Stabilizing Community-Based Arts Institutions

Community-based arts organizations often exist in environments that are inherently unstable. How have funders traditionally defined stabilization, and are those definitions appropriate to community-based institutions? This session investigates management structures, skill sets, planning strategies, and technical assistance that enable these institutions to function as flexible, resilient entities that can respond appropriately to change. Research on the characteristics of community-based organizations in relationship to their communities forms the basis for establishing reasonable growth and stabilization expectations for these often-fragile institutions.

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economically homogeneous, and these were seen as sort of gray areas, transitional areas.

One of the points we've been trying to make consistently through this project is that diverse neighborhoods are the center of a lot of activity in cities, and that one of those activities for which diversity neighborhoods are the home are cultural activities. I put this up because the early results of the 2000 Census underline that this is an important point to keep in mind when you're thinking about culture, because as you can see from the overhead, diversity expanded quite dramatically in Philadelphia and a number of other cities during the 1990s, so that you can see in the city, the proportion of the population living in these diverse neighborhoods nearly doubled during the decade.

Audience: Wait! From back here, you can't read what the key says, and we don't know what this means.

Stern: Oh! I'm sorry. This codes the city in terms of what happened with ethnicity during the 1990s. The gray areas, are, for those of you who know Philadelphia, West Philadelphia and sections of North Philadelphia, and they represent homogeneous African-American neighborhoods that were African-American in 1990 and in the year 2000.

The white areas are areas that were stable white neighborhoods across the decade. The blue areas are areas that were diverse both at the beginning and at the end of the 1990s in terms of their ethnic composition, so those were essentially neighborhoods that were black and Latino, neighborhoods that were black and white, neighborhoods that had a high proportion of Asian-Americans living in them.

In Philadelphia, our Asian-American population is only like three percent or four percent, so there really are no neighborhoods where Asians are a majority of the population. So when you have concentrations of Asians, they tend to be diverse neighborhoods. So that's the blue.

The red are areas that became diverse during the 1990s. So they were homogeneous white or they were homogeneous African-American in 1990, and by the year 2000, they were diverse in terms of that.

So what we've found over time is that there's this real connection between diversity and all sorts of indicators of cultural engagement. For example,

this is based on an analysis of four cities we did. The presence of arts organizations in a neighborhood in all four of these cities was highly correlated with what we called these multiply diverse neighborhoods.

You can see at the far left, those are areas of those four cities that were both economically diverse. They had a higher-than-average poverty rate, they had a higher-than-average number of professionals living in those neighborhoods. And they were ethnically diverse; they were in one of those neighborhoods in which no single ethnic group had dominant representation in the population. You can see that relationship, which we found originally in Philadelphia, is quite consistent across the four neighborhoods. So that was one set of findings, and it has to do with this connection between diversity and ethnicity.

In addition, another point that's come out of our research is that there's a real clear measurable connection between neighborhoods with high levels of cultural engagement and a variety of positive social indicators about cities. We were able to get data from the city on levels of juvenile delinquency, kids who were committed in a delinquent out-of-home placement, and truancy in the city of Philadelphia. We were able to look at that in terms of its relationship to levels of cultural participation. I should point out, this particular analysis was just of neighborhoods that were defined as highly disadvantaged – that is, relatively high poverty rates, high levels of unemployment, the whole set of economic indicators. Looking just at those neighborhoods, what we found was that there is a very clear connection between those neighborhoods with high levels of cultural participation, and neighborhoods that had very low rates, both in terms of delinquency and in terms of truancy.

In addition, we looked at the notion of revitalization. We don't have the 2000 Census data on poverty yet, so we haven't been able to go back into that analysis. But this is from the 1980s, where we examined again, across those four cities, the relationship of revitalization, which we defined in terms of declining poverty rates and stable or growing population, and the presence of cultural organizations. Again, we found a very strong relationship between the two.

Finally, with the new 2000 data, we were able to look at this issue of population growth across different areas, and again what we found was that there's a very consistent relationship between neighborhoods

in Philadelphia with a high level of what we call "mainstream cultural participation," which is essentially levels of participation at mainstream cultural institutions like the orchestra, the museum of art, things like that.

What we found was, if we analyze the data on population growth in the city in terms of that data, there was a very clear relationship between population growth and cultural participation. I should point out as well, the other factor that was a strong explainer of changes in population growth during the 1990s was diversity, but you can see that, since its diverse neighborhoods were growing, it was the diverse neighborhoods.

What comes out of this phase of the research, or the macro phase of the research, is first of all that culture is deeply embedded in urban social structures; that the place it hooks on most strongly are these diverse neighborhoods. And finally, that there's a clear connection between levels of cultural engagement, both in terms of the presence of institutions and in terms of levels of participation, and a whole set of positive indicators of community well-being. The ones I've been through – population growth, community revitalization around poverty, and finally child welfare indicators like delinquency and truancy.

On the first level, the good news from that analysis is that there's a strong case to be made for the role of culture in terms of improving the quality of life in urban neighborhoods. Data like ours I think could be marshaled in a variety of cities to make that case.

Moving on to this second point, this micro issue. The issue for me is that it's only the starting point. In addition to making the case that there is this connection, it's important for us to understand how this connection works, and how programs and initiatives, what strategic opportunities are out there for improving the way that the community cultural system works, to improve its effectiveness on neighborhoods and its impact on the wider cultural community as well.

So the way we have this organized is, Beth and Claudine are going to talk about their experience with specific programs that they've been involved in, then I'm going to come back at the end and draw some general conclusions from research we've been doing in Philadelphia around strategies for intervening in terms of community cultural systems to make that more effective.

Audience: Is there a Web site for this data, where we can find it?

Stern: Yes. It's the School of Social Work at the University of Pennsylvania, and the Social Impact of the Arts Project.

Brandt: I'm wearing a couple of different hats. I ran a community-based arts program called Prints in Progress, where we did after-school arts programs in Philadelphia; and then I was a consultant, first to the Pew Charitable Trusts, and then to the William Penn Foundation, one for an arts education initiative and the second, Culture Builds Communities, which is what I'm going to talk about. Now I'm the director of a foundation in Philadelphia that only funds arts and culture, called the Bartol Foundation.

Culture Builds Communities was an initiative of the William Penn Foundation in Philadelphia that took the data from the Social Impact of the Arts Project and said, if we're going to buy the concept that culture builds communities, that culture is a way of revitalizing neighborhoods and having stronger communities, what can we do to support the organizations that are doing this community arts work? If you take a social work model, we came up with five different ways we were going to try and do this. It was around $2 million over three years, plus an evaluation component that Social Impact of the Arts did. It was managed by Partners for Livable Communities, which is in Washington, D.C., who then hired me in Philadelphia to be their project director. So it's a little complicated.

Here's what we did. First thing we did was call the Core Support, where we picked ten really strong community arts centers and just gave them general operating money for three years with what we called "general operating with an attitude," in that you had to tell us what you were going to do at the end of three years. You could tell us what it was going to be, you could set your own priorities, but that was the first category.

The second category was Earned Income, where we did two business plans for community arts centers that thought they had a potential for a business that would earn income, and what happened was one of the business plans proved it was a really bad time to be an independent bookstore, and that was never going to make money. They didn't get an implementation grant, because we basically proved, not that

you shouldn't have the bookstore – it's in a Latino neighborhood, it's the only Spanish bookstore in the Philadelphia region – but it wasn't ever going to make money for them. Not ever. Not at this point.

One was the Association of Latin-American Musicians, which already had a booking and production system, and they did get a second grant, sort of a capital infusion, if you think of it as a business, to do things that would get them into the mainstream. So if you're booking a wedding, you would look in the Yellow Pages and you could call them and you could get tapes and demos and play lists. I would say the earned income probably wasn't the most successful of our initiatives, but we tried it.

We had another category called Artistic Enhancement, which gave money mostly to non-arts groups. Boys' and Girls' Clubs, recreation centers, the Housing Authority. We have something called Crime Prevention Association in Philadelphia. They were doing arts programs, but they weren't very good. We gave them small grants, $10,000 a year for two or three years, to improve the quality of what they were doing.

What was interesting with these guys is, we got the first round of proposals and they were so clueless that we said, "Wait, wait, wait." We brought them in, we gave a workshop that said, "You don't pay artists $7 an hour, and you can't spend $50 on art materials for a year for three hundred kids." Then we let them redo their proposal and come back. Through that, we had to deal with a lot of the issues when they're saying, "But our daycare teacher makes $8 an hour, how can we pay an artist $25 an hour?" We'll come around to that later.

Youth Access was about reducing barriers to get kids involved in programs. This, to be honest, was a little contrived. It had something to do with the fact that money was coming from the youth side of the foundation, so they had this other initiative about youth opportunities. But it looked at, was it transportation? Was it that kids needed advanced classes and we only had beginner classes? What are things that were barriers for participation, and how can we get to that and support that?

In the last category we did four collaborations between arts and non-arts groups in the same neighborhood. One of the collaborations started with seven groups. I think they ended up with three.

Stern: Well, it depends on how you count them.

Brandt: It depends how you count them. So all in all, there were thirty grants to forty groups, because we had these collaborations going.

We had two goals, which, as the project director, I started thinking of as separate things.

One had to do with, how connected were they to their community? And the other had to do with their infrastructure and their management. Obviously, we were trying to support both of these things. When I started doing this, I would explain to people, think of two continuums, and we have some people that are really connected to the community but have real infrastructure issues, and we have some that are very well organized, but not very well connected to their community.

In the beginning, all of the technical assistance really thought about things that way. Either it was a community thing, or it was a management thing. About a year and a half into this, we started to see that everything was connected to everything, and that it was silly to do a marketing workshop that didn't take into account, How do you market to nontraditional arts-goer communities? Maybe other people would have gotten this sooner, but it took us awhile. So we stopped separating how you run from how you do your work, and tried to put it all in one thing.

One thing I will lay out is, this was all local. This is very different from what Claudine did, and so there was no place that could call me with a problem that I couldn't be there in forty-five minutes in my car. The idea was, the technical assistance was me. I'm here. It is my job to support you thirty organizations through a couple of different things.

First, we had workshops that we would send things out and say, "What do you want to know about? What do you want to learn?" In the beginning, we would have, "This is a core support workshop. And this is a collaborations workshop." That didn't work very well, so we started saying, "Here's ten workshops. Pick five of them." Because what we found was, in any given category, we had beginner folks and we had really advanced folks. One of the things that we learned after the beginning was to say, in the description, "This is a beginning workshop." Or, "This is an advanced workshop." So we let them pick for themselves. We said, "This is what out's there.

You have to come to a certain number." That was part of the deal of the grant.

I think what Mark's going to find one of the best things that we did was to get these people together all of the time for three years. They came to workshops. Twice a year we had – I don't know if any of you have done it – an open space meeting, where people can come and set their own agenda.

At the end of every year, everybody had to come to an all-day retreat where, Here's fifty of your peers, ask each other. What do you need? What are you working on? What are you struggling with? There's a system that they can find each other and go do their own workshops and their own sessions.

Then they could call me. So they could call me and say, "We have to do a personnel manual." Or, "We need to hire an artist. Do you know a dance person?" One year all the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts grant checks were literally five months late, and people needed bridge loans, and "Where can I take this?" and "My bank won't do this," and "What else can we do?" So there was a sense, since they were all with us in the same neighborhood, in the same area, that I could work on things for them. Some of it was very individualized. I would say, "You know, so-and-so wants me to teach them to do a cash flow. Anybody else who wants to tag along, come in and we'll teach everybody at one time."

There are a couple of things in terms of what we learned and some recommendations. One of the things that we really were trying to do was a macro technical assistance. We were trying to raise the visibility of arts organizations as an asset to their community. What would happen is, they would say to me, "They just got rid of the art teacher in the entire school district, and we read about it in the newspaper." It didn't occur to anybody to come to the arts center and say, "Would you come help us fight for keeping the art teacher?" Or, there was a race riot, there was a something, and the community would get together, and – for some of these groups, not all of them – for some of the groups, their problem was, they were the first person everybody called about everything. I had one group who said, "I walk down the street and someone says, 'thanks for getting the lights fixed.'" Because they just assume if anything good happens in this neighborhood, she must have done it. So she gets everything. But then we get other people who say, "Why am I reading this in the newspaper when it's over?"

We did a couple of things. We would set up meetings on their behalf, using the name of the foundation, because it would get people to come, and we would set up meetings with youth development organizations, or with faith-based organizations. Every year we would throw a party in a very fancy hotel in Philadelphia, so that everybody would want to come to the party, and each community organization got to invite five people from their neighborhood. Sometimes they invited politicians. They invited someone from the school board. They invited the social service agency that we were trying to work with. We brought them all in and then we – not the grantees – gave them a pitch about why arts was so important and was such a good asset to build their community. We were using our position as a funder, our money, to throw this party, and then speaking on their behalf in a way that they couldn't. We gave awards and got people to come.

These were multi-year grants, and we could say to them, unless you really, truly take this money and go to the Bahamas, we're not going to take your money away from you. It is in your interest to tell us what's going on and we'll help you. We're not going to hold it against you when we find out that your bookstore is never going to make money. That's a good thing, and now you know it, and let's move on to something else.

I was in a very weird spot, and I know Claudine found the same thing, the turnover in these places is tremendous. It's just the way it is! They're not badly run, they're not mean to people. People are either there for fifty years or they come and work eighteen months, and they train them as a developing person, and then they go make more money someplace else.

A whole part of my job became orienting new executive directors, not just about Culture Builds Communities and what their responsibilities and rights were, and what their benefits were, but I was sort of the organizational history. I would say, okay, well, when they wrote the grant, this is what was going on, and this is what they're doing.

But you see, there were a lot of groups. There were some groups that went through four directors in three years.

Stern: Program director, not executive director.

Brandt: Well, one went through four executive directors. I think in forty organizations we had thirty new directors at some point. Some went through four. You know, some went through one. But also think of it as a funder. This thing just keeps getting thrown into this new director's lap, and they don't know.

We had one person who came in as the lead in the collaboration, and thank God was one of the ones who came and went, who said, "I don't even know why we're doing this!" He wasn't an arts group. He was the lead because he was the biggest, and he could take the grant. All the other ones were too small to take the money, and he really had no interest in it. Thank God he only stayed for four months and then left, because the whole thing was falling apart. People would call me and say, "I'm quitting." I'd say, "Can you give me twenty-four hours? Don't quit today. Let me see if we can fix it before tomorrow." But this is just endemic to these arts centers. As a funder, having the expectation that it's going to be different doesn't seem realistic to me.

What we tried to do is to say, "How can we streamline the stupid things so that you can do the real work?" Their strength is that they're flexible. They're not bureaucratic. They can respond to things on a dime. That's what they're great at. They know their community. They hear about things. If their community needs something, they can do it. We don't want to make them into these structured, heavy bureaucratic things, but on the other hand, if a funder asks you for a report, it shouldn't take three days out of your week, like you've blown your whole week because your funder wants participation data.

There was a huge range of technical ability. The Boys' and Girls' Clubs were great. They're used to having memberships, registrations, you come in, you sign out, they spit out reports. With a lot of the smaller groups, and not even those who were that small, their computers were old, their software stinks, the person who knows how to do it left, and they can't just pop out a report. One of the great values of what Mark was doing is, they would get things and they would go, "I didn't know we had all these ZIP codes! Wow!" But they would give Mark literally a box with papers in it and say, "Here's our registration."

We did some things, like we'd say, you have an event, we were trying to get them to do sign-ins, they wouldn't do sign-ins. We'd say, "Have a raffle. Have a raffle at the event, have everybody fill out a

form." And then they'd give all the raffle tickets to Mark, and he'd have to put them in the computer. But that's where a lot of these folks are, so in terms of evaluation, data collection, understanding toward their place and who they're serving, it's very difficult because they don't capture this stuff.

The thing that really worked well was to say, "Things are going to change. There's going to be turnover. People are going to leave. The environments are going to change. Funding is going to fall through."

Our goal became not even stability, but resiliency. Who are the groups that can come back from this stuff? There are groups that the director left, and they were fine until a new director came in. And there were groups that the director left and the programs fell apart. We had one group that was a CBC group that's now come into our foundation, and we had to say, "You know, you still don't have a director. And there's nothing to fund! There are no programs going." It's not about the director or not. There are other groups that have had directors leave, they have really good program people, things keep putting along, the money keeps coming in.

Stability is really a relative term. How do you make it so when they take these hits, they don't get knocked out? That really became our goal, and it's a very different perspective. Then it becomes about getting some systems in that are going to keep running, getting things that it's more than one or two people who know what's going on, so if somebody leaves, the whole thing doesn't fall apart. Getting peers that they can call in. That was the great thing about Culture Builds Communities: at the end, these thirty people knew each other, and they could call each other up when they got stuck, or they needed a staff person, or an artist quit, or they just needed advice from each other. What more resources can we give them? Because stuff is going to go wrong, and people are going to leave. And then how do they respond? That really became our goal. I know you worked on that, too, so I'll pass it off to you.

Brown: Thanks. The Nathan Cummings Foundation did a stabilization initiative that was a three-year program, and it grew out of a couple of ideas that were promulgated by the board.

One was that we wanted to do general operating support to start with. I have a real passion for general operating support in long-term funding, and

it's taken a long time to convince others that that's a good thing. But one of the crises that arises when you start talking about general operating support is evaluation. People say, "What are your measures for evaluation? How can you tell these groups have done what they said they were going to do, because with general operating support, they'll just keep operating, and maybe not improve, not get better, not grow." So the issue became, how do we evaluate that?

The other issue was that we were at a moment where we were looking at evaluation, and our foundation has looked at evaluation every year and disagreed on what it means. We've had more consultants talk about evaluation than you can imagine. And we've always had a core group of people who just hate the notion of evaluation.

At the moment we were initiating this particular project, we were working with a consultant who helped us think about evaluation from the perspective of being a learning institution. When we were talking about evaluation, we were not talking about giving report cards to our grantees and saying, "Bad, bad, bad, good, good, bad." We were really thinking about what we were learning from their work that would benefit them in the field, and would benefit our being better program officers and coming up with strategies that were meaningful to the constituencies that we were trying to serve.

In pulling together this stabilization initiative, we thought we needed a joint education process. We hired the firm of Brodie and Weiser, and we brought them in so that we could talk about what we meant by stabilization when we were making these grants.

Briefly, we described a stable institution in this way: A stable organization is resilient. It's an organization that can effectively manage crises and adapt to market changes. It is clear about its purpose; understands how it differs from its competition; is knowledgeable and sensitive to its markets and audiences; has strong and effective managers and board; has institutional memory yet is flexible enough to learn from its mistakes; has strong financial management policies and procedures; and conducts planning that incorporates internal and external information.

Because we were arguing over evaluation, we had already decided who the grantees were before we hired the evaluators. We invited the evaluators in to meet with the grantees so that we could talk about

what it meant to be stable together, and so that we could affirm a definition together.

Once we did that, we created a self-evaluation for the institutions. We sent it to them, and it was fairly rigorous. It dealt with all of the points that I've just mentioned, and the director and the board went through the organization and did an audit. After they did that audit, we sent out a person to take a look at those organizations and to visit with them and talk with them about what their organizations were doing, and what their vision was of their own stability. The consultant that we used, again from Brodie & Weiser, was a woman named Krista Velasquez. Based on the site visits, and based on Krista's assessments, our groups began to refine some of what they thought they needed to do with this general operating money in order to become stable.

Now, in their proposals, it was really interesting. I would say that the kinds of things that they thought they needed to do to become stable were very, very different. I should say that there were a number of proposals we knew we couldn't entertain from the very beginning because of what they thought stability was. So for instance, there were a number of prospective grantees who sent us proposals that said, "If you just gave us more money, we could offer more classes and we could get more kids in, and our organization would get bigger and we would be better."

One of the things we realized from some of those proposals was that there was no cost analysis. A lot of times, they didn't know how much it cost to do a class. For instance, we had one organization that discovered it was much cheaper to do dance classes than it was to do instrumental music classes, because with instrumental music, you had to rent the instruments, you had to insure the instruments, you had to have teachers who taught in different disciplines. But with the dance classes, they needed good floors, a boom box, and they would get a ton of kids in. In fact, that's the program that ended up growing, because they had a facility that could accommodate dance, but they had neither the resources nor the human resources to do an instrumental music class. A lot of the early proposals thought, "If we offer it, they will come. If they come, they will pay for it, and then we'll make money." There was never a notion that that wasn't going to be what stabilized their organization, and in some instances, it would tax their organization.

The other thing we found was that a number of these grantees had resources that were getting underutilized. This again is another concrete example – we had a lot of organizations that did after-school programs for children, weekend programs for children, and summer programs for children. But they owned their facilities, and the facilities were empty all day long. They hadn't thought about, who might want our programs, and who could use them during the day? Rethinking the use of their facilities became a really big deal, and many of them began to do programs for adults, and began to do outreach programs at the hospitals and other kinds of facilities. They just hadn't thought about their resources in a way that was effective.

In terms of the criteria that we use, a big piece of our work has always been asking the field to tell us what the world is like that they live in, and asking them to inform us about their issues. Some of the trends that we saw were, number one: There were a number of organizations that said, "You know, we've always used part-time employees to do this work. And we're at a point now where there's some competition, and the really great artists who we've been using now have the possibility of getting full-time work. If we don't start making them full-time, and if we don't give them benefits, it's going to have an impact on our organization." So for some of them, stabilization meant stabilizing their staff. Being able to keep artists in place who delivered a high-quality product, and being able to pay those people. In one instance, a person who was a leader in the organization went to work with the public school system, because he had a family, he needed insurance, benefits, the whole deal. I think his leaving was a great loss to the institution, but the board had to begin to deal with the fact that most of them were executives in businesses where they had hospital benefits, dental benefits, and they were fiduciary officers of institutions and hadn't given a second thought to the fact that the people whose futures they held in their hands didn't have those benefits.

The other thing that we saw happening which we also thought was really interesting was that we were looking at generational issues in institutions, and not just founder-director generational institutions, but there were a number of leaders of organizations who had been there for ten, fifteen, and sometimes even twenty years, who said, "We have seen a whole generation of kids grow up. We have nurtured whole families. And while we were nurturing those families

and building those great communities, the community changed. The demographics of the community changed again, and we don't know the new families. And for us, stabilizing is recognizing that these kids are going to college, and maybe they'll come back, and maybe they won't. There are a whole batch of families that we don't know, and we need to cultivate those parents. We need to cultivate those children. It means that our organization is going to look different, internally and externally." That was another big issue that they brought to the table.

Earned income became a big deal, however they were going to do it. And sometimes it was just thinking smarter about their organizations, and sometimes it was about doing the work differently.

One of the hardest things we found was for people to cut programs that weren't successful. Sometimes they couldn't cut them because the person who taught them had been there, and had been *their* teacher. We had one instance where the director of the organization said, "When I was a kid, this was the person who taught me music. I can't imagine how I'm going to ask this person to go home, even though nobody's taking his classes anymore." So the whole issue of rethinking the organization and what it offers had become a big deal.

The area we were evaluating that we thought was really interesting that people didn't get in its link to mission, was strategic position. It was new language for our institutions. A lot of them understood what it was like to have a mission, and I can tell you, there was often mission slippage. People had forgotten why they formed their organizations, even if it was the founder/director still in place. You know, you get so hung up in keeping the place going, and in keeping people employed, you forget why you are doing the work and for whom you are doing it.

But when we talk about the issue of strategic position, one of the questions that we began to ask groups was, "Okay, you started out this organization and you had a visual arts program, and you had a dance program, and you had a performing arts program. Now there is a theater four blocks away, and a lot of your kids are going there. What's your relationship with that theater?" There were some directors who said, "We hate those people. You know, they just came in and they took our kids. It's just so ridiculous." We said, "Do they do really well with adolescents? Do you do well with really young kids? Are you feeding

your kids to that organization? Are they feeding kids to you? Have you figured out what your niche is? Maybe that's what they can do, and you can move on and do something else." And they said, "We were here first. We do it really well. You know, they ought to move! They never had to come here in the first place." So that whole notion of, your community has changed, do you change to accommodate that, or do you figure out ways of cooperating so that you are not investing in areas that aren't going to benefit your organization in the long run? That was just so very, very hard for organizations to deal with.

As Beth said, the issue of attrition of staff was something that people were ashamed of and angry about. They were angry about it, because they said, "We trained these brilliant people." I'll give you an example, probably for me what was one of the most poignant descriptions of that.

We had one grantee who said, "You know, when I created this organization, I worked a full-time job and came to this organization every day. I was doing two jobs for twenty-five years. And I did those two jobs so that I could take care of my family, and so I could also do the work that was my passion. On three occasions, I've identified young people who I thought would be successors, and in two instances, they were people who grew up in this organization. They were brilliant, they had Ph.D.s. We thought that they would be the savior of the organization. One, we couldn't offer them enough money, but the other thing was, they were building careers. They were not about building institutions. They made it really clear that they would love to come here to do some work, but then they have higher aspirations. They could not imagine being in this institution for five years, ten years, twenty-five years."

So there was just bitter, bitter anger toward those young people who, actually, in many instances, were making twice as much money as the people who were their mentors when they walked in their door. But the same kind of remorse and sadness existed for all of the young people who had come in and been trained on their computer systems, who had then left and gotten better jobs. All of the young people in the development office who had learned how to write a good proposal, who were now writing those proposals for the major institutions. The loss was palpable. One of the things we found was that sometimes, when there was that kind of loss,

it took months, and sometimes years, to replace those people.

One of the first conclusions we drew as we were doing this work was that these are feeder institutions. There is no shame in being a feeder institution. Because they are feeder institutions, and the work that they do as training institutions is important, especially if they stay in the arts and end up at other institutions, we as funders need to be acknowledging and supporting them. It is a form of cultural Darwinism. These organizations cannot stop this from happening. You can't tell a young mother, "You can't take the next job that offers you better benefits and a higher salary." That's just a reality.

In terms of what is effective leadership, that also became a really big issue. I'll give you another example of this.

When Krista did evaluations, she interviewed boards, she interviewed staff. There was an organization that has stellar leadership and a very charismatic leader. But when she interviewed his staff, they said, "We are going to kill him, okay? We are grossly overworked. Every time somebody says, 'Would you like to do a new program?' he says, 'Yes!' He's not teaching them. We are working, like, ninety-hour days, and we are falling off the vine."

When we sent that information back to the organization, his response was, "That woman you sent out was really incompetent. I don't know where you found her. We liked her when she first came, but her findings were really, really ridiculous. And probably, she just talked to the wrong people. She talked to the disgruntled people." I said, "Well, I'm going to give you a list of all the people she talked to, and I think that you should talk to them all, one-on-one." It took him six months to get back to me, and he said, "That woman was really brilliant, okay? I apologize." And he said, "You know, all the things they said to her, they were afraid to say to me, and these are people who I respect and love, and these are people who I was really overextending and wearing out. It took an outsider to be able to let me know that I was off course completely."

This is another issue for these organizations. The demand is great in their communities. If you succeed and do something exceedingly well, people bring you other projects. For instance, we had one group that was fiscally sound, doing exceptionally well, and the city gave them another building to manage for all

the groups in the community, which increased their fundraising burden and threw them into a state of crisis. They couldn't say no to the building, because the same politicians who recommended that they take that building over were responsible for *their* monies. To say no could have caused them to sustain serious cuts. So these groups are often also victims of their own successes.

We had one group that diversified really successfully, diversified the board, diversified the staff. And one group pulled their money out because they felt that the organization no longer represented their values. As we push for diversity, we had one group almost collapse and go out of business because they became diverse, and that new community could not sustain them in the same way. So what I say to you is that the whole notion of stability is like being a part of a democratic society. We're always in a stage of becoming. We're not always quite there. Just when you think you've figured it out, there's a new little glitch that makes it difficult. The city cuts back, the state cuts back, somebody's endowment is down, it is a very precarious world to live in.

For those of us who thought we could do stabilization programs, and one day we would wake up and all of our groups would be stable and have cash reserves, get over yourselves! One of my colleagues said to me, "I helped all these groups create cash reserves, and now they're coming to me for my new initiative and none of them have that reserve money anymore. How do I look at them?" You look at them as community-based organizations that are flexible under stress, that are still alive under insurmountable conditions, that are struggling and will continue to struggle, no matter how smart they get, and they continue to get smart. And they continue to get smart as we learn new things. They will always need technical assistance. They will always have to be flexible, because just as they are flexible in their ability to change direction, to change programming, they have to be flexible when the crises are different from the crises that they had before. We have to be open to them. We have to be open to the fact that they are always in a state of becoming, and not penalize them because they aren't going to be static any more than we are. Thank you.

Stern: That was great. One thing that strikes me, Claudine mentioned this notion of learning organizations. Of course, Beth's stuff I know better than I wish I did in some ways. I was intimately involved in the program that Beth managed. But listening to

both of them, there is a whole notion of learning something out of this. Cathy Weiss, who was the program officer at William Penn who devised the Culture Builds Community, agreed that we weren't just going to be kind of rat-scientist-type evaluators, that a great amount of our research was going to go into providing the foundation with a better understanding of the kind of ecosystem within which community cultural agents operate.

Listening to Claudine and Beth and in terms of our work on CBC, one lesson is this notion of ecosystem. Funders are used to nonprofit grantees and organizations. One of the things that has come out of the research we've been doing on community cultural organizations is that it is very hard to understand any of these community cultural organizations without understanding a whole array of players that surround the organizations, and the networks and relationships that really determine the success of those organizations, not what's going on in them. So that notion of ecosystem.

The other issue, which I think both Beth and Claudine talked to, is this notion of yardstick. This notion that the yardstick we use to judge success, to judge stabilization, to judge sustainability for community cultural resources, has to be very different from a more traditional set of yardsticks we use.

On this point, there's a quote from Paul DiMaggio from Princeton University that as we were trying to get together the evaluation for Culture Builds Community, just jumped out at us. In the early nineties he wrote, "The general thrust of art policy in the United States has been toward what is referred to in policy circles as institutionalization. Nurturing arts organizations, preventing existing organizations from failing, encouraging small organizations to become larger and large organizations to seek immortality. Policies of institutionalization and expansion encourage our organizations to become larger, more bureaucratic, and more dependent on both institutional subsidy and earned income. An alternative policy, which would probably be more effective in stimulating innovation, would be to lower barriers to entry rather than attempting to ensure institutional immortality. To an extent, this would involve doing the opposite of what public agencies now do: focusing grants on new, unproven enterprises, discouraging expansion, investing in organizations with the expectation that many of them would expire."

So far, so good. Then he goes on to note that, "A full embrace of such a policy would be politically suicidal for publication."

It's important to take away from his quotation this notion that cultural organizations are different, and if we're going to talk about sustainability, it needs to include both an idea of stability and an emphasis on innovation, because if you have a cultural sector with all stability and no innovation, you've got a dead cultural sector, whether the organizations have balanced budgets or not. There are two points.

On the ecosystem point, one of the things we've done over the past three years is try to document a whole range of what we refer to as agents, or non-organizational entities that strongly impact the success of a community cultural sector. I'll go through those very briefly.

Artists. One of our most horrible moments while we were doing this evaluation for Culture Builds Community was about a year and a half into it. We were sitting around in a staff meeting, and we looked around and said, "Where are the artists?" The reality is that, at least based on our experience in Philadelphia, the artists are by and large quite marginalized in terms of the institutional lives of organizations. If we look at our community cultural organizations in Philadelphia, at least, from the standpoint of the organization, the artists seem not to be there.

We made a concerted effort to document artists' networks across the city. One of the things that came out of that, and I think it's a huge lesson in terms of Culture Builds Community, is these artists are everywhere. Based on our survey of artists, we found that the average artist who was involved in one of the grantees for Culture Builds Community had, on average, five other contacts with other organizations in the city. Some of them were for-profit, some of them were not-for-profit. In a sense, the artists are providing a whole set of connections between organizations that the organizations are not aware of, because the artists are marginal. There's a huge potential for tying this sector together through artists that, by and large, isn't being realized.

For-profit cultural entities. One of the things we tried to gather data on during the course of the evaluation was the role not only of nonprofit cultural organizations in the area, but also for-profit cultural organizations. We were startled, frankly. There's a standard

mainstream for-profit sector: theaters, galleries, what have you, that's on everyone's mind.

One of the things we discovered was there is this whole other sector that we refer to as the populous for-profit sector, which is kind of…Madame Fifi's School of Dance, music stores that probably are training more musicians than most nonprofit community-based music programs. There's a whole sector. In fact, we counted them all up. There were more Madame Fifi's School of Dance than there were official nonprofit arts organizations in Philadelphia that focused on dance. So this is a huge sector. We don't really understand exactly how it operates.

One of the things that comes out about this sector, though, is somehow they figure out a way of doing this and not losing too much money on it. There definitely are some lessons that it would be worth pulling over.

This other point ties in with this artist point. The artists are crossing that boundary every day. The funders don't cross the boundary. We're not clear on how much interaction there is. But it's an opportunity. Think of this from a network standpoint. It's a place where you could have strength in a system, where as far as we can tell, nothing's going on. In network analysis, there is a notion of what they call structural holes, which is when you have a network that should operate, but for some reason there's a break, and something where there should be a connection isn't happening. The community cultural sector is full of these, and these are just some examples.

The other thing we spent a lot of time on was this notion of institutional connections, how arts organizations tied in with other non-arts organizations in their community and how they used those relationships.

Our lesson here is tied into our earlier talk about September 11th. One of the things that came out from this was that although other non-arts organizations had a very positive view of community cultural organizations, they by and large did not see them as players. They did not see them as guys with sharp elbows who could get in there and really fight around.

One of the things that's come out to us is that there's a different notion of power connected to the arts that isn't the typical notion of power that operates in

an urban community in which they're having fights about schools and getting the streets resurfaced. All the kinds of fights that urban neighborhoods go into. Trying to take arts organizations and making them a player in that game I don't think works very well. Or it doesn't work for everybody; it may work for some.

But there's another source of power that cultural organizations have, that is connected to some other principal. Preliminarily what we're saying is that it's connected more to how people come together, or how people see themselves as part of something, not how people make decisions about who they aren't, or how they divide over time.

One of the consistent findings of all of our research has been this bridging function of cultural organizations. For example, we've noticed that if you look at the participants in community cultural organizations, eighty percent of their participants came from outside the neighborhood in which that group was located.

There's this huge potential for drawing connections across communities that in a sense disadvantages these cultural organizations in terms of the local battles within their communities. Their participants come from a much wider area, and I think this represents a different kind of power, a kind of influence on social well-being and social processes that we have to hook on. It's more this unique quality of culture I think we have to spend more time on.

Finally, this issue of yardstick. I was so thrilled to hear Claudine talk about this stuff. Last year, my partner-in-crime, Susan Seifert, and I wrote a paper called "Irrational Organizations: Why Community Cultural Organizations Are Really Social Movements." The core of that paper was that if we take a yardstick around what every executive director should know about organization, and then use that to judge these community cultural organizations, they come up short. It ends up as a deficit-based model.

If we go into these organizations from a different model, a model that starts with passion and commitment, the reason people are involved in these is not because they're rational organizations in which they can move up and make a good living and get rewarded for the skills they have, and all the stuff Claudine was talking about, but because people, for one reason or another, have a passionate commitment to doing this stuff. If we're going to look at this issue of sustainability, that passion and that commitment is actually where we need to look.

We found time and again in Culture Builds Community, as Beth has said, institutional crisis. Literally, every month, there was one institution that was in crisis.

One of the things that we decided to look at in terms of evaluation was, "How do organizations respond to crisis?" rather than saying, "What are we going to do to keep cultural organizations from having crises?" I think the issue is, "What are the resources that organizations have that allow them to get through and respond to crises, and sometimes come out stronger than when they went in?" The range of those resources is quite remarkable. Sometimes it was the board. Sometimes it was a founder/director. Sometimes it was the community. Members of the community just came in and said, "This organization can't die. We're going to have to do something for it."

I want to wrap up quickly, so let me just say, two of the lessons I would draw out are this notion of ecosystem, this notion that we need to understand a wider range of players and we need to understand them from a network standpoint in terms of not just individual organizations that we judge, but in terms of what opportunities do we have to get the entire network to become stronger? Secondly, this issue of yardstick, that we need to be able to judge these organizations not by some deficit-based model, but in terms of what they actually do well and what they contribute.

Brown: I want to add to Mark's comment the fact that one of the things we found was some of these organizations don't even get press unless they're in crisis. So having a crisis every two or three years gets them the great big story. There's an organization that recently had a story in *The New York Times*, and I thought about it, and I said, I've seen this story in *The Times* every six years, and every time, it was almost the exact same story, and every time the story appears, they get a boost of funding. But if they do the normal good work that they always do, they cannot get the press. It's interesting how society treats these small organizations. They're not on the radar screens often, even when they're doing a yeoman's job. We're going to open the floor to questions and answers.

Audience: First, can I just say, "Hallelujah!?" This was so unbelievably good, I can't even tell you.

Stern: We knew it would be.

Audience: How helpful. My question is going back to something that you both alluded to, which is this issue as a funder of building trust with organizations. On the one hand, in order to provide useful, valid technical assistance, you need this absolute breakdown of walls of suspicion and concern and protectiveness. On the other hand, if you're going to provide technical assistance, sometimes some of the rational business model decisions are things like closing programs, firing the wonderful old music teacher. How do we grapple with that? How do we say, "Trust us," and then come back and say, "But you've got to change the way you're doing things"? Can anybody speak to that?

Brown: I have never told anyone to fire anybody, and won't. That issue, for me, was a cultural issue. It was an issue of respecting one's elders. I think this group will keep this person on until he dies, and I don't have a problem with it. There's room for emeritus people on staff who are honored because of their long-term contributions.

One of the things that happened with our grantees is that, once they're our grantees, we try to enter into a relationship where we say to them, "If there's a crisis, call. It's better that we hear it from you than from someone else." Sometimes we can offer technical assistance. For instance, if you didn't get the matching funds, and you can't do the project in the way you said you were going to do it, it's better that we know so that we can talk to you about how to modify it, so that you don't come in at the end of the year with a final report that says you didn't do any of the things that you said you were going to do.

Ironically, the hardest thing we've had in terms of getting grantees to do is, we offer money, or we have in the past, for board training. It's been interesting to us, but nobody wants it. Everybody says, "I'm so sick of those people. They're supposed to be bringing money in. I don't want to spend grant money on trying to get them to do the job right. Give us the money for our programs and for our stabilization, and let them raise their own money and train their own selves, because they're a pain in the neck." I have to just tell you across the board, that's what our grantees say. They're stuck with the same old bad boards, to be perfectly frank.

Brandt: This is a great example to me. Part of me says, well, is it the model, or is it the board? If nobody can get their board to act the way a board is supposed

to act – and I think this is huge! – in community organizations, are you going to have community representation? Well then, they're not going to raise money for you. That's not what they're good at. They can do other things, but they get sent to these board training things.

We had one group who was very successful with a grassroots fundraising system. They went through this whole program, and it proved for them really effective. But there are some things where you go, Okay, let's just leave it. The board's no good. Let's just move on. We're beating ourselves to death. They're not going to change, they're doing their best. There are some people who are draining, who are detrimental to an organization.

I was in a little weird position because I was between the funder and the grantee. We had a point with one program, we had to extend a little bit. This was at Pew. I said to the guy at Pew, Doug Barra, "Here's the thing. They tell me everything." My nephews tell me things they don't want my sister to know. Like they have a motorcycle, but I'm not supposed to say that I know that they have a motorcycle.

Audience: Was that the grantee or your nephew?

Brandt: This was my nephew. But that's another thing.

But Doug said to me, "If they're smoking cigarettes, you probably don't have to tell me. If they're doing crack, I should probably know about it." So there were some things which were like inner icky. I thought, I don't need to tell him all the goings-on here. But if it was something like this person's going to quit, if it was a big thing, we've got to deal with it. There were times where I was like, "You know what? You don't want to tell me this. This is more honesty than I need. I don't need to know who's with who and who's on this side and that side. If there's something I can help you with, fine, but this isn't helping to give me all the weird stuff."

But I'm also with Claudine. I can teach you to do a cost-benefit analysis, and yes, we can prove that summer camp makes way more money than photography, and then decide. You know, why are you charging the same tuition for everything? But I'm not going to say to you, "You should charge twice as much for this or that." Maybe photography is the best thing they do, and everybody's going to come there.

So part of it is, all I can do is help you get the information, and then you decide what you decide. It's not my organization, and in the end, I really, truly don't know it as well as you do. I don't know all the intrigue and I don't know all the decisions. Even if I feel like I'm spending hours and hours with you, it's not my organization, it's yours, and in the end, you have to decide. Sometimes you have to go, "It's just cigarettes. I'm going to let it go."

Audience: I think you guys have landed on what is a critical, critical issue, which is many of these community-based groups are dealing with a system that does not like or understand them. The typical corporate board model where you have the doctor, the lawyer, the real estate guy, and the banker, is just out of reach, out of reality with how these organizations work. One of the things that is really a challenge is how do you bring in technical assistance to groups like this when most technical assistance providers are still working within those parameters, and so they're basically getting this cookie-cutter parachute-down-from-the-Big-Apple kind of approach to how do you make your life more sustainable.

Brandt: And then they leave.

Audience: And then they leave, and you're in a deeper hole. You're right, they use the resources that would have been better served by getting that extra computer. You could have bought a $3,000 computer; instead, you paid $3,000 to some dingbat to come in and consult.

Brandt: We try not to bring dingbats. One of the things I learned is that I never brought somebody in for a workshop if I hadn't seen them teach, if I hadn't seen them run a workshop. They're people you meet, or you hear about them from somebody, and somebody says they're great. And you bring them in, and they're either totally condescending and patronizing, "Excuse me, I work with kids twenty-four hours a day, you don't have to tell me about what five-year-olds are like," or they're so "It's never going to happen," stuff.

That's one of the things I learned in terms of workshops, which is, I don't want to just hear you're good. I want to see you do something. I want to meet with you. I want to see your materials. As you say, before I'm going to spend this money that could be good somewhere else, you have to really deliver something

if I'm going to take these people's time for three hours, because they don't have it to spend.

Audience: I guess my big conundrum right now is knowing that I know that, and how do I explain that to my staff and board leadership.

Brandt: You're with a foundation?

Audience: Yes, I'm with a foundation. I came from the field where I had to put up with those $3,000 things, because in their power structure, in the board power structure, it does work for the institutions that they're involved in. It does work. Most boards of foundations are on boards of major arts institutions, and that system does work for those institutions.

How do you plan to deconstruct that so you can work appropriately in a substantive and heads-up manner with the community-based groups, and groups of color, where you know that that system is just not going to work?

Brandt: One thing that we did sometimes is pay a consultant fee to another organization to come consult with them. Pay a peer to come and work with them, because a lot of times that was the most useful thing. It kind of fits your board. You say to them, "Who do you really respect? Who do you want to spend time with? Who do you think you can learn from? We'll pay them $1,000 to come spend a day with you."

Brown: It's really important, if you can, to get people who know those organizations. If you can get people who run those kinds of organizations really successfully, it makes a difference.

In terms of our board, it was really interesting. They come with corporate models because they sit on other corporate boards, and we did lots and lots of site visits, where they met not only with the staff, but with members of the boards of directors of these institutions. They were really deeply moved by the level of commitment. It became clear to them early on that these board members might not have been able to bring money to the table, but the social and intellectual capital and the passion was there, and they were deeply, deeply moved, and were willing to hear what the structure should look like, because they recognized that the people who lived in the communities were the specialists at what it took to run these orga-

nizations. But it took maybe four or five years of those kinds of exposures to make that happen.

Brandt: The other thing I'll just toss out is that there are times they did need a lawyer on the board, or an accountant, or something, but they didn't know anybody. So we could help them because we have a Volunteers for the Arts, through different groups. Sometimes they do need expertise, and they want expertise, but they can't find it. They don't know anybody who's a lawyer. Using our position, we know we can find people that are compatible and put them together. Maybe not even as a board member, but just as somebody to help out.

Audience: I'm with the Metropolitan Atlanta Arts Fund, and we've been making stabilization grants to small and mid-sized arts organizations for nine years now, and a smaller arts organization doesn't feel much different than a small cultural community organization.

Through the years, we have had to develop for these organizations some kind of a technical assistance program, and we accommodated all of these issues and we've developed a program that appears to be working very well right now. We're in the pilot phase.

The way it works is that the organizations apply for a solution to a problem. They're not applying for an amount of money, which I have to say was extremely disorienting to them, and challenging for us to budget, I might add. Once they were selected to get one of these Toolbox Awards, then they would work with the Director of Consulting Services at our local nonprofit support organization, who would then say, "Okay, assessment. Is this the problem? Is it really your board that you hate that's not raising money for you, or is it something else?"

The second phase of it, after the problem was ritually clarified and identified was, "Okay, great, this is it. This is what you want. We're going to do a contract together, and we can give you three consultants and let you choose the one you want." Then the consultant services manager at the nonprofit service center is like the customer service guy at Andersen Consulting for the Arts, who says, "Okay, you've got a problem, come to me if you don't like the consultant we're giving you." So they sent us an additional mechanism where they can say, "This guy doesn't understand our issues at all, we don't like him," or

whatever, so they can fire them. Once the mutually pre-articulated goal is reached, the grant and the service is ended. It's working quite well.

Stern: That's an interesting model.

Brown: Thanks, Lisa.

Audience: Hi, just quickly. I may be stating the obvious, but the theme of technical assistance here is very strong, and I'm really thinking about this role of being a funder. The relationship to community-based arts organizations is very different between the funder and the organization, this pairing, this giving advice.

If you're funding a very established organization, you may have those feelings, but it's a whole different level of conversation. The role that we are playing in this niche is very complex, and I'm experiencing some of what you're all talking about. Maybe we don't have time, but this role, is it appropriate? How can we do it better? Are there ethics involved? And I also hear many of us who see ourselves as practitioners. We can't control ourselves, because we know what it might take, and oh, if only they'd listen! And I've had groups for the community initiative at OSI where people asked for an arts person, because the TA that was given them didn't understand them, and then they meet, "Oh, God! Someone who understands us!" It's wonderful to have this dual role, but I also think it's complicated, and I'm not sure I'm always comfortable.

Brandt: One thing I will say. I'm not painting the glorious picture here. I might have been, but I'll stop. There were people who didn't want our help. There are people who never called me. There are places I called to ask for the director, and someone said, "Oh, they're not here anymore." They had never told me, had never called me until I wondered why they didn't show up at three meetings in a row.

There were some groups where, to be honest, I thought, I'm not going to fight with you. If you don't want help, there are other people who do, and maybe you're fine! You're probably fine. Just go about your business. I'm not going to yank your money because you didn't come to your five workshops this year.

Some people ask you for everything, you know? "Oh, could you do this? Could you do this?" As you say, it makes you feel really important and helpful, and all

those things. Then there are other groups I don't want to work with if they don't want to work with me. Because then it's just, why am I fighting to help you?

I would have discussions with Cathy at the foundation, saying, "How much do I chase these people to help them?" If they really don't want it, I've asked you three times if you need anything, you said no. I'm done. When you need me, call me.

Brown: We have some questions up here. We have a lot of questions, so I want to get to people who have not had a chance to ask. Vanessa?

Audience: I'm with the NEA. And I guess there were a couple of things. I really want to thank you for saying a lot of very real things in your presentation, particularly the one about the teacher where people aren't coming to their class anymore, because I think there's a dynamic in a lot of community-based organizations where maybe it's the worst person in the world that they have as their marketing director, the most misanthropic person, or the most disorganized person who's their financial manager, or something like that. But it's not about that. It's about commitment that people have to an organization. That's a reality that a lot of these organizations deal with.

Brown: Glad you brought that up.

Audience: There were two things.

One is that, this idea of peer mentorship, I've liked for a long time. I've had this pipe dream for years of having some kind of collective fund where, instead of giving money to high-priced consultants who don't understand the systems and the contacts that a lot of these organizations work with, they can work with their peers and we can help. Because especially people who have a broader view because they're funding regionally or statewide or nationally can say, "Look, I know somebody who's just one step ahead of you and can help you, tell you some stuff that really helped them make it to the next level." Pay those people the money that you would pay a high-priced consultant, because they deserve it. That's one thing.

The other thing is about the feeder system. And about what does that mean? If we take this arts ecology issue seriously, and we say, these really are feeder organizations in a bunch of different ways, both in

terms of arts administration, in terms of the development of emerging artists, who move on, move on, everybody's moving on, what does it mean to recognize that?

A lot of the time, I hear people say, "Well, I can't give them that big of a grant because they're too small," or "I can't give them that much money to improve their facility for X, Y, and Z reasons." But you feel there's a subtext of, "Do they really deserve such a good space, or such great equipment?" I can't sometimes tell what's going on with that.

How do we recognize that in concrete terms in our practice to say, "Okay, this is a feeder system," and their position in that system is really key, because you have to have these levels in order to have a healthy system.

Brandt: I think the other thing that Mark didn't talk about in the research is the community regional thing in terms of participants.

Stern: One thing for me is, is it really a system? Does it really work and where are the connections? A number of reports came out this summer from Rand that various people funded, but one of the lessons you can draw from those is that the overall structure of the institutional organization of culture is changing. The middle, according to them, is being hollowed out.

And there are some real issues about where does community connect? Is it a hierarchical structure, or is there something a little crazier going on? From my standpoint, making sure we understand where, if it's a feeder system, where are those connections? That might be an area where there's a need for more investment in terms of getting the system to work better.

Brown: A quick response to that, because I've thought about this. I think there are two things that could happen.

One, in terms of peer training, the National Association of Latino Arts Centers had an initiative several years ago where they paired a new director of an organization with an established director, and they each spent a week at each other's facilities, and they planned the week so they could see a board meeting, they could see staff meetings, so they could get shared information about each other's cultures. Then they stayed in touch online for a set period of time,

so if they had questions to ask one another, they could continue the dialog. It's the kind of thing that is formalized, but it allows them to work with each other without losing too much time from their own institutions, because most of them can't do that.

In terms of a feeder institution, I've thought about a couple of things. One is our whole notion of what pre-professional training is. There are CETA models, there are WPA models, but the model that comes to mind for me is, D.C. and other cities have something called Leadership D.C., and you know that if you ever want to run for politics, that you need to give to the not-for-profit sector. You need to do good board training, that sort of thing.

We should be doing something like that in the arts. People who care about the arts, who are passionate about it, people who are artists who might at some point want good administrative skills, should be able to go through like a year-long program so they learn how to read a fiscal report. So they can give good board service and possibly be good staff people if they choose to work in an organization in other capacities.

If we're training them, and they're leaders, and they know that there are many roles that they can play, we'll have a core group of committed people so that there won't be these long gaps if a job is left open. We'll have people who are willing to come in who have some professional skill. They may not want to do it for a long time. They may want to do it as retirees.

One of the groups that we work with had a real difficult time finding a smart fiscal person. Then they called me and said, "The fiscal officer for the local opera has retired and would like to work for us for half-salary, because he's a retired person now and he can give his energy to an organization that he thinks really needs him." So this is a person who was a leader, and who could really redirect his energies.

It's those kinds of training programs where people understand that they have this passion about the arts, that there are some skills that they need to learn, and they would be willing to take a chunk of time out of their lives to be a part of the arts community. They don't always have to be kids, you know? They could be women from Wall Street who are just off maternity leave, who don't want to go back to Wall Street right away. There are all kinds of people who can fit into

those positions, and I think we have to begin to think about that.

Brandt: One thing before people start going, we have a publication I'm going to pass out, and there are more if we don't have enough. This was done as an advocacy book at the end of Culture Builds Communities, and there's a section on why culture helps youth development, why it helps economic development, why it helps build cultural bridges. The idea is, our grantees could take it, put a Post-It note on the page that applied to them, and send it to a funder and say, "This is why culture is important." There are more if there aren't enough.

Audience: First of all, I appreciate how much your conversation has meant to me, but there are a couple of things.

One, the absolute respect with which you describe these organizations, especially Claudine's long list of – both of you – of ways of seeing them. You also used the term "irrational" for a minute. This list was very profound to me, because it wasn't infantilizing all those, "They're so funny how they can't get it together." It was to actually suggest there's knowledge and power in the way that people are organized.

If you could get that information out publicly it would be so important, because most of us, including me… My organization is twenty-five years old this year, and I'm still trying to twist myself into looking like something else! So I really thank you.

Secondly, you guys are activist foundations. This was extraordinary to me to hear the way you were describing people today that you work with. I had lunch today with another activist foundation person. It's amazing to hear.

I drove up in the car with five artists, and I will just say without saying who was in the car, that one of the things we talked about is, "Hey, you guys, everything's great, remember when you get there. Everything's great!" And we were howling just like you did just now, we were howling. It seems that if we can build the kind of relationships which we could get to by understanding the profoundness of what you guys are saying to us, I think then we could build some amazing partnerships, because I've always felt you guys know so much. You've been through so much and you see us. But I don't think we can do that with absolutely everybody.

Brown: Thank you. Picking up on what you just said, the powerful role of storytelling in this whole process which happened for me here today. I've thought a lot about boards over the years, having run a lot of artists' organizations that had membership boards, where you have a fiduciary responsibility, of course, because that is a board responsibility, without fund-raising actually going on on the part of the board.

There aren't enough stories of boards that work, or in many cases, a lot of things that work, that aren't that sort of model of everybody having to twist themselves around like a pretzel to become something that is completely inappropriate. We have to figure out what the mechanisms are for looking at the things that have been invisible and have been either under-valued or completely devalued in the cultural arena.

I did a lot of consulting work with organizations, and the utter pain in community-based organizations who have tried to become what all those high-priced consultants told them they should become. There was a period of time where I said, "I'll never be out of work because I have to go in and do all of the repair work of the damage." I'm talking about serious psychic damage to organizations.

We have to get the stories out about the structures that do work as, not new models, because that's equally dangerous, but about the process that people use to arrive at a structure that works in their own situation. We have to figure out how and where the stories are going to be told.

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