years she directed the research and developed the research agenda there. While at the Council she designed and managed the project that produced the terrific book, *Evaluation for Foundations*. We've got a bunch of resources over here and one choice chapter that lists 35 key things to think about when you're thinking about evaluations. She's also the author of books and articles on philanthropy and on civil society.

Michael O'Hare, is Professor of Public Policy at the University of California, Berkeley, where his work includes research on arts and culture and related policy issues; also on environmental indicators; and on managing nuclear waste. I'm sure there's lots of cross-fertilization there. His varied career began with training in architecture and engineering, and also includes work for the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and at the Massachusetts Environmental Affairs Office. He is the co-author of the book *Patrons Despite Themselves: Taxpayers and Arts Policy* among many other books and articles. I should also note that he teaches graduate students who sometimes need evaluation projects in the arts; for grantmakers in Northern California, that's at least the possibility of a significant resource.

I want to kick off the series of presentations. We're going to do four brief presentations and then have a round-robin conversation.

I'd like to begin by fleshing out the question that I raised with the group this morning about how we can identify learning opportunities that can advance foundations' work in the arts, and to do that in a way that poses it as an alternative way of thinking to the stereotype of evaluation that I fully endorsed at the beginning of my career working in evaluation. That stereotype, which I think continues to be deeply held by many people working in evaluation, and by many clients who commission evaluations, is that the purpose of evaluation is to find out whether or not the program achieved its goals. So evaluation becomes a thumbs-up or thumbs-down verdict on did it work or not. Did people do what they were supposed to do, or didn't they?

There are probably some cases in which that's a sensible question to ask. You can imagine, for example, when a government agency is making a systematic effort to improve a set of services that are highly standardized or carried out in a large number of counties, it might make sense to evaluate them to see whether things were being done similarly and with particular desired effects.

The question, did it work or didn't it work, makes much less sense when the evaluation is about innovation, when it's about efforts to support flexibility or growth, or when the evaluation is about responding to changed circumstances. In those categories, and in many of the other categories where foundations are active, the evaluation question needs to change, and the relationship between thinking about evaluation and clients' needs, should to be very different than the stereotype.

So if the stereotype of evaluations is, did it work or didn't it work, here's an alternative. Is it possible to use evaluation to answer two questions?

First, what did we learn from the investment, the grant, the program? What did we learn that others can use?

The second question: How can these lessons enhance the value of the grantmaking?

One way that these questions are different from the traditional stereotype of evaluation is that they indicate that the evaluation needs to be tailored to be useful to people, to meet the learning needs of the people whose work is both subject and object.

When these questions are answered well, they can make the evaluation a very valuable legacy of grant-supported activities, a legacy that is of great value to people who are touched by the grant themselves, and to those who are not directly touched but who can benefit by applying lessons generated by those doing the grant-supported work.

In my limited experience in the foundation world, grantmaking often causes people to focus very hard on the beginning, the front end, the start up of an exciting project. A good evaluation offers a very valuable complement because it enables people to learn lessons that emerge from the beginning, the middle and the end of that work. It enables people to close the loop and move on to the next stage. Let me give an example of how that process can work.

A couple of years ago, the foundation where I work commissioned an evaluation of a series of grant-supported efforts to expand participation in nonprofit arts activities. A team at the Rand Corporation collaborated with my colleagues and me at the foundation to design an evaluation that was supposed to capture the lessons from projects that were really quite varied, applied to organizations in a range of artistic disciplines, and worked in communities that were themselves very different. They began by identifying and describing a whole range of strategies that the nonprofit arts organizations had used to broaden participation, diversify participation, and deepen participation. They then proceeded to analyze the different challenges that arose in the doing of this work and describe the factors that affected whether or not people participated in the arts. So they tried to unpack the definitions and the process of participation as a way to clarify what the challenges were.

They've developed and are now in the process of fielding a survey of the project directors of this group of over a hundred grants. The reports will deal with a series of topics that are really not at all about whether the grants worked or didn't work. The reports are designed to be about topics that people can actually use. There will be a report that analyzes which strategies are likely to be effective in which kinds of local community circumstances. There will be another paper on implications for funders. There will be a how-to manual walking through some of the issues that arise in doing participation-building strategies in different circumstances.

It's an evaluation. It tells stories that are positive and represent extraordinary accomplishments, as well as presents evidence on things that did not work well and therefore ought not be slavishly followed by others without thinking hard about what the downside was likely to be. The example for me points to several features of evaluations that don't take a stereotyped approach but instead are aimed at capturing lessons from grantmaking.

First, they tackle important questions that go beyond the up or down, did it work or didn't it, award verdict. In the case of the evaluation that I just mentioned, it's really about how we can expand participation effectively, not which of these grants worked and which didn't work.

The second feature of these evaluations is they're very carefully tailored. They're not off-the-shelf cookbook evaluations. They're tailored to the funders' purpose, to the strategies used by the grantees, and they're tailored to the differences in the local community contexts of the grantmaking. Third, the focus is on how the work is going to be used. The focus is on the legacy and application, on adding value to the grantmaking in order to produce concrete benefits for people who really want to use these lessons.

When work is done this way, when evaluation supports the strategic goals of grantmaking, then you get a convergence of evaluation and grantmaking around achieving the foundation's strategic goals. In this approach, evaluation is not about reporting back on results. It's about achieving the foundation's strategic mission by clarifying the lessons, and enabling other people to use those lessons and apply them to their own work.

Let me get a couple of other examples from evaluations that the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund has commissioned. Both of these examples come from work done by The Urban Institute. The Urban Parks Initiative is intended to benefit the public as users of urban parks.

The evaluation of this initiative by The Urban Institute is producing a series of reports whose goal is to show city leaders and community leaders how to achieve that goal on their own.

The first report is called Partnerships for Parks, and it shows how city agencies, typically under enormous fiscal pressure, can partner with non-profit community groups, and these are not groups with a lot of money themselves, and how the partnership can generate new resources, new energy and new skills, with the result of better and more usable parks. How the different resources brought to these partnerships by the public agencies and the non-profit community groups can complement each other and result in a whole that is a big multiple of the sum of the parts.

In developing these reports, the foundation and the Urban Institute worked together to figure out how to make it available on the Internet so it's available as a free download. That fact and brief reviews of the document have been widely cited in professional publications on parks, city management, community development and land use that has resulted in a very large number of downloads.

The other example is from the initiative called Community Partnerships for Cultural Progress, which provides grants to nine community foundations that are working to stimulate their local arts organizations and community groups to engage more people in the arts. The evaluation that Elizabeth and her colleagues are conducting will produce its first two monographs, next year. One will provide important news based on a community survey about the breadth of community participation in the arts. One that we think will be of great interest to this group and that we hope to inform all of you about through the GIA newsletter; will be available on the Web. The second monograph will look at how the arts can contribute to community-building efforts and how community-building efforts can draw on arts activities.

These are evaluations, but they are not standard evaluation products. They are evaluations that try to advance the foundation's strategy by including important lessons, good news and bad news. Because, as I've indicated before, ineffective approaches need to be identified so that they can be switched and transformed into more effective approaches.

It's important that in this approach to evaluation, the grantees aren't being audited, and the program officers of foundations aren't being second-guessed or assessed about whether they made good judgments or bad judgments in their program design. Instead, the grantees and the program officers become the most valuable resources to the evaluation as a learning effort. They're the people who have the expertise that can help identify what the key issues are, what the learning opportunities are, what evidence is going to be relevant to those lessons, and who the audiences are that can apply those lessons to their own work.

In these evaluations, there's a premium placed on extensive involvement by the grantees. It's the grantees who can best identify what their field needs to learn from the grant-funded work. They can point to important audiences for the findings, and obviously they can use the findings to improve their own continuing efforts.

One final thought about the benefits of integrating evaluation into grantmaking efforts to achieve a broader foundation strategy. When you simultaneously design both the grantmaking approach and an effort to identify the learning opportunities that come from it, the result is often to clarify and strengthen the grantmaking effort.

At the beginning of the Lila Wallace efforts, the grantmaking staff and the evaluation staff have worked very hard to create a picture that tries to capture in a step-by-step way what has to happen for the initiative to achieve its goals. We call these pictures logic models. Other people have called them theories of action. It's a very adaptable approach that can be used in lots of different ways to clarify thinking and to advance discussion about what the steps in the process are going to be. They've really enabled us to focus our evaluations on what the grantees and leaders in the field think are the important lessons that they want to learn from the work and that they think others can learn from it.

The diagrams are also terrific discussion vehicles with people in the field, because they help sharpen my understanding of what the process is going to be. We alter, correct, and modify these diagrams many times based on input from the grantees, and it really enables us to have evaluation designs that are much more sensitive to the concerns, issues and experiences of the people who are doing the work.

I hope these examples have supported my view that it is possible to have a strategic marriage between smart grantmaking and useful evaluation. But in order for that to happen, I think foundation staff have to change their relationship to evaluators. They have to become a different kind of evaluation client.

With that, I want to turn to John.

Bare: Thanks, Ed. It's good to see so many folks here, and there are two of my colleagues I saw sneaking in the back, so if I make anything appear too rosy at Knight Foundation, I'm sure they'll speak up. I also was thinking that I agreed with so much of what Ed was saying that I was tempted to let you take my 15 minutes and keep going.

I'll try to steer the discussion to a different direction, to think about some questions that we've been asking among ourselves as we try to formalize what has been an informal process. Informal in that my position was created, and I joined the staff in August of '97, so much of what I've been doing at Knight Foundation has been trying to formalize some things that people were already pretty good at, which was using evaluation. Formalizing it across the range of grants we make, from the unsolicited $5,000 grant, what kind of information needs and learning opportunities do we have on those, to our initiatives which are highly organized. We hope more and more in the future to have that evaluation piece built in, because as Ed said, that's clearly the learning opportunity where it clarifies the grantmaking.

When the very first time in philanthropy I was asking folks about evaluation in grants, the first question was, why did you make the grant? If it's before the grant, why are you going to make the grant? Almost everything follows from that. In the evaluation, it's, why are you going to do the evaluation? Those sound like rhetorical questions, but they're not.

The folks at a foundation ask those for very specific reasons, because program officers do have reasons that they are recommending a grant. Quite often those reasons may be different than a trustee, different than the grantee, different than a peer organization in the field, even though everybody may want to make the grant.

So one of the challenges is reconciling all these different expectations. There is something that's called in the jargon an evaluability assessment as an example of something we used this year where an agent that we partnered with worked with these various partners, to try to reconcile these expectations. Now we're at the point of trying to decide whether we're going to take the leap and do the evaluation, and this is intended to prevent us from getting a year down the road and having two different stakeholders say, but hey, I thought you were measuring the other thing.

One other thing I'll mention because it relates specifically to an arts group. We visited an arts organization in Palm Beach County a year or so ago, and at lunch the director was telling me about opportunities in the community in Palm Beach to fundraise. They bring the children in the program to the little old ladies in Palm Beach, and they perform and sing and the ladies write the checks. I said, then you don't need evaluation. You really do need to decide what you're doing it for. We thought a lot about that in the last year in our internal conversations.

The first handout has to do with the link between the activity and the outcome you expect to occur. While I definitely agree with Ed, you don't do an evaluation for a thumbs-up or thumbs-down; you do it for the follow-up of why. It's not enough to show something worked, but why? That really then is useful to other people who may come behind you and try to implement it.

I'm new to reading grant proposals, but people will have a noble activity and propose a noble outcome, but there may not be any reason to think the two are linked. All of this is on the front-end planning of grantmaking, and instead of trying to force square things into round holes, it may be well enough for a foundation to say, that sounds like a good and interesting idea, but we may need to do some back and forth with the grantee to prove to them we don't expect them to claim the world is going to change because of this grant.

Gary Berger, who's in the audience, and I were discussing a grant in the last year. I forget the activity, but it was a noble activity that in three years the outcome was to change the orchestra field. So if it's that simple then we should make the grant right away.

But clearly grantees feel a need to oversell what is going to be accomplished, and funders can do a great service to the field by having conversations. If you're funding projects that are small, scaling back expectations, the inevitable "gotcha" is when the funder leaves the high expectations on paper; a year passes; someone commissions an evaluation; the evaluator goes back to the paperwork; sees high expectations; and of course they didn't occur. The worst case then is there's the thumbs-down, and a program may be damaged when the expectations could have been handled on the front-end.

The second set of questions, which is very important lately, because we've talked a lot about site visits, and it relates to some of the other questions in my section. How are you going to define what success will look like and define it for others? If you don't have the luxury of being present at your organization and watching the success, because you know it when you see it is a common test, how are you going to write it so anybody else in the field can know it? If you don't visit the Parks Initiative sites and watch what's happening in the project that Ed talked about, you still want to reach those audiences and provide useful information. One of the great challenges is how to provide it for folks who don't have the baptism of experiencing it.

One way to be persuaded is that you see it works. The other way is that you come behind it and read the lessons that were learned, and that's a challenge at the beginning to define those.

The other is, what stories do you want to tell? The best example that we've had in working with a group of grantees in helping them think through the evaluations of their projects, really sort of a TA function that a foundation can provide. Because I asked them, pretend that three years have gone by, and your projects were great successes. Everything worked. What's the headline you want to write? There was no silence in the room. They thought up things and said them, and I put them on the board. Then I said, what audiences do you want to reach with these? We identified those. Then I backed up and said, what information do you need to gather along the way so you can learn that? And do you have the mechanism in place, then, to gather that information along the way? Something like that has to happen at the beginning. If it happens at the end, it is in the example that Ed talked about, an evaluation coming after the fact.

The biggest struggle at Knight Foundation is that we make 300 or so grants a year. Most of the grantees are not involved with an external evaluation. So there are a range of information needs, and I think evaluation can be expressed very well in a range of information needs, in that if you make grants by lottery, you wouldn't need information. You would draw numbers out of a basket and make the grants.

Well, grantmaking is about decision making, and evaluation is really useful as a planning tool, not as a retrospective tool. So these different stakeholders, what information do you need? At the project level where grantees are required to work with program officers to document what they said they were going to do so that there's no external evaluation layered on top of that, the question really is are funders giving adequate resources in the grant to allow the grantees to do that? Are mechanisms in place to document what the grantees need to learn and to help the program officers do due diligence? That's one end of the spectrum.

Quite often when I hear folks talk about needing evaluation, what they need is technical assistance. What people need is more assistance for the foundation to provide to the grantees, both to help the grantees document their own lessons for their own program planning and to help the program officer track a large portfolio.

At the other end, what we all think about in the stereotypical evaluation, comes down to the front-end planning and figuring out which stakeholders you're going to target. The policy-makers and decision-makers that Ed talked about would need very different information than if you're doing an evaluation for a narrower audience, something just that that grantee or a set of grantees needs to make. Those decisions about who you're going to reach obviously are affected very early.

The second page of the handouts is an internal, thought-provoking paper that we've used on the staff, both formally and informally, that asks staff, when you say this is one of the highly selective opportunities that we want to involve ourselves for evaluation because we want to learn something, then the question is why? We hope if there ever come to be competing resources, this will help us resolve. So far we've been so highly selective, we're able to take on new projects as they come on-line. But I do think we need evaluation, and so we do it, and we struggle then to use it.

In the last two weeks, I've asked a colleague on our staff in planning for 2000 to tell me what he would like to know about a set of grants we expect to make in 2000 to help him make better grants in the future in that area. Or, to serve any information needs or constituency he might identify, decision-makers or others. He thought, and he said, well, nothing. It's not my position to try to talk him into it. The worst case is two years down the road presenting him back with information, and he says, I told you I didn't need any information, and it just sits there. So where there are some information needs that people identify, you really can have an exciting opportunity.

The last thing I'll mention is the report that is the product of a process that has been pretty positive at Knight Foundation. It did involve an evaluation. It did involve thinking about who would use the information, and designing the work and the communications strategy to target funders and arts groups who may be interested in learning what we've learned about a collaborative arts marketing experience in Charlotte. While that was not an initiative, it was a rather complex project that we funded, we were able to build into the work the lessons we're also learning from a replication effort. It's been a nice opportunity to move beyond the thumbs-up and thumbs-down and say what we've learned from this that we're already employing in another community. As other communities come to us and ask questions, we think we're better equipped to help them. Thanks.

Boris: Good afternoon. It's a little bit like following in a parade here, and I'm afraid all the good lines have been taken!

My experience is from the technical assistance to foundations point of view, when I was at the Council on Foundations, and doing evaluations and working with foundations. My assignment was to talk about the different kinds of things I've seen in evaluations. We looked at over 100 evaluations before we chose nine to profile in the book *Evaluation and Foundations*.

I guess the overwhelming learning from that experience is, most people don't like to share their evaluations. It's very hard to pry them out and to get permission to look at them, let alone rewrite them and make them available in sort of an analytic form for their colleagues to learn. I hope that some of that is changing.

Part of the problem that I always saw with evaluation, and even evaluating the Lila Wallace project, is evaluation is a term that has a lot of baggage. How many of you do evaluation? What kind of reaction do you get from your grantees? Scary? Afraid? Don't come near me – you're going to judge me? We've seen that, too, and it hurts a little bit. That's not our job. We're not out there to say, you did good, you did bad.

Evaluation, I like to say, is collecting information that provides feedback on funding decisions. Avoid the e-word altogether. The way I see this information is as a management tool. It's a learning tool. You've heard that from about five people today, but I think we have to keep repeating it. It's not a judgment tool.

Why do you need it? Because you need some answers to some questions in order to do your job better. The information that you need, and the level of precision, is really going to vary with the importance and the sophistication of your questions. Evaluations take many forms, and there's a whole tool kit of different ways of approaching evaluations. There's not any one right way to do it.

From my point of view, as I was thinking about evaluations and as I tried to talk to other people about it, the basic question is, why bother? The answer is, for a lot of grants you don't bother. All you want to know is, did the grantee take the money and spend it for what you intended? Do they have the financials and a little narrative to prove it? Since it's a one-time grant, maybe a one-time performance, it's a group you know well, you've worked with them over the years, that's probably all you need.

However, more and more we're using evaluation to expand understanding of the role of arts and culture in our society, and we're trying to make the case for supporting the arts. So now you have maybe a different hat that you put onto that grant. Findings are helping people to articulate, to communicate why they're making grants in the arts at all. What's the value? What's the role of the arts in life?

Some of the findings that evaluation is providing for us is the impact of arts on learning, on education. It makes a positive impact on learning experience. Other funders are finding out that when they look at the role or arts in their communities, they're finding an economic role. There's an impact on their communities. It's revitalizing downtown. How do you collect the information that helps you make that case?

Other kinds of evaluations are going for more subtle things. Quality of life in communities. What kind of indicators could you use for that? Businesses say they'll come to - pick your city - Boston because there's a thriving arts community there. Employees will be happy there; they won't want to move off to say, Kansas City or Detroit. The quality of life is impacted by the fact that there's a vibrant arts community. So there's another possible role.

There's a more intangible use, but just as important: what's the role of the arts in building and rebuilding distressed communities and preserving cultural heritages? We're learning more about how to do that, and it's a very much a positive impact of the arts. Unless we have evaluation, we can talk about it and tell stories 'til the cows come home, but no one's going to believe us unless we have some basis of fact.

We're just beginning to document, in the Lila Wallace evaluation and some others, what is the impact of the arts in connecting people within and across communities of color? Ethnicity? Ages? Neighborhoods? In some of the focus groups that we've been doing, we've heard some very poignant stories about the lack of arts in low-income communities.

One of the things that hit me hardest was when a participant around the table said, you all believe that arts are just for rich white people. It's important to us, too. We had arts in our schools and in our community when I was growing up. We don't have it here for our kids now. Why not?

So it puts you back on your heels. We don't believe that. But have we ever gotten around to trying to articulate what is that value, and what role do the arts play in education and in bringing our communities together?

We're learning through our research, if we ask the right questions, and through our evaluation of our projects, the many ways that arts are central to the way people live their lives. We're also learning what participation in the arts means to people.

But when I come back to, why should you want feedback on your grants? Obviously, you have lots of possibilities for spending your grants money. Why pick one rather than the other? What are the alternative uses of that grant money, and in order to think about that, you may need some feedback, some information.

Another question that I came up with when I was thinking about it is, what does your foundation get back for its support? You get information, maybe, if you've evaluated and if you've tried to understand what went on, to help you make better decisions or work more effectively. But what do you get back for the field of arts grantmaking if you don't ask any questions, if you don't try to assess what the impact of those grants are?

What does the activity of the groups you're funding teach you? I won't go through the litany that the two former speakers have gone through so well, but I just emphasize being clear on a couple of very key questions provides a very firm foundation for planning projects and setting the stage for learning what was accomplished. The key question is, why? What will you achieve with the grant? What does your recipient hope to achieve? How are the activities linked to the goals? How will each of you know that the project has succeeded?

Now, I have a list of some various kinds of grants that you might think about, and obviously the first level is the one I mentioned first. The money is spent in the way that it was intended.

The second level is, do you want something to change as a result of that grant or group of grants? If you do want something to change, then you have to start asking the questions about how you'll know what succeeds and about the output of the grant. For example, if you've supported a performance, and the output of that performance is a better performance, how would you know? Critics might help. Peer reviewers might help. It might be a sold-out performance that indicates increased participation.

But if your goal for that performance is a higher level of capacity for that organization, you might ask some other kinds of questions. Down the road, are there more subscribers? More sold-out shows? More philanthropic support? A budget surplus? Other kinds of outcome measures? So depending on your goals and the goals of your grantee, you ask another level of questions.

And your colleague in the next seat might be starting from another point of view. They might build the financial capacity through technical assistance, etc., and then look for different kinds of program outcomes. There was a really nifty example in a small evaluation done by Kathleen Fletcher. She assessed, after the fact, a whole series of grants that were to fund fundraising in small to medium-sized organizations, $3,000 to $9,000 grants. Three to five years later she went back to see, what was the impact of those capacity-building grants. She found that the organizations were still benefiting. Their fundraising had risen up a notch, their finances were in better shape, they were still using technical assistance, they had hired consultants. Some had even hired fundraisers. Those small grants and that evaluation provided some learning for colleagues.

Another type of capacity building was in the book that was mentioned by Ed Pauly. The Skaggs Foundation made a series of $100,000 grants to promote income ventures for arts organizations. They hired a professor at the cost of $1,000 - not an expensive evaluation - to go in and figure out, for two specific grants, one that succeeded and one that failed, what were the lessons? What could they learn from these two different cases? That evaluation is profiled in the book. That sharing of experience has helped other folks to learn.

The project that Ed Pauly mentioned that we're doing for Lila Wallace is much more complicated. It's a grant with sophisticated change goals, multiple partners and venues, multifaceted assessments, and they really intend to learn to change behavior, to learn it and to share with their colleagues.

I want to talk a little bit about participation, in a project called Community Partnerships for Cultural Participation. First we had to define what arts and culture is. Then we tried to figure out where does art happen? And it doesn't only happen in arts venues. It happens in schools and parks and lots of different places. Then we developed a theory of change. What influences participation? Our demographic characteristics, our responsibilities, our socialization, our education levels, our individual motivations, our individual resources with money and intellect, our structure of opportunity, what's available to us. All of that leads to participation.

The important thing to note is that participation varies in communities. One size does not fit all for arts participation or anything else. When we look at the various communities and try to assess what's going on, you have to take into consideration that they're very different.

Different cultures, different backgrounds, different races. One of the things I thought you might like to see was that one of the reasons people go to arts events is family. Taking their children. Providing opportunity. A very high reason for participation.

If we look at a very traditional or classical interpretation of arts and culture, we see that it varies very much by education. However, if we take an expanded notion of participation, in parks, in festivals, in non-traditional venues, participation by education does not change very much. So definitions matter, baseline matters.

If you just look at traditional forms of participation, there's a pretty low participation rate by some of the various ethnic communities. If you expand the definition and are open to different ways that people participate in arts and culture, there's a much higher level of participation across cultural and racial groups. So we're learning as we provide the baseline for this study.

We want to know why people participate. They participate to learn their heritage. For religious services. Or to learn about art. Or to learn about another culture. So there are lots of different reasons for why people participate.

But there's more. Socialize. A big reason why people participate. Experience of quality. To support their communities; support their families. So we have to take this into consideration as we try to figure out what the evaluation is telling us.

Some of our findings from this initial telephone survey is that people participate in both traditional and non-traditional art and expanded forms, and they have similar motivations. Expansion of our notion of what constitutes art and culture reduces the effects of education and race. Then we increase the effects of socialization and civic participation.

So that's just a teaser for what we are trying to do. It illustrates that we may have to use much more sophisticated ways of getting at the bottom of what we want to learn and what we want to communicate to our colleagues. Thank you.

O'Hare: How many people here give away more than $5 million a year? More than $50 million? More than $1 million? How many people are recipients? Arts organizations looking for donations? So after what we've heard so far, which I think is a drop-dead persuasive case, how many people are now going to go back to your organizations and not sleep until you do up to 50 percent more target evaluations, the kind we're talking about? Well, what would you like me to do? Should I preach? I'm genuinely puzzled.

Let's take a different approach to this. Let's not talk about evaluation. In fact, let me take you to another world that maybe we can learn from, a world that, by the way, is important to your trustees. How many people are trustees? Not too many. Let's think about a foundation and an arts organization as partners in an enterprise, sort of like a Toyota engine division and a Toyota assembly plant. They can't make cars without each other, and each one's got something to do. Or even you can imagine Toyota and whatever company makes their brake pads. I don't know who makes their brake pads, but I think it's not Toyota. Some other company.

So in this private sector world, there's been a revolution in the approach to quality, and you probably ought to pay attention to this because in some industries, and in some firms in some industries, and generally they're the ones that are winning, you have people who are almost as obsessive about quality as you are in the arts.

Now, the revolution goes like this. The old way in the private sector was quality control. In quality control, you test all your products to make sure they fit in an acceptable range, and this is no-nonsense testing. It's absolutely rigid. If the crankshaft of a car is supposed to be between one and a half inches in diameter plus or minus three thousandths of an inch, you measure them all.

Well, now, that raises a question. What do you do with the ones that don't quite make it into the acceptable range? There are three classic choices.

You can scrap them. You can rework them. If they're oversized, you might put them back on the lathe and turn them down a little bit until they fit. Or you can just ship them. Say, boy, that's too bad, it's out of the range, but it's going to cost a lot to throw away this crankshaft, so let's send it on out. Some of you may have had a car that was made that way.

Now, if you have too many failures – again, this is tough, this is the private sector, and they don't fool around. If you have too many failures, there are two things you can do. One of the things you can do is to expand your acceptable range. Then you have less failures. Some of you may have had a car like that. The other thing you can do is to fire the son of a bitch. You can terminate the contract of the supplier that gave you these wrong-sized axles, and say, so there! Or you can fire the worker who's been working the lathe wrong. Now you have a new supplier and a new worker. Somehow, this does not always solve the problem.

There's been a revolution, and nobody talks like this in the private sector anymore that I'm familiar with; certainly in production and even in services, this is changing. The new way is really very different. Here are some key dimensions of this new understanding of quality which is quite a bit more complicated. Have I used the word "evaluation" yet? I'm trying not to. Quality assurance is what I want to talk about.

The first thing is, you measure everything, and not just what's easy to measure, which tend to be things that leave an accounting trail of money. Or admissions to a museum. We didn't used to know how many people came to museums when there was no admission charge, and now we've started selling tickets, suddenly, this generates real data. Data that's been in my experience quite astonishing to some museums. You measure everything. It's very important to measure a lot of things because if you only measure a few, you're going to get a lot of them, whatever it is, because that's an iron rule of management is that you get what you measure, especially if you make it known that you're measuring it.

The second thing is to have a lot of quality dimensions. Now, in the private sector, things are simpler than they are in the arts. Toyota maintains records on about 45 quality dimensions for a car door. McDonald's site visit, which is a performance evaluation that's done every two weeks. I apologize for talking about this kind of lowbrow activity, but we have to learn where we can. McDonald's has a site visit every two weeks. A guy comes around in a raincoat and kind of a low-brimmed hat so as not to be too conspicuous, and observes 45 quality dimensions of a fast-food restaurant. 45 quality dimensions. Is the hamburger hot? Does it have lettuce on it? Also things like, was the table clean? Was the floor clean? Was there litter in the parking lot? Did the server smile, both taking the order and dealing with the change? When I said, no, I guess I don't want a Big Mac. I want something else, so she has to go back and change it around. Forty-five quality dimensions. How many people measure as few as 45 quality dimensions for the art products that you're in partnership with arts organizations in producing. Hundreds, right?

The second dimension of this is customer needs. I want to emphasize how different that is from what the customer says he or she wants.

Creative, innovative organizations know that they're smart. If they're really attentive to the customer, they know things that the customers would love but can't possibly articulate. I had architectural training, and I worked for a while as an architect, and I know the clients. Now, it's possible to abuse a client and build a house that you want to have published in a magazine at the client's expense, but it's also true that if you just ask the client, what kind of house do you want? They're within their rights in saying, well, I'm paying you for it! Right? You're supposed to understand what kind of house I want by getting to know me, but don't ask me to design a house. The customer is the core of this process.

A very important aspect: focus on the process, not on the product. We measure all of the crankshafts, but we ship them all and we make sure everybody knows that every crankshaft is shipped, but we measure them all to learn about our process for making crankshafts. Now, that measurement tends to be less intimidating to the fellow running the automated lathe than if he sees a pile of scrapped crankshafts accumulating. In fact, he may even help you out, because generally people want to do a good job, if they can get some help.

Another really important principle is this idea of continuous improvement. I want to make a picture of that point.

This is the organization. This is the path over time, and this is whatever you think quality means. This is the path over time of an organization that has set an absolute inflexible standard of acceptability. None of this mushy arts stuff. We're going to play nice music and hope people come. They're serious about it. When this organization falls below its quality standards, something is done about it immediately. What does the trajectory over time look like? Well, it starts out okay. But things happen. Key people leave. You fall below your standard. Can't have that! Fix it! Back up to the standard. Things happen. A performer cancels. Fix it! Back up to the standard.

So, here's the path. What's the average level of performance of this organization?

Here's a different organization. This is whatever you think quality means. This is time. This organization is managed on the principle of continuous improvement, which means that anywhere you are, you have to get better. But we've suppressed the concept of acceptability. There's no such thing as okay. Well, that organization is going to improve. But then, things happen. The world is unpredictable. A performer cancels. A concert hall burns down. You learn from the experience. Things happen.

Which kind of place would you rather work in? Which kind of organization would you rather have supplying arts services to you or to your community?

This concept has been found to be absolutely poisonous to quality assurance in organizations that care about it. Because a floor becomes a ceiling. If this is okay, being better doesn't mean anything. People tend to smile more. The language is even better, as opposed to just good enough.

Those are some ideas in the private sector for people who face issues that you might think are not entirely unlike the tasks we face, which is to create value for the public using the tools at hand, which in our case is the arts. It seems to work for them.

Now, what's the difference between us and them? Well, there's a lot of differences, but I want to draw attention to one that I find particularly. If you don't like their cars, you don't buy them, and they don't get your money, and you don't get their car.

But all of you manage resources that are taken from the public by force and given to you to be especially useful with. Sometimes people are a little surprised to hear that.

I assume you're all tax-exempt, right? So if you're an endowment and you buy Microsoft and you do well, you do not write a check for capital gains tax, whereas I would? So all the tax exemptions on the gifts you receive and the initial family endowments you've received, are public funds. Just as though the government wrote you a matching grant check.

Some of us think that if you're managing funds that have been taken from the public by force, you have special responsibilities to be really good at what you do. It's reasonable that we should be benchmarking ourselves against high quality assurance standards where those issues are taken seriously. We're smarter than them and our product is more interesting, so this should be a piece of cake.

Now, what happens if we don't take seriously the idea of managing this relationship with grantees on a quality assurance basis? As a couple of the speakers said, grants will be made. Choices will be made.

Let me relate an interesting conversation I had with the exec of a distinguished San Francisco arts organization in the last few days. Well, first of all, how many people think we should have an academy, that the arts have been altogether too unruly in this country and it's hard to tell what's good and what's not good, and we should therefore have an academy like we used to have a hundred years ago? Nobody thinks that. How many people think we should have a commissar of the arts, that is, a government agency that determined what was and wasn't art? No support for this. Hmm. Well, here's what she said.

I said, you have a National Endowment grant? And she said, oh yeah, you betcha. I said, it's probably not very much money, huh? I know these grants are very small. Big match, yeah. Why is it so important to you? She said, well, if we didn't have a National Endowment grant, we can't get our foot in the door with foundations. That's the indicator of quality that foundations are looking for. It's a seal of approval.

Well, if we don't make judgments with a rich and deep sense of quality performance for organizations, then those judgments will be made some other way, which is by a government agency that puts stamps of approval on things and saves us the trouble. But most people, like all of you, think that having an academy, like the National Endowment panel, even, or a government commissar, like the National Endowment, under the very specific attention of Congress, as we've seen lately, is not where we ought to be moving. I emphasize that the only defense against that is that grant givers get very good at making their own decisions. That's not a matter of taste. That's a matter of taking it as though it was serious, hard intellectual work requiring effort and attention.

The last thing I could drag in here from another context, which I presume is my contribution here because I certainly don't know enough about the arts to be telling you anything that you don't know, is on this issue of evaluation appearing to the people involved as though it's going to be holding them to a very specific kind of legalistic test. That is, what does it say in your proposal, and did you do that? That's something I learned from an Admiral in the Navy who came in to talk to us at the Kennedy School when I used to work there, about procurement.

He said, one of the things you get into in military procurement where you're getting things that are new and innovative and you're contracting for research, is that there's always a dispute about the contract at some time. When that happens, he said, I call the parties in, the contractor and the technical people from the Navy, and we sit around a table and they all tell me their woes And he says, okay, stop. What does the contract say? Immediately, somebody on each side of the table holds out the contract, and they start reading at the same time. And he says, stop! Don't read it to me. Tell me what it says.

Then things tend to go a lot better because he can move the conversation away from the legalistic interpretation of the document that was the best anybody could write before anybody knew what the airplane even looked like. You can only write so good of a contract to invent something. But he can move the conversation away from constantly going back to that and forward into, well, the contract says basically we were supposed to invent this wonderful new airplane, right? How are we doing? Then things get a lot more constructive, and people tend to feel like they're more on the same team than when they were all playing lawyer. That's a tone and a spirit of good quality assurance research in grant-giving that we've heard examples of here, that you could probably do a lot more of. It would probably leave a lot of people associated with it a lot more comfortable than if it looks like I have my "gotcha" hammer that I'll hit you with if you can't show just exactly the right number of this and that happened.

Question: I'd like to ask if the data that you showed was collected all in the same manner, and if so is it surveying?

Boris: Telephone surveys, yes. Same instrument. Different communities. Same firm.

Question: When you talk about focus groups, how do you choose to do a focus group versus some other type of evaluation? What type of data do you seek from a focus group?

Boris: We used focus groups as we went into communities to get the feel of the culture. Since these grants are focused in neighborhoods to try to broaden, deepen and diversify participation in specific neighborhoods, the idea was to get a couple of focus groups of different kinds of people within those neighborhoods, to get a sense of what did they think the issues were, what did they think about access to arts and culture? What was on their mind? What were the issues? To hear it from some real people, and then we would have a better sense of how we might design the telephone surveys or what the community foundation was hearing from its information gathering. So it's context questions.

Pauly: If I could follow up on that. Frequently, evaluation folks who are commissioning or supervising evaluations worry whether the methodology is right. Are the right tools being used? You guys shouldn't have to be the experts on that. You should have a relationship with evaluation people, which I think should be broadly construed. It's not just the folks that you have the evaluation deal with, but other people who advise you and talk to you about this stuff that can give you the answer to that question without requiring you to become an expert on it. Your job is to figure out what your needs are and what the needs of the field are. That's something that you're always going to know much better than anybody on the evaluator's side of the table.

There's also Michael's question, if you measure a lot of things and you've got a lot of information, what do you do with it? How can you be smart about that, especially when the resources are tight?

O'Hare: I heard a couple of people mention, we have an outside evaluator and then we can't afford an outside evaluator. One of the ways to make sure that you don't make much progress on affirmative action is to have an affirmative action department. Because as soon as that's somebody's job, then it's not anybody else's job. Usually that's somebody who's at the fringes of the organization in terms of power and focus and influence. One of the ways to be sure that your quality assurance program doesn't interrupt the comfort of life in the organization is to have a quality assurance department, or a quality assurance consultant who comes in and does quality for you.

One of the lessons I forgot to mention is that quality is pervasive, that it has to be happening all through the organization. And I would say, why don't you make a couple less grants and give yourself one to learn to be good at squeezing all the information you can out of the information you've chosen to collect? Because I think that's actually part of your job. This is not something you can delegate to somebody else. It's your decision.

Boris: There's some other things you could do, though, and I think that *Evaluation In Foundations* gives you some ideas.

In some of the evaluations we found that were very low cost, there were graduate students who are doing research papers. The Hogg Foundation for Mental Health in Austin, Texas has a team of graduate students every year who do their evaluations. There are also faculty members who are studying various things and who might be very pleased to be able to get a paper to help you compile that information.

There are lots of different ways to skin this cat if you need some technical assistance to get started. How to shape the information, how to put it together, how to report it out. You could use some of those techniques.

Bare: I want to put some questions back to you because I'm not sure exactly where you are. Is this a technical question in that the tools you would need to actually carry out some analysis? Is it that you need the tools for that? Or is it that you've done that and you've got so much information, you need help deciding what's important? Or that you've done that and you need some help in designing the communication tools to report that back efficiently? Because as Ed mentioned earlier, this goes hand-in-hand with communication strategies, and so the evaluation quite often is as much of a communication challenge. If you've got the technical know-how, and you've looked at the information or you're prepared to compile it, that still leaves a challenge of communicating it in a way that suits that audience.

A lot of your discussion may come back to, who is the one or multiple audiences? Is it the lathe operator you're trying to reach? Or is it the Association of Lathe Operators? Or other funders? You may have multiple communication products, that instead of trying to write it all into an encyclopedia because you may have an encyclopedia's worth of data, to have some specific products.

Pauly: If you couldn't hear the question, it was when information and evaluation results go back to grantees, what do they do with it? And my own experience is, if you talk to them first about what they would like to learn and what the challenges are that they face, and you can work with them on what information is relevant for that, then boy, they're going to jump on it! If you don't talk to them first, then there's a packet that arrives in the mail, it's going to be ignored.

We've had a series of evaluation that I've worked on at Lila Wallace, and had conversations with groups of intended users of our work. We do this at the beginning of the evaluation, in the middle, and right before the final report first draft gets written, to find out whether we're on track with their needs. Every time we have one of those conversations, it changes the work that's about to be done. When we hear from people who are in business to apply and use the stuff, it utterly changes the conversation about how to make it, about how to shape the evaluation.

Question: I'd like to know a more context-specific thing, like what are the kinds of things that organizations want to look for and the kinds of things they want to learn? And what surprising things have you learned by this kind of thinking?

Answer: Great question. The truth is that when you ask a blanket question to a group of non-profit leaders about what they'd like to learn, they'll give you a very long list! More things than you actually can, for any reasonable amount of money, get sensible and useful answers for.

So the real conversation gets going with the next question. Okay, so which are the priority items that belong at the top of the list? Which are the things that are most important that you really depend on? Which are the things that it would be nice to know about, but are not necessary? That's often a tough conversation for folks to have. If they're talking about information that is not available to them now, there's a degree of uncertainty in the answer that makes it very challenging for them. Having said that, we're talking about people who run programs, they're hardheaded decision-makers, they know what issues confront their organization, so they're used to making these tough calls. The conversation can get very interesting very quickly.

The specifics that come up are dramatically different from one arts system, from one collection of grantees who share a purpose but are in different circumstances, to another.

In one group of cases, there may be a lot of questions about understanding the participants, the folks out in the community, who they're working with and what their needs and interests are, how they're using their relationship with the arts organizations. It's really understanding that nexus that is of a dramatic need for the group.

In other cases, it can be clarification of strategies of arts organizations and, in effect, creating a menu of those strategies so they can have a bigger collection of ideas from which to draw. Enrich my understanding of what my options are and help me understand which options make sense in which circumstance. A very different approach than focusing on customers.

Boris: There are lots of hypotheses out there about why folks do or do not attend particular events, and so helping them articulate what they might be and then getting some information.

For example, are there barriers? Can people not get to your space? Can only very few people get to your space if they have cars? Or is there public transportation? Is the cost too high? Are there some strategies you could use to lower the cost for certain kinds of people? Is the timing of your events not conducive to people attending? Saturday afternoon performances as opposed to Saturday night or Sunday afternoon?

You can go through a whole list of hypotheses about why people do or do not participate, and then go through what are the strategies you might undertake to understand which of those really affect your organization, and then what you might do about them. So the evaluation can help answer some of those questions.

Question: I'm with a foundation that just started a new initiative for small organization that will be easier to tailor to individual circumstances. But the consulting agency that we're working with has suggested that we prepare a questionnaire asking other foundations what their experiences have been, which is an expensive proposition, and it would mean taking grant money away from the organizations So I was wondering what your experience is in terms of the effectiveness of this.

Boris: I think it's been very positive. You may want to comment more on that.

Pauly: The umbrella that I use to think about it is to say, where does your foundation strategy envision taking this work in the future? If this is the only time you're going to do this project, if you envision the benefits being the benefits for these grantees and their communities and that's the goal, then pulling out lessons that are really intended for other folks is not what you're about. That may be somebody else's concern, and there may be real benefits for somebody else to capture there, but it's not the purpose specific to this strategy.

If the strategy is to go on with this and to apply it to other folks, then I think the opportunities go way up for encouraging sharing and cross-fertilization. Some of my colleagues at Lila should talk about their experience with convening. It can be expensive, but boy, are there some payoffs.

Question: We had a grantee meeting in Seattle when we brought together grantees of about a half dozen programs including museums, theaters, dance organizations. All these groups are funded to increase popular participation in the various art forms. They found some community of problems, of shared issues that they face. In many cases they discovered that they in the same communities. And didn't know each other.

Pauly: From an evaluation point of view, I often fall into the trap of thinking that the biggest benefit that can come out of a grantmaking program is kind of a brilliant lesson or something you can put on the Web and other people can use. But, that's not going to happen. There are other ways of solving problems. Leaders of arts organizations working together to take ideas from each other and apply them to their communities can be more directly powerful even than my favorite methods.

O'Hare: One program I've been associated with for many years is the Innovations Competition of The Ford Foundation and The Kennedy School, which gets 800 to 1,000 nominations every year for great innovations at the state level and now federal government. And it gets funneled down and funneled down by various review methods to 25 semifinalists that all get a couple days site visit. Then ten are selected to win a $100,000 prize and get a lot of publicity.

One purpose of this program that we think is working pretty well is that these innovations are ideas to have ideas with. We talk about replication, but what we're actually thinking about is that if you found out that someone was doing something really interesting and clever, you would have an idea about how to do something in your organization that was very valuable, and not necessarily a direct imitation.

The thinking behind this is one thing that we've discovered with a fairly substantial research knowledge, which is that if you ask the innovators, what did you do that was new? They almost always say, well, I didn't do anything that was new. I used to work over in the mining and engineering department, and when I got here to the trash department, I found out that they were doing this and that, and then I remembered something that we used to do at mining, and it turned out to work pretty well here.

But innovators almost entirely are carrying ideas back and forth from different contexts, and there are actually very few new ideas. Well, I'll take that. You always like new ideas, but, I mean, architecture's been made for thousands of years with walls and columns and windows and ceilings and floors, and there's not much new in architecture, but we still seem to be able to make pretty good buildings.

Stirring up ideas between and among organizations so that they go in a new context means they get attention. You see the same old thing. You don't see it. But if you move a picture in your house to another wall, suddenly you start seeing the picture again. If you have machinery that explicitly moves these ideas from organization to organization and discussion groups of this kind, especially if they're non-judgmental, you can generally generate a bunch of creative new thinking that way.

A private sector example is management by walking around. You ought to get out of your office and just go see what's going on! Talk to people, and then tell people what the other people said. Enough stirring the pot generally can produce a lot of value.

Pauly: I have no idea who the evaluation consultant is that you're using, but their thought may be that a conversation among the people doing the work can be more productive than the rest of the evaluation can be. Evaluators start all of their projects knowing vastly less than anybody else engaged in the work. Everybody else says the expert evaluators are trying very hard to catch up. To the extent that they're able to learn anything, it comes from the people who are doing the real work, so it follows from that that anything you can do to, as Michael said, stir the pot, is going to be more productive of new ideas.

Bare: That's one of those examples I mentioned earlier about technical assistance. It may be that your foundation and your boss who had approved a budget for you said, we're doing evaluation, we're bringing these people together, and wouldn't if you said, I need technical assistance to bring them together to stir the pot. But you may just start building that into initiatives as program planning because it's good program work, whether you do any evaluation or not. You may not even need your evaluator there. You may need somebody there to take notes to relieve the participants of the burden of taking notes and share the ideas.

Quite often I've found that foundations bring these people together under the premise that, we're going to learn from each of them. Whether you need it as an evaluation or not is your personal call, but it may turn out that your program officers start doing things that you used to think of as evaluation just because they're good program planning.

Question: We've decided to fund arts and culture because we believe that it will generate economic development in those communities like Harlem. We've done that because we are starting to see all around us the impact of cultural grantmaking. But we're seeing the organizations in Harlem who do not have access to foundations that other parts of the city have, and that they're trying to diversify where they're getting funding from.

My question is related to how foundations are looking at economic impacts related to their grantmaking. We're definitely doing that. Our system requires us in our evaluations to look at certain measures and then monitor the grants over time to track those measures. I'd be curious to know if other foundations place a value on the economic impact of these investments? When you do these evaluations, how have you been successful in sharing that information with other funding sectors, particularly the public sector.

Bare: We've been thinking a lot about that. With the available tools, when you think of time and duration and intensity, how much money we have and how long we make grants for, don't often line up. If you're making one-year small grants and you're looking for systemic effects in the community over ten years, your tools aren't lining up. So the first challenge, if you're able to align that and make the kind of grants that you do think have this kind of activity, to me it comes down to a "Can we say this?" question. When I used to work with reporters, they would write a lead or a sentence and say, "Can we say this?" And I would say, "No, you can't say that." So they rewrote, "Can we say this?"

Because the highest level is causation. We're talking about doing something that causes economic development. Maybe not directly, but it's one ingredient in a recipe that produces economic development.

I would suggest thinking long-term. You're building some things in that you do track over a five- or ten-year period of whatever theory of change shows it takes, so you're not held hostage by your own data when you don't find the grand success in Year One. You have the precision in your measure that you're putting into your grantmaking.

Question: That's exactly true. One of the challenges that we have is to have an economic impact o the grantee and the organization, but the bigger effect is really indirect, and that is where we take time.

Bare: One of the things that I've heard about, and haven't used yet, is that foundations quite often say, here's a group of people. We do project X. What happened to that group of people? As opposed to saying, here's a group of people. What are all the nine million other things happening around them other than the tiny slice that they're getting from being touched by us?"

There are social networks and other things where you can begin to see these indirect effects. They track the stock market, what, in fractions of seconds or seconds, I'm not sure the exact tick. You wouldn't want to track change by the second. But would you want to track it by the quarter? By the year? I think that's the challenge. You may want to have some business models that come in there.

O'Hare: I want to say something different about this. I know you mean well, and I know Elizabeth, you mean well.

The economic impact studies in the arts that I've seen so far have been technically quite disappointing and look extremely tendentious, and they allow you to say, well, this is why we're doing this. It's a pact with the devil. It's not really the competency, but it relates to the question of goal shift and being clear about what you really care about. If you want to advocate for the arts on the basis that it builds economic growth, then you have to be prepared to shut up and sit down as soon as somebody shows that a ballpark will build more.

Corporations' representatives say that they locate in cities with high-level cultural enterprises. I knew the president of Burlington when they moved to Dallas, and I asked, why did you move to Dallas? And he said, because you can fly from Dallas to anywhere in America and back in the same day. If what's important about the arts is more important than health and more important than everything else, that if life isn't worth living, then why should it be longer? We don't have to love the arts, but if we do, to compromise and kind of waffle and say, well, the reason we're supporting this new theater is that we think people are going to serve a lot of lunches in the restaurants nearby, then you are opening yourself up to a kind of analysis that you really don't want to undergo. That's not why we have concerts, so people buy dinner!

Boris: No, but there is an economic impact of the arts, and people are developing methodologies, and some foundations are supporting them, and they're not very good right now. But I think we have to recognize, and people seem to forget this, that non-profit organizations employ people. They pay taxes. They pay wage taxes. They have benefits for people. Sometimes those people are very underpaid, and I think probably a lot of them are the working poor in this country, but still, they are employers, and they do help to build communities. I'm not saying that you have to build your whole case around that, but it's one point. One nail in that coffin.

Bare: Where we are in Miami, to say we're building a performing arts center that will boost the economy of Dade County is fine until somebody comes along and says, well, I can build something that will boost it more. Then you lose.

But you've mentioned empowerment zones and the Knight Foundation. There are many communities where they have distressed neighborhoods. We're not looking for the economic balance to compete with a stadium. These are neighborhoods everybody's left. They ain't gonna build a stadium, much less a Blockbuster. You're lucky if you can get a cab or do anything.

Part of some of these distressed communities, and I don't know the data, but there seems to be a recipe that you need some cultural presence. If you just build public housing without daycare and without healthcare nearby, you just have people living in tinderboxes.

In the CDC movement, when you build the public housing or other things in these distressed communities, you don't want to do that without the cultural component, whether it's because you value it as an important part of civic life or it helps the distressed community.

The really interesting part from my personal angle is developing some of these models at the neighborhood level to get away from the competition at the Metro or MSA level. Because there is some feeling that program officers have in working in distressed communities on economic development that there's a cultural component that needs to be there. I can't be any more specific than that and don't know where it will head, but I see it a lot from CDCs.

Pauly: Three very different views that I think perfectly illustrate why it's important to know the background, the history of the approaches and the kinds of insights that an evaluator has used in the past before you make a deal with that person. If you think you can go to somebody who has a good reputation as an evaluator and say, that's all I need to know about you. You can go to work for us, you're making a big mistake. As the range of views we've just heard illustrates, there are very different ways of unpacking a single, really interesting and generative question. Another question over here.

Question: You all have worked in fields other than the arts, and so the question is, are the arts different from an evaluating standpoint? We always claim they are. Especially if you want to evaluate the process, there's a richness of material there that we often think gets left out of evaluation.

Bare: What Michael's tapped into is the exact thing that makes the arts different. Quite often, the people working in it are believers. They don't need information to prove to themselves this is good. It's good because as a part of my opinion of the way life should be led, there should be cultural opportunities. It's a valuable part of life.

But, in trying to make that argument to outsiders, they then seek out these pieces of data to try and make the claim, and in every case, almost, the data are insufficient because it is a values choice. There's this difficult tug between when people tell me it's good because art is good, I say fine. But, it's good because art is good and I want to prove that it bounces unemployment up two points, well, then those are two different things.

Childcare is something similar in that quite often people who work for at-risk children are believers. You know, that's why they took that job. That's why they went to work for an arts group or went to work for a non-profit. There's a real difficult challenge between selling-out on that value and coming up with evaluation information that you can take to other stakeholders. In almost every arts project we deal with, it's a real challenge, because the group believes it's good because it's good, and they're just having to get some data because somebody else needs it.

O'Hare: I would urge you not to put much stock in my answer to the question of, are the arts different? My guess is that everybody who works as part of an arts organization, a funder of arts organizations, or is closely engaged with the big project in the arts, has her or his own answer to the question of, what do I need to learn? What do my colleagues need to learn?

Sometimes the answer to that question will lead you to seek partnership with somebody who knows some evaluation tricks. Often, it won't. That comes out of your needs. If there are ways that you can identify connections between things that you need to learn about in other sectors, that suggests one set of opportunities. If there are questions that are *sui generis* to your work, the evaluators that I know would be especially excited to work with you, because the opportunity to do something new and to learn something that hasn't been learned before is one of those rare opportunities in life that you don't want to have go by. But you're the expert on what the learning needs are.

Pauly: I was mentioning this the other day to a colleague: these testimonials are only bad when they're presented as something else. If you present testimonials about how much people like art and claim it's evidence that it will balance the economy, then people say, oh, no, that won't do it. But on its face, it's compelling if it's sold for what it is. I told a colleague the other day that many of us have made decisions betting on our afterlife on much less information. But I don't argue that it's anything else. It's just what I believe, and it's faith.

Compelling information about how art enriches our lives can take you a long way and a lot farther down the road with an economist who isn't going to buy the tendentious data, but does want to live in a place where there are compelling, exciting, vibrant opportunities, because it improves civic life. That may be an area that's under-tapped in your evaluation, because it can't be sold as the other product. As long as you don't try to do both and sell it as the other, I think it's probably underutilized.

O'Hare: My former boss, Grant Allison, who's been at the Kennedy School, once wrote a paper that keeps being cited in the public management area. It says this: are public and private management alike in all unimportant ways? And now I can't remember what the answer in the paper was. The answer is, well, yes to both. Of course, there are lots and lots of similarities. Any arts organization is a productive organization and has to have pencils and paper and needs a building to do a whole bunch of things that can be done better or worse, and might as well be done better, and those all have spillover effects on the fundamental product. The product is, in many ways, different from a car. I was, you know, being wry. A painting is more important than a car, and a performance is more important.

That means that we have to be even better than, rather than to simply say, well, we have nothing to learn from these people. So there's enough similarities that we ought to harvest low-hanging fruit until we run out, and then we'll know when we've run out. That's the sense in which I think they're similar.

To be held accountable for excellent performance, which is what private sector's been like for 25 years, what government is now being, all my students go into public agencies that do TQM and they understand that being held accountable by the public, not just to stay alive but to get the mail delivered by 3:00 and not 4:00 is expected. I think the same thing applies in the arts, and let's get on with it!

Question: I'm really interested in quality of life and particularly those that measure the arts. Do you have any examples that you can cite?

Boris: I think just recently the Community Foundation in Maine has succeeded in getting a couple of indicators of arts activity into the Maine quality of life, economic development measures. You might talk to them about the measures that they chose. I think one of their goals was to make sure that the arts would become more visible in Maine, and so I don't remember offhand whether it's numbers of performances or finances or whatever, but that the quality of life in Maine has to include the arts as one of the indicators.

Question: We have 26 communities that we make grants in. We didn't pick them, we can't leave them, staff has to deal with them, and they're our laboratories. It depends on whether you're trying to fit arts into people's lives or people into arts' lives. When we talk to people about what's important, not many people volunteer that as first. Clearly family and church and faith and other things that you do daily, such as, commute to work, are just some of a lot of things that affect quality of life.

Quite often, it seems that people don't want to live in a community without those opportunities. But in a daily thing, unless you work in an arts field, most of us need the information we need to get through the day, and most of us need the other thing. So it's an odd mix that if you ask people would you rather live in a community that has these opportunities or not, you would say yes. But on the way people spend their time, if you judge them at their behavior, they're not daily, deeply involved with many things that this group would define as arts opportunities. It doesn't mean they're not important.

Bare: It's the lathe option of defining, widening your definition. We weren't getting good response with our narrow definition, so let's widen it. When you look at how people live their lives and talk about literacy, the importance of libraries, and say, we're going to call that culture too, then it jumps up the list.

O'Hare: There's a way in which the arts is different, and it's really different, and different from almost anything else. If you asked museum visitors – everybody here knows of the incredibly important difference between visits and visitors in attendance at a museum. Because lots of people go to a museum a lot, and a few people go once or twice, so you get a lot fewer bodies than visits in any urban museum. When I was doing survey research in museums, knowing that this was important, I asked in my pre-test, how often do you come to the museum? I got data back, and I knew what sample I'd taken, and I was able to back out the annual attendance of the museum and see if it matched reality, and indeed, it was about five times too big. That is, the people were systematically exaggerating the frequency of attendance at the museum by five times.

Now, if you ask people, when did you last call Roto-Rooter and have your drains cleaned? If you even ask people, how often do you eat spinach? you get perfectly good data. But in the arts, you have to be super careful. This is the point at which some professional technique helps. I have people working with me who are good at survey research, and so we were able to refine this question. When we asked, when did you last come? then I got perfect data.

Now, what's going on here? What's going on is that people took the first question as a question about the type of person they were. More, they took it as a question about the kind of person they wanted to think of themselves as. Now, that's not unimportant. That's not unimportant in terms of measuring quality of life, that arts, especially the fine arts, the highbrow arts, are an indicator of goodness to people about other people and about themselves. It's a meritorious, privileged set of activities. And that's real different from buying cars or plumbing or any other kinds of things Baseball, even.

You have to be pretty subtle about how you deal with the data if you really want to get information. This is one reason why in this context when you're doing performance and process studies, it's always good to try to look at behavior instead of to seek opinions. Because opinion data, especially in this area, is especially worthless for planning programs.

If you want to know what people like to see in museums, count people in the galleries. It's fairly cheap. And look at the differential population of the different galleries and how much work is there, which is one of the things I did that made people upset with me at the MFA because it's not something all of the curators wanted counted. Then you see people voting with their feet, and you know, the nose prints on the glass. There are unobtrusive measures you can use for this.

I would emphasize that in this particular context, people really want to think of themselves as people who love the arts and consume the arts, and there's nothing wrong with that. You have to think carefully about what it is you really want to measure, and then you may have to be a little devious and careful about how you take your data.

Question: I have a question, but first of all, just a comment. I want to commend all of you because I think one of the things that's particularly good about all of you is that you've started to demystify the whole issue of evaluation. Not just for, I think, the group here, but as we go back and deal with our foundation's concerns.

Could you give some guidance on the way that you think we can deal with evaluators or quality assurance partners? I've found, even though there's no specific evaluator that we use, in the 81 school projects that we've done in New York City, there's a real range in the way that they interact with evaluators. Some of them have come up with the kind of black box evaluations where there's an input and then there's an output and then there's a report. Others are the kinds of programs that you're talking about, which are formative evaluations where there's a continual loop of feedback, the purpose of which is to make a program better, which is the bottom line. So what suggestions do you have?

I would take issue with the fact that you don't really need to know about evaluations; if you just ask a few people they'll help you. Typically the jargon that comes back from evaluators is dense, it's arcane, and there's a whole rhetoric about how we have to have certain arm's distance from what you want and what I record, because I can't really get involved in technical disputes, because now you're asking me to really get involved with those people that I'm evaluating and therefore I have a conflict of interest, etc., etc., *ad nauseum*.

So what kind of ways would you suggest that we engage people like yourselves who are much more collegial and want to develop a kind of cultural conversation about this, as opposed to the typical kinds of measures.

Question: It's a tip-off: if you hear that language when you talk, you don't want to hire those folks.

Question: Which language?

Question: "Don't talk to me." "Arm's length relationship." You know, "just stand back and let us do it and we'll send you the report."

Boris: False precision.

Pauly: You do need to protect yourself from funding relationships that grantees have with evaluation that is not going to be useful for them.

I think the 35 tips in the Council on Foundation's article in the resource packet, are a great beginning for that conversation. The Kellogg Foundation's manual on evaluation, *The Evaluation Handbook*, which is downloadable for free from their Web site, has a very nice section on program evaluation that's also in the resource materials, that can help you without turning yourself into an expert on methodology, that can help you have the conversations with your grantees and with people who can be resources for them about how to reach the right kind of evaluation partnership.

The United Way of America has invested a lot of money very thoughtfully in helping their local United Ways and the groups that those United Ways fund, to be smart about figuring out what it makes sense for them to measure; how to think through the measurement challenge; and how to make partnerships with people to gather the data. They have a terrific online resource called the Online Resource Network. I pulled several pages from that off the Web, and it's in the resource manual.

The Grantmakers Evaluation Network has a terrific Web resource and a great newsletter, and that's in the resource packet as well. So there are a lot of resources that are quite accessible and that are not going to require you to get a Masters degree in this stuff in order to start the conversation.

O'Hare: I urge you not to hire evaluators. If you came to me and said, we'd like to hire you to take this consulting project on, go look at this grant and do an evaluation, I would turn down the work.

Quality assurance is not a function that a company can outsource, and that's basically what you're saying you're doing. If you heard that Procter and Gamble had put quality assurance out to Arthur D. Little or Booz Allen and that they were buying it all on a contract basis, you would buy some other kind of soap, because it's so implausible. I urge you not to do this.

Now if you want to hire somebody to help you learn how to do quality assurance in-house, to train your people to be more sensitive – this is not rocket science. It's much more a matter of judgment and instinct and practice than a lot of technical training.

But I really think that the effective relationship between an outside evaluator brought in to look at a grantee is so poisonous that it's almost a lucky shot if you get really useful results out of it. It's just too scary. Do you go around asking people to evaluate you? Day to day, just to see if you're okay? That's why I really think we have to use another word. It's just too scary.

We have to make this process look like the solution to a problem the grantees know they have, and not another problem they don't want. We have people who have work to do who know what they want to do, who have a mission in life. They're arts organizations, for God's sake, and we're in the service of helping them do what they do even better, not threatening to shut them down because they don't meet some technical standards of the statisticians.

Question: You just said two minutes ago regarding the museum question, that you were doing an evaluation of attendance to the MFA, thank God you worked with people who really knew how to survey because of the questions that they asked. Had you asked the people, how many times do you plan to attend the museum, versus the question that was asked by the professional evaluator, you would have gotten terrible data.

I think you've contradicted yourself, at least in my mind, about whether or not an evaluator is useful to have. Because it seems like we don't have enough information to be able to ask the questions in the right way to give us the kind of data that we need.

O'Hare: Let me clarify. I was an employee of the museum, and I was doing the survey. If I had got that question wrong, it still would have been a pretty good survey, except that I wouldn't have had data on frequency of visits.

But if I hired those people who were helping me and said, look, survey the visitors for me and let me know what you've found, then I would have had a very low-quality product because they would have no way of knowing what the real work is. It had to be internal to the museum to find out what its visitors were like, and then I could go to the curators and say, look what I found. We're all in this together; it's our museum; I have these interesting results, rather than having something fall from the sky.

Boris: I think, though, if you approach evaluation as we all talked about, which is as a learning experience, and you factor in the reality that most foundations have very few staff, then the notion that there are going to be people who can help them ask those questions in a way that can be meaningful and get them some meaningful information makes sense. We can't be so rigid about that.

O'Hare: But they have to be your questions.

Boris: Your questions. Oh, we agree. They're your questions.

Question: I'm going to take it back to an earlier comment about community partnership and measuring the arts and if the arts are different. You talked about quality of life and that the breadth of community participation is no longer being considered in terms of how many times people went to the opera and went to the museum and went to events. It may be that their participation in the arts is something that's happening with friends or family or in their homes. I know that I'm in Humboldt County, and you can't go to the opera. But it doesn't mean there are no arts there and there is no participation. In fact, it's really strong, and I think it comes from looking at it differently and realizing that it's not a product you're looking at, it's not an outcome and an end result, but it's really a process and a continuum.

Boris: I agree. That's what the data is showing. When you broaden the definition and you ask people where they're doing their arts, you get a broad range of behaviors.

Question: But they're not necessarily defining it as art.

Boris: Exactly, until you give them the clue that it could be in a school or it could be in a park

Pauly: I find this evaluation to be very exciting because of the terrific fruitfulness of the dialogue between the community people who are doing the work and the evaluation folks who are trying to figure out what the cross-cutting lessons are. Finding people who can be part of that partnership who are willing to have a real give and take and to be flexible and to change their prior assumptions, it's the difference between having the learning really pay off or not. I think that's what we've just heard.

Question: For Michael, is there an arts organization that's said, Let's try to get the Quality Award, or is there an ISO 9000 certified arts organization? And if not, why not? Is that a realistic model?

O'Hare: I can't even get my own school to go for ISO 9000, which I think would be a great feather in our cap and we could probably do it. I think there's no excuse for this. I don't know, physician heal thyself. It's just not part of the culture, and it feels like manufacturing or some kind of industrial service work to arts people. And it's quite expensive. I'm not even sure it would be the best use of time for an arts organization. Would you sell more tickets to the opera or less if you said you were ISO 9000 certified? I'm really not sure what the answer would be. It's an interesting dream.

ISO 9000 certification, for those people who don't know about it, doesn't mean you make great products. It has nothing to do with the product. It certifies that your quality assurance process assures the customers that you'll deliver what they thought they bought. So it's a certification of your quality assurance mechanisms, and it has nothing to do with whether your car actually runs.

Boris: And that's where the arts are different. If your tenor has a cold that day of call, he's going to be down.

Pauly: That's all the time we have. Thank you all very much. challenges

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