

FUNDAMENTALS OF EVALUATING ARTS FOR CHANGE

Resources from Animating Democracy

Website & Frameworks

IMPACT website. Animating Democracy’s trusted online storehouse of Arts and Social Impact resources includes: tools and frameworks, case studies, reports and articles. Also includes **A Place to Start** to explore key terms and basic how-to information.

“Continuum of Impact.” 2017. Animating Democracy’s REVISED Continuum of Impact is a practical tool to help: articulate clear and realistic social/civic outcomes that can seem intangible; define indicators or evidence of change that can be observed and measured; and begin crafting an evaluation plan to collect and use data to substantiate and report outcomes. Includes writeable worksheets and case study.

“Aesthetic Perspectives: Attributes of Excellence in Arts for Change.” 2017. Animating Democracy’s NEW Framework aims to enhance understanding and evaluation of the aesthetic dimensions of Arts for Change work featuring 11 attributes of excellence defined by artists and ally evaluators and funders participating in Animating Democracy’s Evaluation Learning Lab.

“Evaluating Impact/Appreciating Evaluation.” By Pam Korza and Barbara Schaffer Bacon, 2012. Companion to the Continuum of Impact, this article shares two artists’ stories to convey how evaluation helped them know what difference their projects and aesthetic choices made and show how evaluation can be doable and even enjoyable.

Webinars & Blog Salons

“Evaluation in ACTION! Webinars.” A suite of practical webinars addresses common evaluation challenges that artists, arts organizations, and their community partners face, presenting specific stories, techniques or tools, along with conceptual frameworks to guide evaluation design.

“Social Impact & Evaluation Blog Salon.” Animating Democracy/Americans for the Arts, 2012. Features posts by: Kenneth Bailey (Design Studio for Social Intervention), John Bare (Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation), Rachel Grossman (dog & pony dc), Mark Rodriguez, (Changing Worlds), Shirley Sneve (Native American Public Telecommunications) among others.

“Aesthetics & Social Change Blog Salon.” Animating Democracy/Americans for the Arts, 2014. Features posts by: Denise Brown (Leeway Foundation), Carlton Turner (Alternate ROOTS), Deborah Fisher (A Blade of Grass), and Roberto Bedoya (then with Tucson Pima Arts Council)

“Excellence and Equity in Arts for Change Blog Salon.” Animating Democracy/Americans for the Arts, 2017. Seventeen bloggers respond to the framework, **Aesthetic Perspectives: Attributes of Excellence in Arts for Change.** Features posts by: Savannah Barrett (Art of the Rural), Ananya Chatterjea (Ananya Dance Theatre), Eric Booth (arts learning consultant), Anne Mulgrave (Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council), Maria De Leon (National Alliance of Latino Arts & Cultures), the artist collective Complex Movements, Lauren Slone (MAP Fund), Jeree Thomas (Campaign for Youth Justice) and more.

Evaluation in ACTION! Case Studies & Models

- “Documenting Civic Engagement: A Plan for the Tucson Pima Arts Council.”** By Mark J. Stern and Susan Seifert. 2009. As part of Animating Democracy’s Art & Civic Engagement Impact Initiative, TPAC wanted to know what concrete measures are reasonable to use to understand the civic engagement effects of its work as an agency. Stern and Susan Seifert of the Social Impact of the Arts Project proposed five strategies—improving organizational data gathering, telling stories, documenting artists and the informal cultural sector, identifying institutional networks, and using geographic information systems to integrate data for analysis—and an implementation plan that would allow for staging these elements.
- “Evaluation Plan: Art At Work.”** Terra Moto and the City of Portland, ME. By Chris Dwyer and Marty Pottenger. 2009. As part of Animating Democracy’s Arts & Civic Engagement Impact Initiative, evaluator Chris Dwyer worked with artist Marty Pottenger to specify outcomes, indicators, and data collection strategies for the Thin Blue Line police poetry/photography project which aimed to improve police morale and public perceptions of police.
- “Evaluation Plan: Starksboro (VT) Art & Soul Project.”** The Orton Family Foundation. By Chris Dwyer. 2009. As part of Animating Democracy’s Arts & Civic Engagement Impact Initiative, evaluator Chris Dwyer and the Orton Family Foundation specified outcomes, indicators, and data collection strategies for the Art & Soul project which hypothesized that engaging an artist to work with citizens and leaders would improve upon traditional approaches to planning and lead to better decisions about the future of Starksboro. See also: **Preliminary Menu of Possible Outcomes/Indicators/Measures”**
- “Making the Case for Skid Row Culture: Findings from a Collaborative Inquiry by the Los Angeles Poverty Department (LAPD) and the Urban Institute.”** By Maria Rosario Jackson, Ph.D. and John Malpede. 2009. As part of Animating Democracy’s Arts & Civic Engagement Impact Initiative, LAPD and researcher and urban planner Maria Rosario Jackson engaged in field research that provides a foundation to recurrently identify, monitor, and assess the presence, density and richness of the cultural infrastructure of the Skid Row neighborhood. Research substantiated potent effects on individuals and on social relations in Skid Row, and acknowledged LAPD’s contributions to influencing structures, systems, and even policy.
- “Moments of Transformation: Rha Goddess’s LOW and Understanding Social Change.”** By Suzanne Callahan. 2009. As part of Animating Democracy’s Arts & Civic Engagement Impact Initiative, evaluator Suzanne Callahan and artist Rha Goddess focused on the impact of the one-woman performance piece, LOW, and post-performance dialogue on audiences’ attitudes, beliefs and perceptions about mental health and illness. A formal evaluation conducted by City University of New York researchers, plus an alternative approach to audience evaluation developed in collaboration with Callahan allowed comparison of two research processes that asked similar questions in different ways.
- “Two-Way Mirror: Ethnography as a Way to Assess Civic Impact of Arts-based Engagement in Tucson, Arizona.”** By Maribel Alvarez. 2009. As part of Animating Democracy’s Arts & Civic Engagement Impact Initiative, Maribel Alvarez and the Tucson Pima Arts Council (TPAC) applied principles and practices of ethnography as qualitative evaluation strategies to better understand the social and civic effects of Finding Voices, a program that helps refugee and immigrant youth develop literacy and second language skills by researching, photographing, writing, and speaking out about critical social issues in their lives.

Articles & Reports

“CASES & POINTS: A Summary of the Funder Exchange on Evaluating Arts & Social Impact.” By Pam Korza and Barbara Schaffer Bacon, 2013. Based on Animating Democracy’s 2013 Funder Exchange hosted by the Nathan Cummings Foundation, this report summarizes discussion regarding concrete approaches and measures funders are using to understand the impact of arts and social change investments. Features evaluation case studies by the Crossroads Fund, J.W. McConnell Family Foundation, Fledgling Fund, and Porch Light Initiative of the Mural Arts Program, Philadelphia.

“Civic Engagement and the Arts: Issues of Conceptualization and Measurement.” By Mark J. Stern and Susan C. Seifert, 2009. As part of Animating Democracy’s Arts & Civic Engagement Impact Initiative, and based on a literature review drawing from the social sciences, humanities, and public policy, Stern and Seifert of the Social Impact of the Arts Project, UPenn, suggest documentation and evaluation strategies that artists, cultural and community organizations, philanthropists, and public agencies could take to improve the quality of knowledge about the social impact of arts-based civic engagement work.

“High Points from the Los Angeles Evaluators Circle.” By Pam Korza and Barbara Schaffer Bacon, 2016. Animating Democracy’s second Evaluators Circle convened L.A.-based cultural leaders, researchers, and evaluators to share evaluation projects, findings, and learning focused on how data analysis and evaluation are informing decision-making with an emphasis on cultural equity as a social justice goal.

“Shifting Expectations: An Urban Planner’s Reflections on Evaluating Community-Based Arts.” By Maria Rosario Jackson, Ph.D. 2009. As part of Animating Democracy’s Arts & Civic Engagement Impact Initiative, and based on research about integrating arts and culture into concepts of healthy communities, Jackson argues for a shift toward more realistic expectations of social impact and evaluation of arts-based civic engagement on the part of both practitioners and funders and provides recommendations for practical ways of moving towards and operationalizing that shift.



The Continuum of Impact was developed in 2010 as part of [Animating Democracy’s Impact Initiative](#) with support from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. Animating Democracy co-directors Pam Korza and Barbara Schaffer Bacon shaped the Continuum based on analysis of common social outcomes reported for arts-based civic engagement projects and additional research and valuable feedback contributed by Suzanne Callahan of [Callahan Consulting for the Arts](#) and Chris Dwyer of [RMC Research](#).

The Continuum is used for evaluation planning and evaluating projects and organizations that are intentional in connecting arts and community development, civic engagement, and social change, as well as by cultural organizations that wish to consider how their work is contributing to social or civic change. The Continuum has been incorporated into college, university, and training program curricula.

We encourage you to copy pages and use and adapt the worksheets in your work. Please add the following credit when sharing broadly:

From the [Continuum of Impact](#), created by [Animating Democracy](#), a program of [Americans for the Arts, 2017](#).

Animating Democracy provides training and consults with practitioners, funders, and policy makers in areas related to designing, implementing, funding, and assessing arts and civic engagement and social change work. We also conduct research that informs field leaders in their efforts to connect arts and culture to community, civic, and social change. For information contact: bsbacon@artsusa.org