



**Social Impact of the Arts Project**

The arts and civic engagement:  
A field guide for practice, research, and policy

Social Impact of the Arts Project  
July 2009



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Digital garden screening at Sara Roosevelt Park in New York City's Chinatown arranged by Manhattan Neighborhood Network. Local advocacy and activist communities are partnering with filmmakers "like never before."

(Bottom) © JACQUES-JEAN TIZIOU / WWW.JJTIZIOU.NET

Philadelphia Live Arts Festival 2008 at FDR skate park in South Philadelphia. Emmanuelle Delpech-Ramey's "Oedipus at FDR" drew on the theatricality of skateboarding to explore ancient and modern notions of truth, judgment, and death.

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[www.sp2.upenn.edu/SIAP](http://www.sp2.upenn.edu/SIAP)

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Philadelphia, July 2009

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## Introduction

Since 1994, the University of Pennsylvania Social Impact of the Arts Project (SIAP) has developed methods for documenting the impact that the arts and culture have on their social environment. During 2008, SIAP collaborated with the Americans for the Arts' Animating Democracy project on a review of the literature on civic engagement and the arts. This collaboration provided SIAP an opportunity to consider the theoretical and methodological issues involved in studying the topic. Based on that review, we were able to develop a comprehensive strategy through which policymakers, researchers, and practitioners could collaborate to bring a fuller understanding of the arts' civic impact to the general public.

The core of our approach is a multi-level data gathering effort. This initiative must start at the grassroots, with the efforts of practitioners to improve their knowledge of who is involved in their programs and how that involvement influences their attitudes and behavior. However, the work of practitioners will only pay off if it is complemented by regional efforts to compile and analyze these data. This field guide lays out how this cooperation can explain how investments in the arts and culture can pay dividends, not just for those who attend events, but also for our entire society.

This is a particularly important moment to make this case. The 2008 survey of public participation in the arts conducted for the National Endowment for the Arts concluded that involvement in the arts by ordinary Americans has declined markedly since 2002. Efforts by conservatives to brand the arts as "elitist" may have become a self-fulfilling prophecy in which cuts in funding undermine the arts' ability to inspire and engage the American public.

If we are to reverse this trend, we will need the evidence and ideas that explain the arts' contribution. This field guide is a modest contribution to this effort.

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Philadelphia

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## How the arts work: theories of action

Over the past decade, members of the creative sector have been increasingly interested in developing methods to document their social and economic impacts. Much of this effort has been directed at the issue of economic impact. The Americans for the Arts, for example, has led the way in developing methods of calculating the economic impact of the arts in major American metropolitan areas and even suggested that individual organizations are able to identify their economic impact.

While questions about estimating the economic impact of the arts are still unsettled, the attention given the issue has far exceeded that devoted to measuring the arts' civic or social impact. In a 2009 monograph, *Civic Engagement and the Arts: Issues of Conceptualization and Measurement*, Stern and Seifert have outlined an approach to this topic and identified a set of challenges.

The initial challenge in developing methods for documenting culture's civic engagement impact is specifying how that influence might occur. Stern and Seifert outline three basic "theories of action" that might connect culture and civic engagement.

### Didactic: the power of persuasion

*Didactic* approaches focus on the arts' capacity for persuasion. The capacity of the visual and performing arts to dramatize or shock has been used by many artists and social movements as a means of bringing public attention to particular conditions. Historically, social reformers have believed that the arts could serve a broader civic purpose, for example, in the use of civic pageants to forge unity out of the diverse peoples in early 20th century American cities. Of course, the extensive use of propaganda as a means of mass persuasion provides a cautionary tale to those interested in a didactic use of culture. Apparently culture's power to persuade is as strong for lies as it is for truths.

### Discursive: enhancing the public sphere

Where the didactic approach to culture and civic engagement focuses on specific outcomes, a second approach—*discursive*—focuses on the process of

#### A didactic example

An artist is involved in designing puppets as part of a political demonstration. Whatever the practical problems involved, the who and what in this case are straightforward. People observing the demonstration are the "audience" for the art, and its effectiveness would be measured by the extent to which the event changes people's attitudes or behavior.

While the who and what of this example are simple, actually collecting data is more challenging. Because there won't be a list of who attended the demonstration, one needs research methods that collect data at the same time of the event. The simplest approach to this is a **sign-up sheet** that we discuss later in the guide.

#### A discursive example

A media cooperative works with community groups to produce short videos that explore issues of concern to local residents. It then schedules a set of public screenings followed by group discussions of the issues. On some occasions, local political leaders are invited to sit in on the discussions.

The immediate impact of this expansion of the public sphere would be on those attending the events. However, its true impact might be how it changed the wider public discourse of the issue. Did it become more prominent in the local press? Did local officials respond to the discussion with actions as well as words?

deliberation. Deliberative democracy and the public sphere have been important topics within the civic engagement literature. The arts and creativity can enter this debate in two ways. First, one could use the arts to dramatize a particular approach to a problem. This approach is similar to the didactic use of the arts, but in this case one does so as part of a dialogue rather than as a single message. Second, the arts can play a role in creating the space within which public discussion can take place. In this case, creativity's capacity for place-making could play an important role.

## Ecological: contributing to the social environment

Finally, an ecological approach to culture and civic engagement focuses on how involvement in the arts can have spillover effects that influence civic outcomes. For example, motivating people to attend a workshop or performance can have the effect of getting people out of their homes, which may lead to their involvement in other aspects of community life. Indeed, there is a growing body of evidence that cultural engagement generates a range of important spillover effects from improved public health to boosted property values.

The theories of action are not necessarily mutually exclusive. An artist who embraces a didactic approach to her art, for example, might fail to persuade her audience of her position but still provide a space in which the issue gets discussed and debated. In fact, the research suggests that virtually all cultural engagement, whatever its theory of action, produces spillover effects that influence the environment.

### An ecological example

Your cultural organization is located in a neighborhood that is on the upswing. Since you moved to the area, a number of other cultural organizations and commercial firms have moved in. The street scene is much livelier than it used to be. More artists are living and working in the neighborhood. Your phone is ringing a lot more than it used to.

This is all good news! How do you document your contribution (and those of others) to community vitality? Your organization can undertake a variety of data gathering by tracking participants, artists, and organizational contacts.

However, you're going to need help. Your data gathering will be greatly enhanced if you aren't doing it alone but are coordinating your efforts with those of other relevant organizations. The ecological approach requires a more comprehensive approach to data collection and analysis.

## Different theories, different methods

If one is concerned with documenting the influence of cultural engagement, these theories of action pose different issues with respect to defining the population that one expects to influence and the nature of that influence. Both didactic and discursive theories are quite specific in defining the scope of study, while ecological theories pose much greater challenges.

An ecological approach, which explores the unintended consequences of the arts and culture, requires more wide-reaching methods of measurement and documentation. Because we are dealing with spillover effects, the people influenced go beyond those actually involved in a particular event. For example, one study of Philadelphia found that areas of the city with high levels of cultural participation tended to have lower levels of truancy. In this case, we did not think low truancy was a direct effect of attending cultural events. Rather, we hypothesized that it was an indirect effect of the arts'

contribution to a higher level of community engagement in the lives of young people, a condition that some scholars have defined as “collective efficacy.”

## Measuring the Civic Impact of the Arts: A Multi-level Strategy

Given the difficulty in identifying the exact paths that connect cultural engagement and its possible social or civic impact, SIAP recommends a multi-level approach to its measurement. Individual organizations are unlikely to be able either to track their particular ecological impacts or to differentiate their impact from that of other cultural providers in the area. Yet, it is only if we gain a better gauge of organizational participation that we can see how it fits into the broader picture. Therefore, we recommended a three-level approach:

- *Organizational data gathering.* Individual organizations can contribute to understanding the relationship of culture and civic engagement in two ways. First, they can develop systems for tracking their own level of engagement. This includes gathering information on individual participants (including audience, members, volunteers, students, and artists) in their programs; and on other organizations (arts and non-arts) with which the organization is connected, what we call institutional networks. Second, they can develop ways of using qualitative research to document the broader connection of culture and engagement.
- *Regional database development.* Once a system is in place to gather participant, artist, and institutional network data, a regional entity (a funder, government agency, or arts council) can develop a means of integrating these data into a unified database. This provides the opportunity to examine the aggregate impact of cultural engagement on region-wide measures of civic engagement. In addition, through the use of a geographic information system (GIS), this approach allows policymakers to link data on cultural engagement to other socio-economic and neighborhood data.
- *Initiative level approaches.* As a middle ground between individual organizations and a regional approach, a grant-making or policy initiative provides the opportunity to test the relative effectiveness of particular types of interventions. For example, would a program that provides relatively low intervention but serves many youths be more or less effective at influencing levels of youth violence than an approach that provides more services to fewer youths. (Because it is difficult to generalize about initiative-level assessment, we haven't included it in this field guide.)

We begin by examining how data-gathering could be improved at the organizational level. Without reliable data on cultural participants, artists, and institutional networks, it will be difficult to demonstrate any significant relationships between culture and civic engagement at the regional level.

# Practitioner-level data gathering

As we noted earlier, documenting the civic engagement impact of the arts requires a multi-level approach. Data gathering by practitioners is the essential building block to development of a region’s capacity for measurement of the civic and social impact of the arts. In this section, we outline the types of data that individual organizations could begin to collect and analyze.

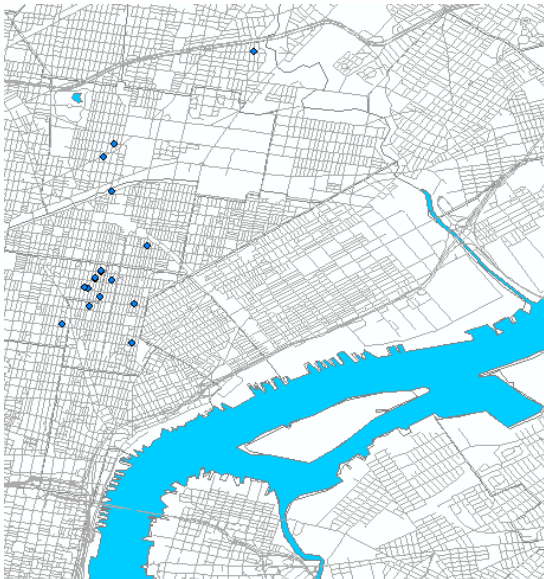
## Participant data

The most basic type of data needed to document culture’s civic impact is detailed information on who is participating in cultural events. Clearly, the definition of participants is quite elastic. It ranges from season subscribers of major cultural institutions to informal gatherings of musicians or artists. Inevitably, any method for documenting this range of participation will be skewed toward the more established institutions.

Much of these data already exist but are scattered and only partially analyzed. Here the challenge is to come up with a system for assembling the data in one place and applying

simple analytic tools. Take the example of a simple registration list from summer arts classes. Data like these are collected for administrative purposes and entered into a database by most programs.

Last Name	First Name	ADDRESS1	CITY	STATE	ZIPCODE
A	D	XXXX N 5th St	Philadelphia	PA	19133
A	J	XXXX N 3rd St	Philadelphia	PA	19133
C	J	XXXX N 5th St	Philadelphia	PA	19133
C	C	XXXX N Lawrence St	Philadelphia	PA	19133
C	B	XXXX Leithgow St	Philadelphia	PA	19133
D	G	XXXX Gransback St	Philadelphia	PA	19120
D	L	XXXX Gransback St	Philadelphia	PA	19120
D	L	XXXX N Lawrence St	Philadelphia	PA	19133
F	F	XXXX N Marshall St	Philadelphia	PA	19140
F	G	XXXX Brookview Rd.	Philadelphia	PA	19154
G	J	XXXX N Lawrence St	Philadelphia	PA	19133
G	A	XXXX N 3rd st	Philadelphia	PA	19133

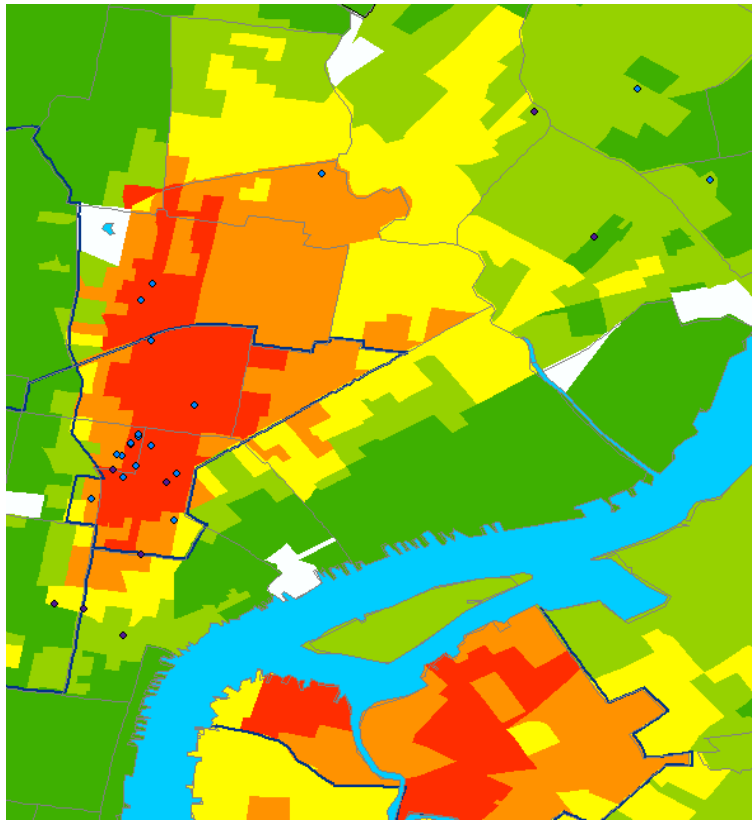


However, through a geographic information system (GIS), these data can be converted into a map of participation.

From a program perspective, a participation map allows administrators to identify where their participants live and perhaps places where they might expect to draw participants. The map can be enhanced by inclusion of data on the social context. For example, a Puerto Rican arts organization might be interested to compare its program participation with the concentrations of Hispanics within the region, as shown below.

This map, for example, might suggest that the organization is successfully drawing participants from its immediate neighborhood, but could do some work on the other side of the river where there is a significant concentration of Latinos who are not involved in its program.

For the most part, established organizations already collect these types of data. For those organizations, what is needed is an incentive to contribute its data to a broader regional effort. In Philadelphia, this task has been accomplished through the cultural alliance's *cultural list cooperative* in which more than one hundred organizations contribute data that are then analyzed and shared among the members.



This leaves the challenge of groups who do not collect participant data, for which a carrot and stick approach makes sense. The carrot would be the provision of technical assistance in collecting and analyzing the data. The stick would be requiring groups that receive funding to submit program participant database files as part of their grant reports.

We do not wish to minimize the challenges of data gathering, but to make the point again, most of the data needed to conduct these types of analysis are already being collected. What is needed is a regional agency willing to give priority to making better use of these existing data.

## Sign-in

In many situations, participants in cultural programs are not tracked administratively. They don't register for a class or buy a ticket. Same-day ticket purchases, free events, festivals, or demonstrations all present situations where the best way to collect data is simply by taking sign-in at the event.

We recommend sign-in systems over the venerable *audience survey* that organizations often hand out at performances. From a statistical standpoint, a data source that includes a broader cross-section of your participants is superior to one that is filled out by a small subgroup. In practical terms, this means exerting effort to get a little data from a lot of people is better than a lot of data from a few people. This simply means that having a couple of volunteers with clipboards can greatly increase the efficacy of your participant data tracking effort.



NAME	ADDRESS/CITY/STATE/ZIP CODE	E-MAIL	HOW DID YOU LEARN OF THIS EVENT? •NEWSPAPER •INVITATION •WORD OF MOUTH •E-MAIL• OTHER
Alison + Ciraham			email
SARY [redacted]	[redacted] Whitaker ave.	(215) 457- [redacted]	[redacted] 614@AOL.c
Maria Helena [redacted]	[redacted] Esomas rd MT Laurel NJ 08054	[redacted] a5@yahoo.com.	8569 [redacted]
Maria [redacted]	[redacted] E. Cleve Ave SA	215 (423) [redacted]	
[redacted]	[redacted] n Meade rd	[redacted] @nbsonline.org	
Yolanda [redacted]	[redacted] N. Rose St	[redacted] @ad.com friend	
Darlene [redacted]	[redacted] Weibel st	[redacted] @yahoo.com friend	

The sign-in sheet can be quite simple. For organizational purposes—e.g., adding to one’s mailing list—you may want people’s names, but in some situations, you might want to leave this off (see “Issues of confidentiality” below). Street address and zip code are the most important information for the broader data analysis. Adding a question or two (e.g., how did you hear about the event) can make it more useful for organizational purposes.

We have found that the biggest challenge to using sign-in sheets is developing a routine. Once an organization adds sign-in to its list of things to do for each event, it’s relatively easy to do the work. Here again, developing an organizational culture in which data matter is probably the best way to make this a regular part of your activities.

### Institutional networks

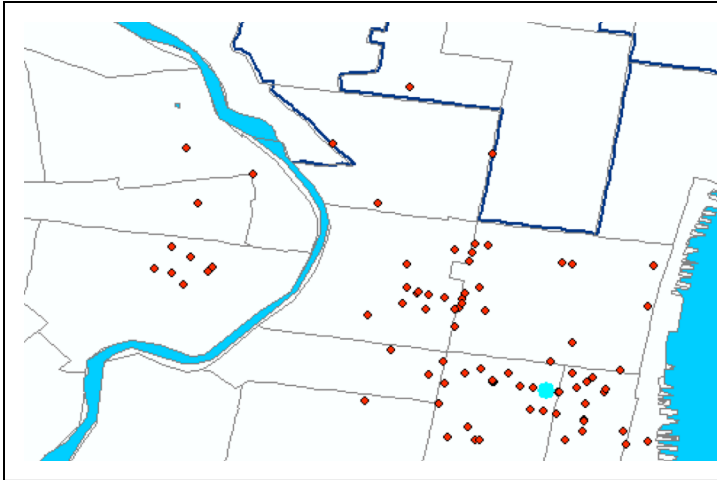
The creative sector includes a large number of artist-driven and informal cultural groups. Because these groups do not employ many staff members or possess complex organizations, their ability to succeed is often determined by the networks they develop to work with other members of the community. This strategy is particularly pertinent for measuring their civic impact. Therefore, developing a means of tracking the institutional networks of cultural agents is critical to understanding the role of culture in civic engagement in the region.

This conclusion must be tempered, however, by the difficulty of the task. Like Monsieur Jourdan in Moliere’s play, who was shocked to discover that he had been speaking prose his entire life, cultural providers typically do not see “building institutional networks” as a distinct activity, but simply as how they operate. As a result, in order to document these networks, organizations need a system for tracking the ongoing flow of contacts they make day-in and day-out. As a result, the data gathering issues involved in documenting institutional networks are challenging.

Below we give an example of the types of data that would be included in an institutional network database. The “unit of analysis” for a network file is a *link* between two organizations. In this example, we examine links between a community arts program in Philadelphia and a variety of other organizations. Three types of data are critical to the file. First, we need to know the geography of the link. This begins with the address of the institutional contact, which is then geo-coded. This allows us to ask questions about the distance between the two “nodes” of the network, whether they are located in the same neighborhood, and whether the social characteristics of the neighborhoods are similar. Second, we need information on the nature of the other institution. In this case, we’ve displayed only one type of data—its sector—but it would also be possible to include data on its size, mission, population served, etc.

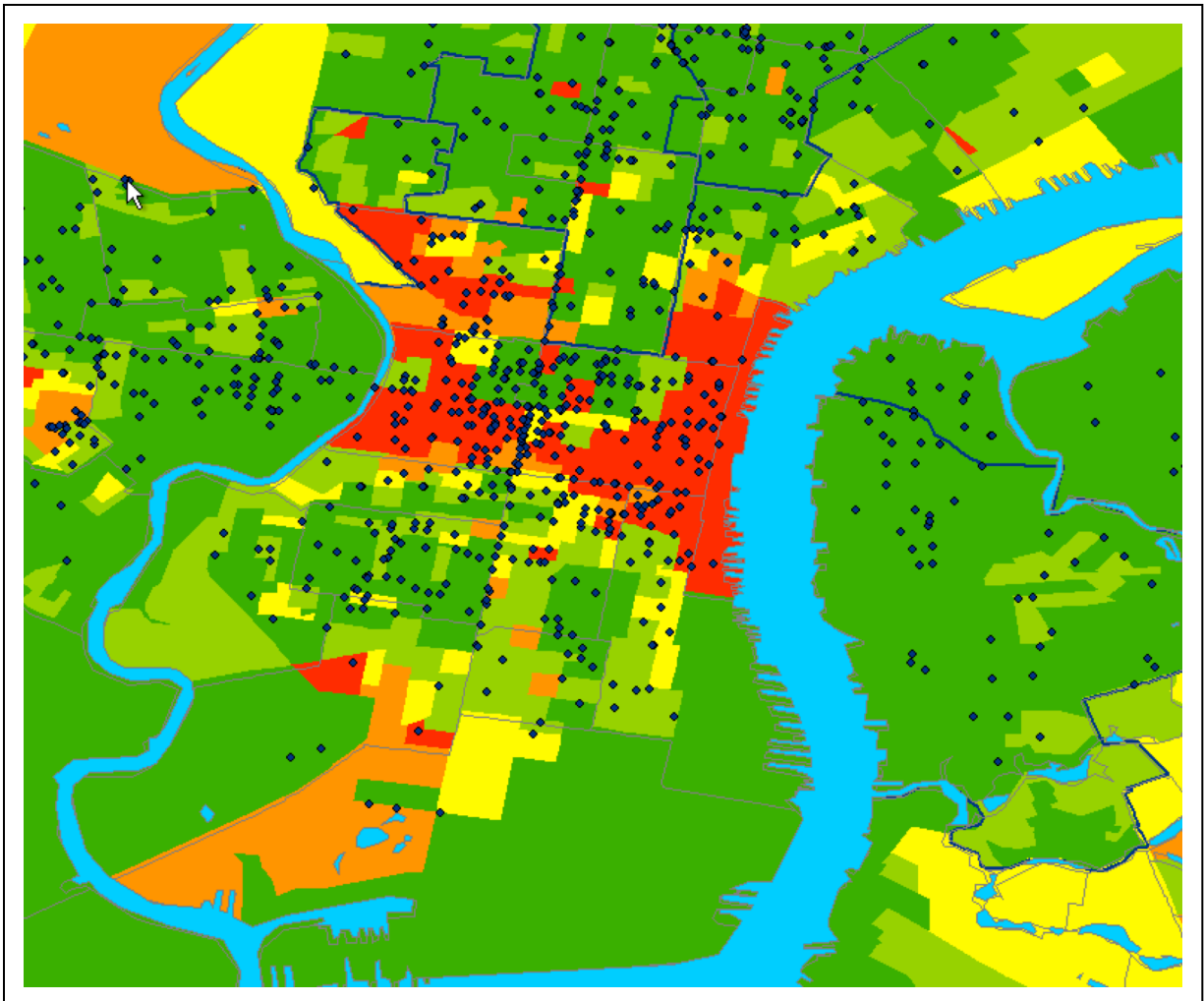
Third, we need information on the nature of the relationship. In this particular case, we used a scale that ranged from *resource*—a group that is known but not actively engaged—to *colleague*—denoting a very close, long-term relationship, with a number of intermediate categories including *facilitator*, *collaborator*, or *partner*. Finally, we need to know *whose* relationship it is. Every institutional relationship is also a personal relationship between two or more individuals. Sometimes the individual is an executive director, but it might be a program staff person, a volunteer, or a board member.

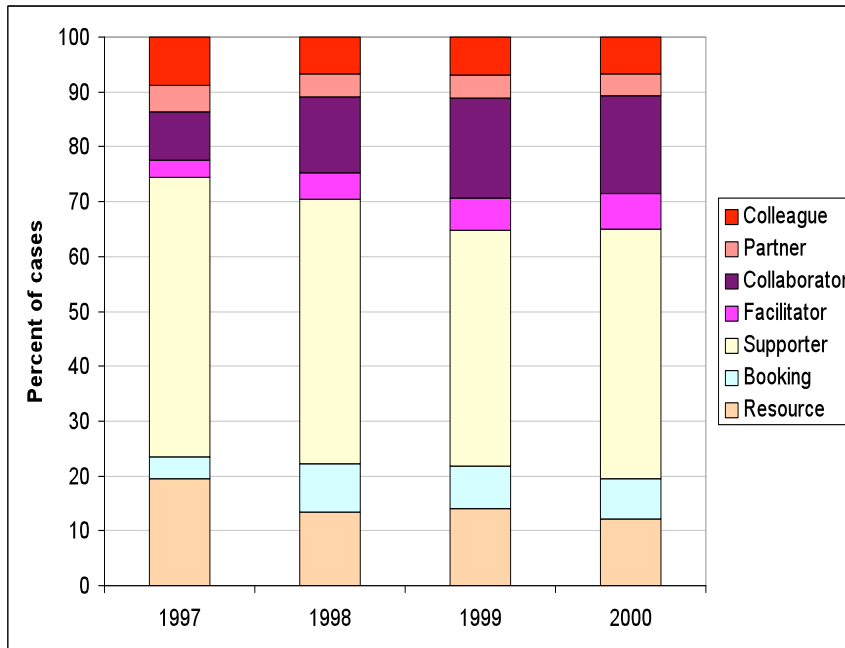
<i>org1name</i>	<i>org2type</i>	<i>org2name</i>	<i>cmbcod2a</i>
Fxxxxxx	Special interest	AIDS Fund (Uniting People from All Walks of Life)	New collaborator
Fxxxxxx	Cultural	American Composers Forum	New colleague
Fxxxxxx	Commercial	American Pie	New collaborator
Fxxxxxx	Cultural	American Swedish Historical & Cultural Museum	New colleague
Fxxxxxx	Religious	Arch St United Methodist Church	Collaborator
Fxxxxxx	Cultural	Arts & Business Council of Greater Phila (BVA)	New colleague
Fxxxxxx	Ethnic	Asian Americans United	Other, unclassified
Fxxxxxx	Cultural	Asian Arts Initiative	New colleague
Fxxxxxx	Youth	B & J Child Care Center	New booking
Fxxxxxx	Commercial	Bel Arbor Tree Farm	New colleague
Fxxxxxx	Neighborhood	Bella Vista Civic Association	New colleague
Fxxxxxx	Neighborhood	Bella Vista Town Watch Inc	Resource
Fxxxxxx	Cultural	Cambodian Court Dance Troupe	New colleague
Fxxxxxx	Government	City of Philadelphia, Office of Arts and Culture, Art Commission	Colleague



These data have clear utility for the organization itself. Not only can leaders see how their network changes over time, but because different staff may know about different elements of the network, the network database allows for more effective intra-organizational information sharing as well.

As with the participant data, one can aggregate institutional network data for a number of organizations to identify whether particular neighborhoods have dense or sparse institutional ties within communities or across the region. These data could also be linked to the other cultural and social indicators. For example, the following map includes information on the average income of Philadelphia's block groups.





In addition to mapping institutional networks, one can analyze them statistically. For example, for a Philadelphia grant-making initiative, SIAP tracked organizations' institutional networks across three years. As the chart shows, over time the proportion of more passive links (resource, booking, supporter)

declined while the number of more active connections (colleague, partner, collaborator, and facilitator) expanded.

## Telling stories

In the previous section, we outlined several ways that systems for gathering quantitative data could improve an organization's ability to document civic impact. In this section, we summarize several qualitative data gathering strategies to provide a deeper understanding of the processes involved in civic engagement.

Cultural organizations across the U.S. have developed models that use ethnographic methods to engage communities directly with artists and creative processes. Of particular promise are the practices of embedding folklorists, humanities scholars, oral historians, or cultural workers in organizations, on projects, or in community settings.

To date the use of ethnography by arts organizations has been largely for documentation—both as creative process and product—of vulnerable cultures, communities, and places and often with a view toward broader goals of political voice or social inclusion. Such models, however, are applicable to evaluation purposes. They suggest the compatibility of ethnographic practices to community arts settings; the feasibility of technical assistance collaborations as a way to acquire field method expertise; and the potential use of documentation to describe and assess the contribution of arts programs to achieving civic or social goals.

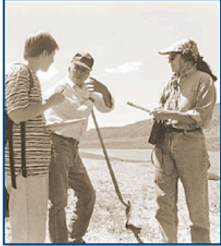
In *Animating Democracy's* earlier work, for example, an experiment called "Critical Perspectives" tested the use of participant observation to document the processes and outcomes of arts-based civic dialogue. In each of three projects, the director and three unaffiliated people were invited to be participant-observers and write about the work. To varying degrees humanities scholars, ethnographers, sociologists, journalists, critics, and community residents were embedded in this set of arts-based civic dialogue

projects. The goal was to generate multiple writings from different perspectives and vantage points that would provide a comparative view of the efficacy of the projects as well as raw documentation of the experiences.

Although qualitative methods alone cannot demonstrate the effectiveness of culture as a civic engagement strategy, the thorough documentation of the “magic” created by the arts as they occur is the essential starting point for any effort at making a case for their importance.

The strategy used for your qualitative data gathering is shaped by your **theory of action**. If your primary interest is your program’s influence on people who attend a performance or event, your observations can focus simply on that event. However, if your influence is more ecological, you might want to collaborate with other organizations to examine and compare social processes throughout your neighborhood.

### FOLKLIFE AND FIELDWORK: A Layman's Introduction to Field Techniques



When the first edition of *Folklife and Fieldwork* was published in 1979 there were only a handful of professional state folklorists. Today nearly every state has a program for documenting and presenting its own folk cultural heritage. Folklife fieldwork has gone beyond its early missions of preservation and scholarship to serve new uses, such as providing information to economists, environmentalists, and community planners. New technologies for preserving and presenting traditional cultural expression have been developed. A new generation of professionally trained folklorists have emerged from university programs, and many now work in state and local organizations to sponsor concerts, website presentations, exhibits, and other cultural heritage programs.

But regardless of the number of folklorists available for professional projects or the sophistication of the technology, there is still a need for

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Collaboration with a regional folk life or local ethnography center is one way for cultural organizations to build capacity to undertake qualitative evaluation. To learn more about ethnographic concepts and tools for documentation, as well as folklife services and resources in their state, practitioners can consult the Web site of the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress. A downloadable introductory guide is called *Folklife and Fieldwork: A Layman's Introduction to Field Techniques*.

Qualitative research provides one opportunity to pursue relationships with educational institutions. A number of cultural organizations have collaborated with sociologists or anthropologists on student projects. While student workers often present their own challenges, they provide a way for your organization to try out research on performances or one’s community.

## Issues of confidentiality

Whenever you collect or share information on individuals, you must consider the possible uses to which the information might be used. This is particularly important if some of your participants are part of a vulnerable population, like children.

The issue of confidentiality often comes up at the point at which information is collected. For example, parents may have second thoughts about providing their children’s exact address. This issue can be addressed simply by deleting names or by asking for an

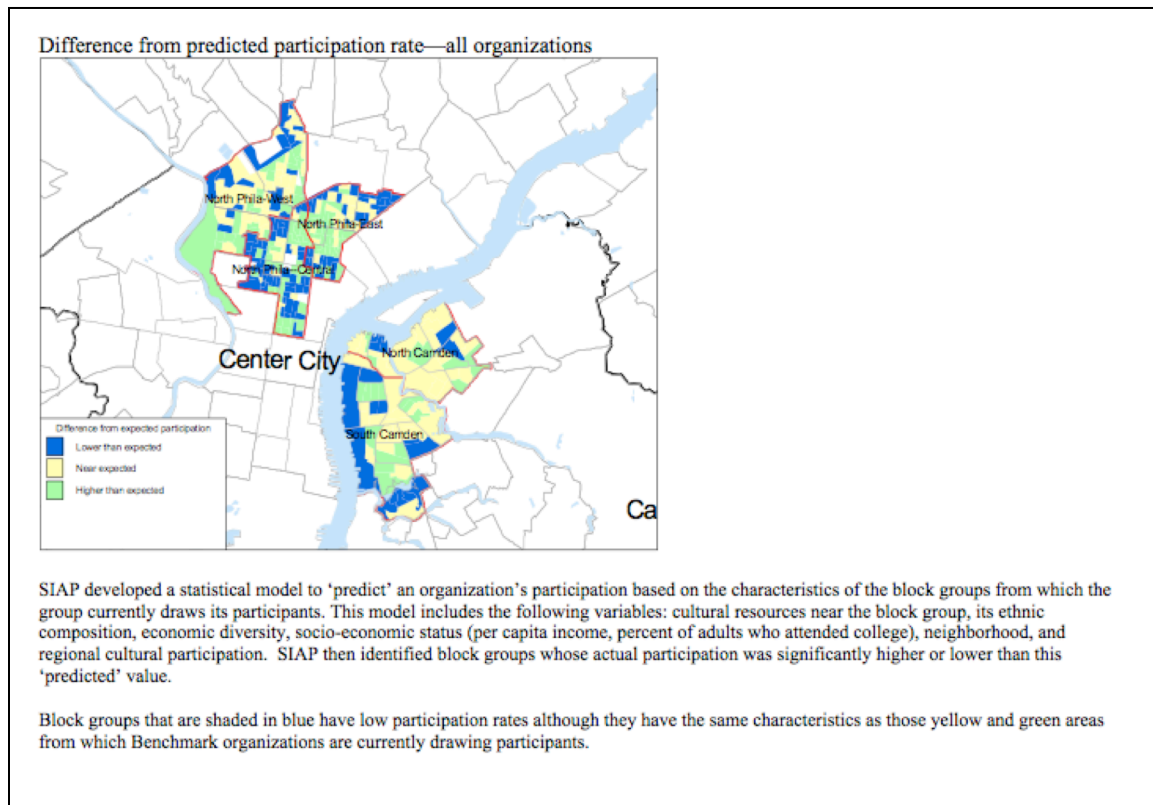
intersection (e.g., “4th Street and Broadway”) and zip code instead of an exact address. Some organizations have chosen to ask only for zip code, but we have found that this seriously undermines the usefulness of the analysis.

Confidentiality is also an issue in the dissemination of data. Generally speaking, the first step in the analysis of these data is to aggregate them at the block group level. (We discuss this in the next section.) At this point, all individual information is eliminated from the analysis. Still, establishing safeguards to assure that individual information is only used for proper purposes needs to be part of any plan.

## Analyzing program performance

The data collected at the program level can be used as part of a regional analysis of civic engagement, but it also has immediate value to the organization. With relatively little work, the data can be converted into maps and statistical analyses.

For example, in an earlier project, SIAP used data from a number of organizations to construct a statistical model of participation for the metropolitan area. It then used this model to examine each individual organization’s participation profile. This allowed us to identify neighborhoods where the organization’s performance was lower than one would predict using the model. Several organizations were able to use these data to target their outreach efforts.

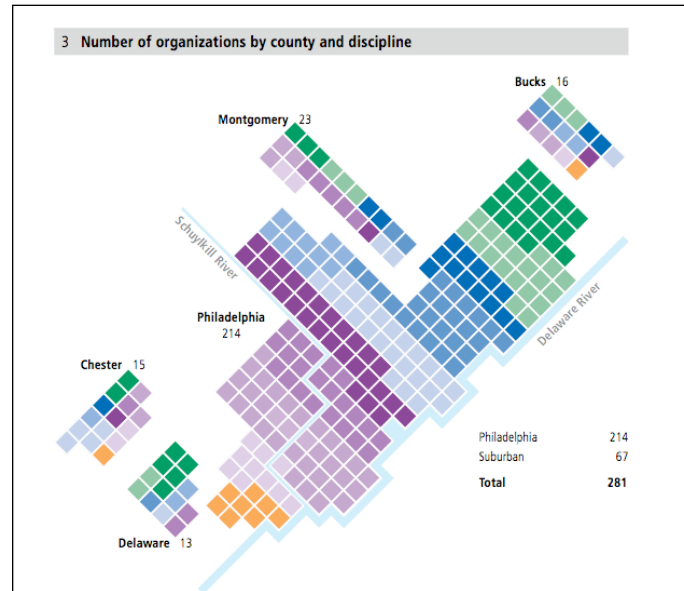


## Regional level approaches

### Inventory of nonprofit and commercial cultural providers

The starting point for a regional effort at documenting culture's civic impact should be an inventory of nonprofit and commercial cultural providers in the area. This may sound simpler than it is. While there is a group of nonprofit cultural organizations that are well known to those involved in the arts, this is often only the tip of the iceberg.

Take the example SIAP knows the best: Philadelphia. A number of funders in the metropolitan area have invested in a system to track cultural organizations. In their latest report, they included 281 organizations. Yet, this constitutes only a small fraction of the over 1,900 nonprofit cultural organizations that the National Center for Charitable Statistics identified in the metropolitan area. Furthermore, in SIAP's last inventory of nonprofit cultural providers in 2004, we estimated that at least thirty or forty percent of these providers were not chartered 501(c)3's but were part of the *informal* cultural sector. In addition, from business databases, we've been able to identify upwards of four thousand commercial cultural firms in the metropolitan area.



The bottom line is that constructing a full inventory of cultural organizations requires a multi-method approach that begins with government sources and then supplements them with business databases, funders' grant applications, and a scan of local media (like the "weeklies" that cover the arts in many areas).

### Artists and informal culture

Given the importance of individual artists to the creative sector and the increased recognition of the role of informal cultural activities, getting a better sense of the region's artists and their economic and social realities is critical. In addition, artists present a key connection to informal cultural activities that are otherwise quite difficult to document.

Joan Jeffri's study of jazz musicians conducted for the NEA in 2003 provides a model for documenting the role of artists in cultural and civic engagement. Jeffri's study pioneered the use of "respondent driven sampling," a chain referral sampling strategy that uses social networks to access a representative sample of artists.

The survey instrument should be designed cooperatively with a set of stakeholders. An artist survey, as shown in the sample below, can provide a better understanding of the economic and social realities of artistic creation.

**PART A. PROFILE OF THE ARTIST**

First, I would like to ask you a few questions about yourself as an artist.

A1. How long have you considered yourself an artist? \_\_\_\_\_

A2. In what MEDIA do you work? \_\_\_\_\_

A3. Do you work and live in the same place? ~~or~~ Do you have a separate studio or work space?

1—[ ] Work and live in the same place      2—[ ] Separate studio or work space

A3a. *If separate, what is the address/location of your studio?* \_\_\_\_\_

A4. As an artist, do you work alone, with a group or collective, or with a number of groups? (*last 12 months*)

1—[ ] Alone      2—[ ] With one group      3—[ ] With more than one group      4—[ ] Alone & groups

A4a. *If one or more groups, what is/are the name(s) of the group(s)?*

\_\_\_\_\_

A5. Why did you decide to become an artist?

\_\_\_\_\_

A6. Have your goals (or motivations) changed since you began your career?

\_\_\_\_\_

A7. Do you see yourself as part of a specific community of artists? [ ] NO [ ] YES

A7a. *If yes, how would you describe that community(ies)?*

\_\_\_\_\_

A8. Does your work resonate with particular groups or populations? [ ] NO [ ] YES

A8a. *If yes, please specify.* \_\_\_\_\_

A9. How would you describe your reputation as an artist?

\_\_\_\_\_

A10. How many artists do you know by name in metropolitan Philadelphia who also know you? \_\_\_\_\_  
(*If difficulty, "a general estimate of artists of any discipline" ... "who you know personally or professionally" ...*)

A11. Of these artists you know by name in metropolitan Philadelphia, how many either work or live in North Philadelphia or Camden? \_\_\_\_\_

*[For this study, North Philadelphia excludes Northern Liberties-Eishtown and Fairmount and includes neighborhoods mostly north of Girard Ave. See map and list of eligible neighborhoods.]*

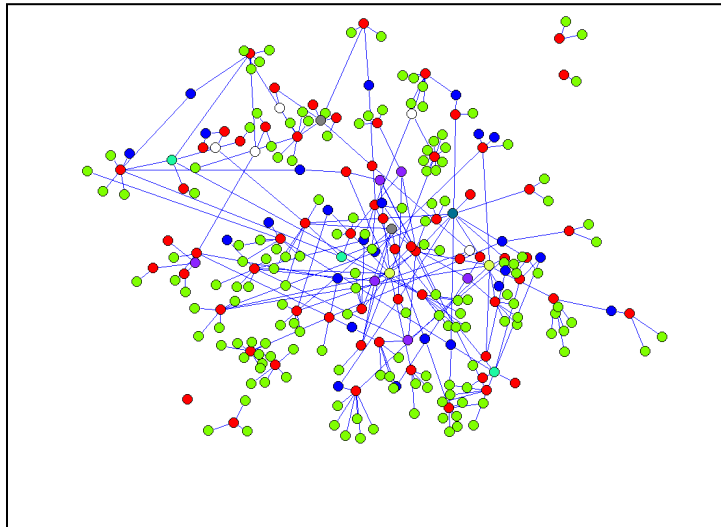
In any case, the questionnaire should request information on the range of professional projects and positions that respondents undertook in the previous year. In previous studies, artists' surveys have turned up significant numbers of "informal" cultural venues and groups that otherwise are below the radar of most cultural grant-making and research. Taken together, informal arts sites can complement the conventional data on nonprofit and commercial cultural providers. These data also provide a critical understanding of the link between artists and the other community institutions with which they collaborate.



The adjacent network diagram, for example, shows a group of approximately 60 artists and the range of organizations with which they collaborate.

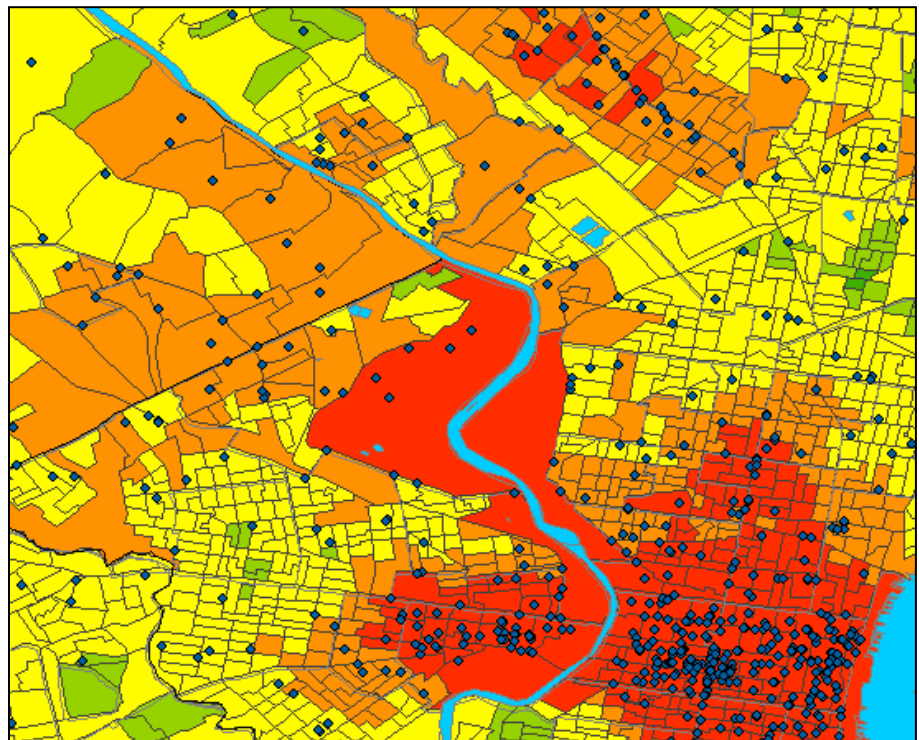
Again, artists' project and position data serve two purposes. First, they document how artists are reaching out and influencing other social sectors. Second, they provide a baseline that can

be used to assess change over time and the effectiveness of efforts to expand culture's civic impact.



## Geographic information systems (GIS)

A geographic information system provides a means of bringing together the disparate elements of the cultural engagement database. Essentially, GIS allows individual organizations to identify the precise location of all of the elements the database and examine their relationship to one another and to other community indicators. In SIAP's Philadelphia database, we have used the census block group (a census geography of approximately six city blocks) as our common



unit of analysis. Each data base element begins as a set of points on a map (see earlier figures) but is then aggregated to the block group. For example, in the above figure, the points represent the location of nonprofit cultural providers. We then count the number

of points within each block group (the smallest area outlined in black). Through this procedure, we are able to bring all data into a common database.

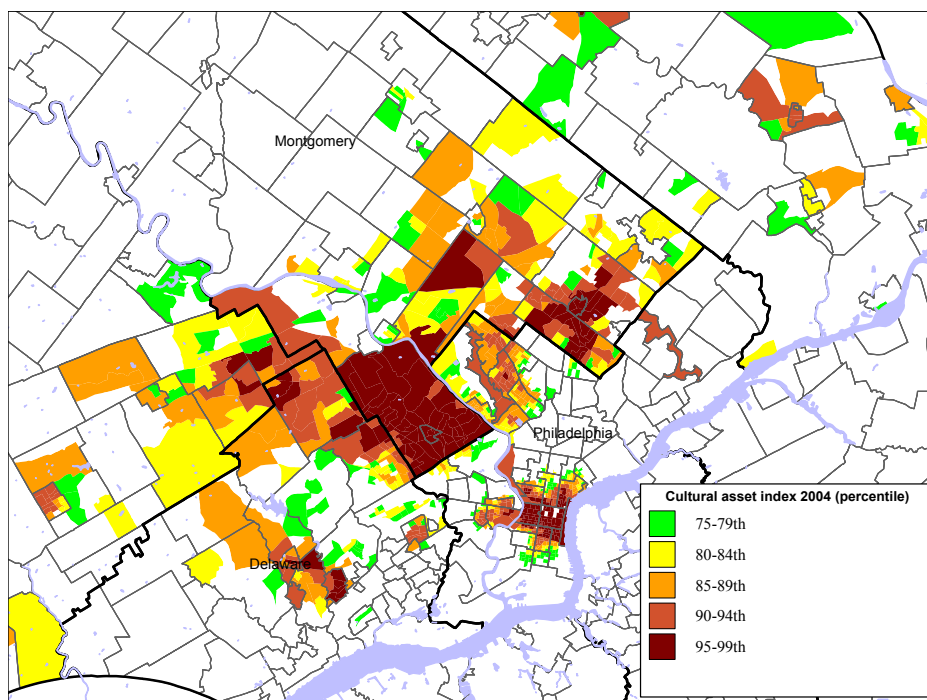
In this example, we have created a dataset in which each line is a block group. Attached to each line are data on the total population of the block group as well as counts of the total cultural participants per 1,000 residents, resident artists, commercial cultural firms, and nonprofit cultural organizations.

	blockgroup_id	total_population	regional_participaton_rate	resident_artists	commercial_cultural_Firms	nonprofit_cultural_organizations
1	420171001021	1089	78.61	0	12	1
2	420171001022	1682	134.82	2	20	2
3	420171001031	1173	58.90	1	15	2
4	420171001032	1371	55.83	0	17	3
5	420171001041	1595	71.53	1	11	1
6	420171001042	2846	19.27	0	6	0
7	420171001051	766	55.27	0	6	0
8	420171001052	1079	88.57	0	3	0
9	420171001053	1471	61.37	0	10	2
10	420171002011	863	50.70	0	3	1
11	420171002012	1337	46.63	0	6	1
12	420171002013	1109	82.15	0	6	2
13	420171002014	1013	41.04	1	10	1
14	420171002061	1506	80.73	1	16	1
15	420171002062	2085	102.88	0	10	0
16	420171002063	856	80.64	0	13	0
17	420171002071	1713	76.99	0	13	0
18	420171002072	2129	29.05	1	13	1

## The cultural assets index and “natural” cultural districts

Once data has been collected on a set of cultural indicators for the region, these can be combined into a **cultural assets index**. This index provides a single measure of the level of cultural activity in every part of a metropolitan area or region.

In Philadelphia, SIAP combined individual indexes of nonprofit cultural providers, commercial cultural firms, resident artists, and cultural participation to create a map of cultural engagement in the five counties of Southeastern Pennsylvania. The value of such a map is that it provides a single, clear representation of where cultural engagement is concentrated and where it is not. Furthermore, these indexes allow one to integrate cultural data into other data systems to track social indicators within and across regions.



Another important implication of the cultural asset index is that it allows us to identify parts of the region that have very high concentrations of these assets. There is evidence that these clusters—what we call “natural” cultural districts—have an important role in the cultural life of the metropolitan area. They are neighborhoods that attract participants not only from the local community but also from throughout the region. Just as a “blockbuster” exhibit at a downtown museum might attract visitors from other cities, these districts are destinations for people from other sections of the metropolitan area. “Natural” cultural districts also play a role in the creative process. The clustering of artists and other creative services appears to give impetus to innovation. Finally, these concentrations of cultural assets provide public spaces for a wider range of civic engagement, supporting what we’ve called the discursive dimension of the arts’ civic impact.

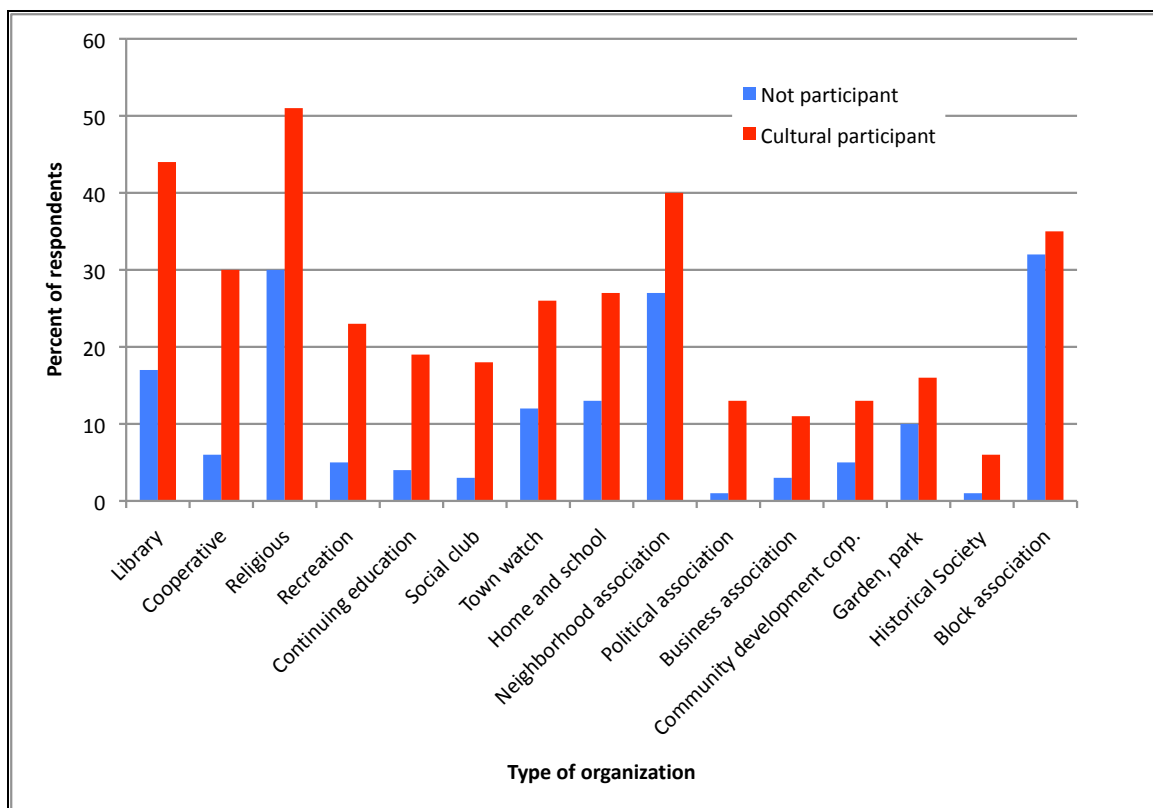
## Integrating cultural indicators with other measures of civic well-being

As this example suggests, GIS is a powerful tool both for representing different dimensions of civic engagement and the arts and for conducting analyses that link these data to other indicators of social conditions.

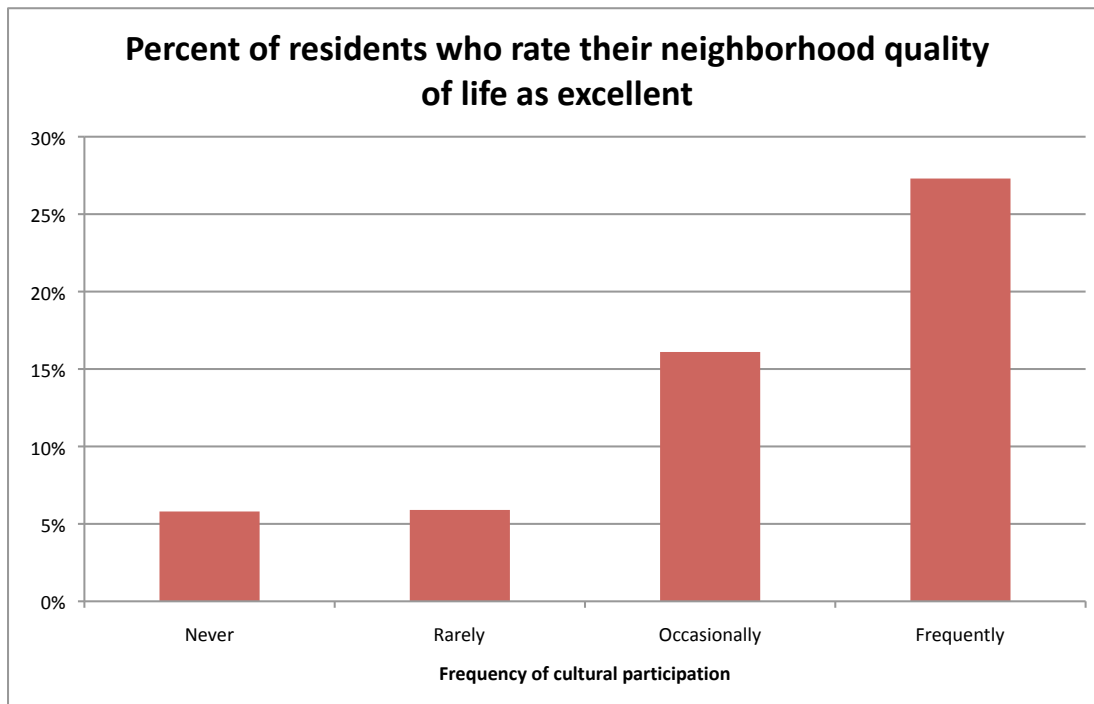
### What links the arts to other indicators of community engagement?

SIAP has identified two primary avenues through which cultural involvement is linked to other dimensions of civic engagement: cross-sector and cross-neighborhood participation.

Civic engagement becomes a strong force in a community when a significant part of the population exercises stewardship over many aspects of community life. In operational terms, SIAP calls this *cross-participation*, i.e., the frequency with which residents are involved in more than one aspect of community life.



Using a community participation survey of selected Philadelphia neighborhoods, SIAP was able to demonstrate that cultural engagement stimulates other forms of participation. For example, cultural participants were more three times as likely to be involved with the local library, recreation programs, and business or community development organizations than residents who did not participate.



Cultural participants who are active in other dimensions of community life are more likely to see themselves as part of a community that can address its challenges. This explains why those active in a community’s cultural life are much more likely than other residents to see their neighborhood’s quality of life as “excellent.”

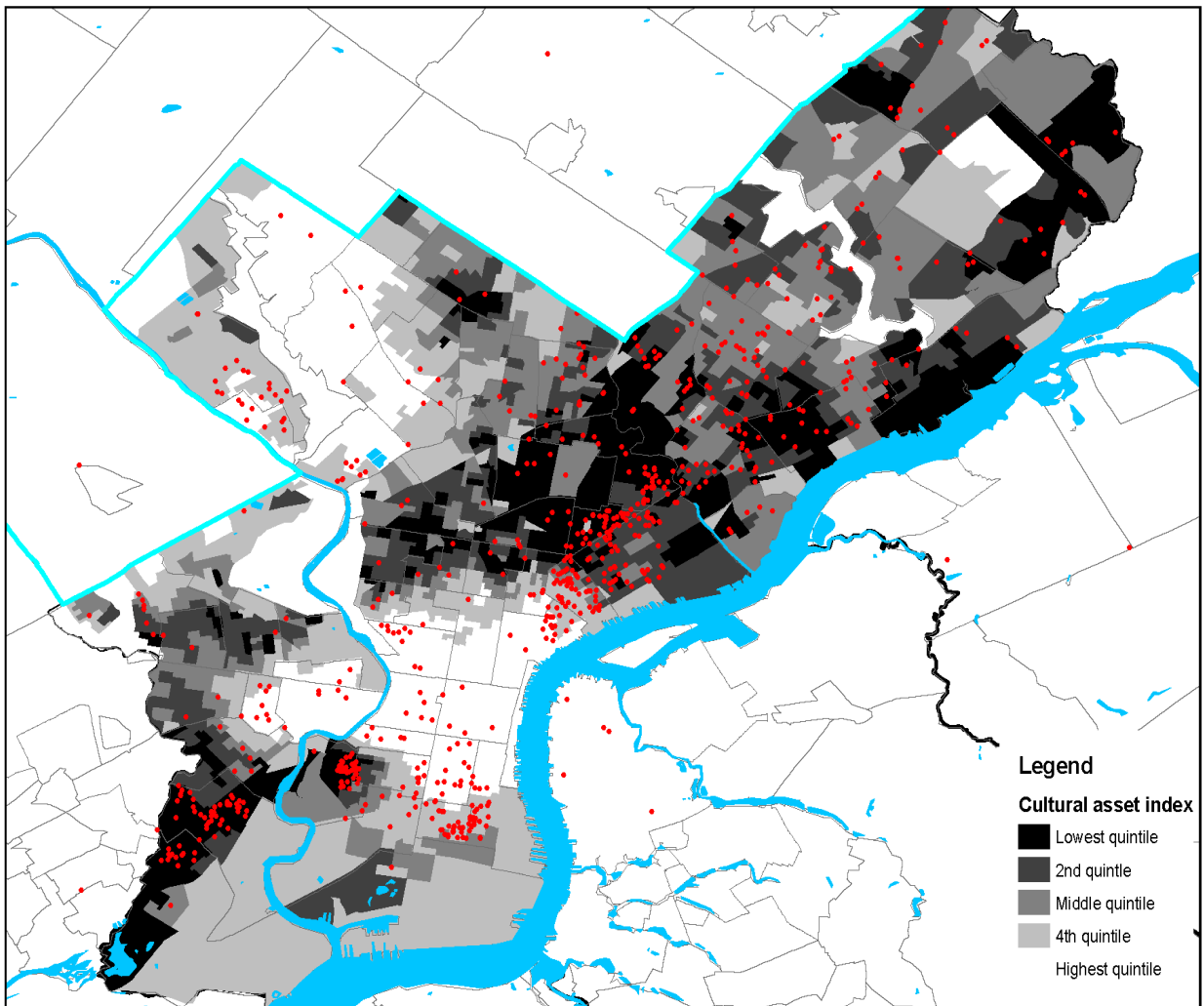
The second source of the arts’ civic power is the unique ability of cultural events to draw residents from across a region. SIAP calls this the *regional audience for community arts*. Even very small, community arts groups consistently draw 80 percent of their participants from outside the neighborhood in which they are located. In contrast to many forms of community engagement, “the arts have long arms” (as one local artist noted) that reach across boundaries of race, social class, and ethnicity.

## Measuring the arts’ civic impact

This ability to combine mobilizing local residents and linking disparate communities is the key to the arts’ civic impact. We are only beginning to develop data that link cultural assets to success in addressing a community’s challenges. Here we give three examples: reducing ethnic and racial harassment, reducing crime, and improving housing markets.

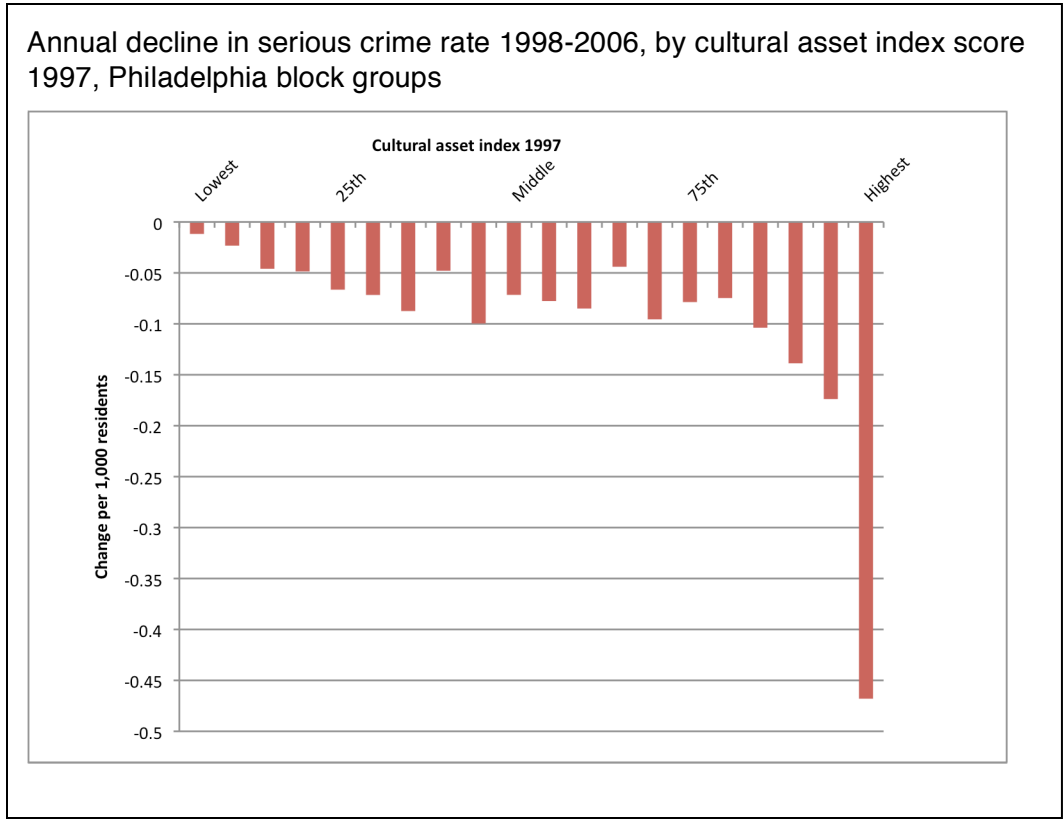
## Ethnic and racial harassment

SIAP was able to use our *cultural asset index* to examine the relationship of cultural engagement to incidents of racial and ethnic harassment filed with the Philadelphia Human Relations Commission in 2001. We discovered a clear relationship. Neighborhoods that were experiencing ethnic change—for example, because of the influx of new immigrants—reported harassment nearly three times more often than the average neighborhood. However, if the neighborhood had a high level of cultural engagement, its harassment rate was significantly lower than the citywide average.



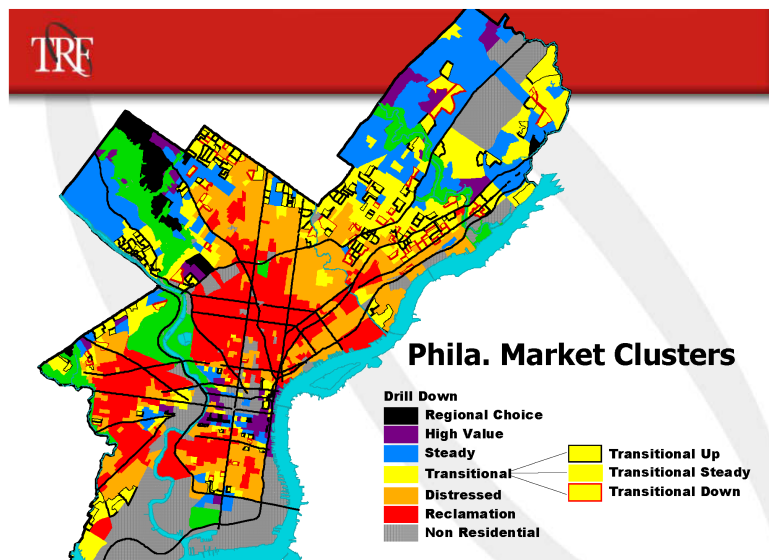
## Trends in serious crime rates

Between 1998 and 2006, Philadelphia's serious crime rate declined significantly. The vast majority of this decline took place in neighborhoods with high levels of cultural assets.

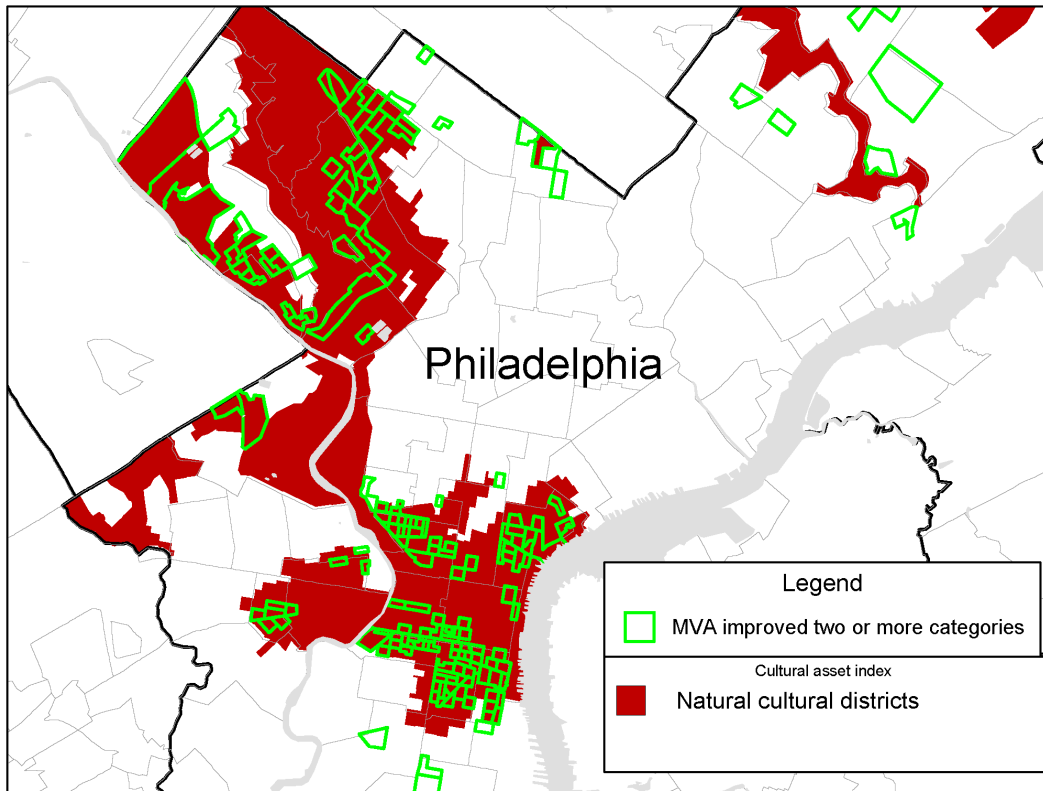


## Improving housing markets

Cultural assets have also been associated with the economic vitality of neighborhoods. SIAP collaborated with The Reinvestment Fund (TRF), a community development financial institution, to examine the relationship between cultural assets and neighborhood revitalization in Philadelphia. TRF conducted an independent survey of Philadelphia's housing markets in both



2001 and 2003. These surveys used an eight-category scale to classify housing markets, ranging from *regional choice* markets that were the most desirable to *distressed* and *reclamation*, the least desirable. Between 2001 and 2003, TRF discovered that housing markets across the city improved significantly. We used an improvement of two categories—for example, improving from *distressed* to *steady*—as an indicator of significant improvement in a neighborhood’s housing market.



As this map shows, the correlation between our “natural” cultural districts (neighborhoods with very high cultural asset index scores) and improved housing markets was dramatic. Nearly eighty percent of neighborhoods that improved during the two-year period were already a “natural” cultural district.

The connection between cultural assets and indicators of a neighborhood’s success in addressing its challenges is the ultimate test of the civic impact of the arts. While the evidence is striking, there is still much research to do. However, understanding these relationships will be possible only if practitioners, researchers, and policy-makers collaborate to collect, compile, and analyze evidence of ordinary residents’ involvement in the cultural and civic lives of their communities.



