The Continuing Impact of DDCF Interventions in Support of Innovation

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a report commissioned by the
Arts Program of the
Doris Duke Charitable Foundation

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Table of Contents

The Study 3
The Grant Programs 3
Methodology 4
The Study Population 4
Project Staff 5
Acknowledgements 5
Context and Findings 6
Capacity for Adaptive Change 6
Culture of Continuing Innovation 7
Receptivity to Change 8
Decision Making 8
Information Sharing 8
Managing Conflict 9
Impact of Technical Assistance 9
Program Design & Implementation 9
Interview Results 11
Note on Interpreting the Interview Data 11
Receptivity to Change 12
Decision Making 15
Information Sharing 18
Managing Conflict 21
Impact of Technical Assistance 24
Program Design & Implementation 27
Appendix 1: Interviewed Grantees & Projects 29
Appendix 2: Sources 30
Appendix 3: Interview Protocol 32
Appendix 4: Texts of Communications 33

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The Study

The Doris Duke Charitable Foundation Arts Program commissioned this study to evaluate the post-project impact of the Innovation Lab and Continuing Innovation grant programs on twenty-nine theatre, dance, presenting, and jazz organizations. Twenty-three of these organizations had participated in the EmcArts Innovation Lab, six of them received Continuing Innovation grants without participating in the Innovation Lab, and several participated in both programs.

A 2010 in-progress evaluation of Innovation Lab interventions[1] identified two positive outcomes: a number of specific innovations of importance and a cohort of leaders capable of generating non-routine projects, change initiatives, and innovations. It also concluded that there was reason to hope for a third positive outcome: that organizational cultures had been changed so as to yield a continued stream of innovations in the future. Because this third, more speculative, conclusion could be more reliably supported with data gathered after the passage of some time, the Arts Program commissioned this follow-up study.

According to Ben Cameron, the objective was "not to determine whether these grants succeeded in their original intent (although if they did, we are delighted), but to hear more about the impact—if any—the grants had on the organization[s] in a long-term way, if indeed that can be determined. We have always said that funding of innovation will inevitably mean that we will support projects that 'fail' and that more appropriate criteria for success may lie in what was learned, regardless of the outcome of the project."

The Grant Programs

DDCF's Arts Program helps artists and organizations in the dance, jazz, presenting, and theatre fields. In addition to the Innovation Lab, grant programs concerned with innovative solutions and organizational transformation have included Leading for the Future: Innovative Support for Artistic Excellence (with the Nonprofit Finance Fund); Jazz.NEXT (with the Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation); Engaging Dance Audiences (with Dance/USA); Creative Campus Innovations Grant Program (with the Association of Performing Arts Presenters); and New Generations (with Theatre Communications Group). Particularly promising projects begun with help from this variety of innovation programs were supported with additional grants under the description of Continuing Innovation. Some of these organizations also participated in the Innovation Lab, and those that did not were able to choose their own approaches to technical assistance and facilitation.

EmcArts serves as a value-added re-granting intermediary for a number of arts funders, including DDCF. It aims to help client organizations sustain themselves by equipping them with tools to build their capacity for adaptive change. The Innovation Lab was designed to help organizations find "new pathways to mission fulfillment that were discontinuous from previous practice and that resulted from shifts in underlying assumptions." It asked participating arts organizations to engage in intense planning on a practical innovation project and create a sense of organization-wide investment in change. With active facilitation from EmcArts, organizations identified cross-departmental Innovation Teams, attended a 5-day Intensive retreat that served as a "project accelerator," and used seed money to prototype and evaluate their innovation project before full

[1] Elizabeth Long Lingo: *Findings and Assessment of the EmcArts Innovation Lab for the Performing Arts*. Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, 2010.

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launch. The Innovation Lab for the Performing Arts and Innovation Lab for Museums serve organizations in fields in addition to those of particular interest to DDCF.

Methodology

Twenty-eight of twenty-nine organizations agreed to be interviewed, and were promised confidentiality. The list of organizations that participated in this study is provided in Appendix 1. In addition to the grantees, we also interviewed staff and consultants for the DDCF Arts Program and EmcArts, both on the phone and in person.

Self-reporting via phone interview was adopted as the cost-effective basis for data collection.[2] Before each interview, a short questionnaire (see Appendix 4) was emailed to the chief executive or other official responsible for the project. Each question required a numerical response in advance of the interview, and participants were asked to think of anecdotes or other examples to help explain their responses during the one-hour phone interview. (See Appendix 3 for the interview protocol). The quantitative and qualitative responses were tallied and summarized.

Because cultural effects often are not fully understood or articulated by people inside the culture, we chose to direct participant attention to three important attributes of culture that generally are thought to be critical levers in managing change: how decisions are made, how conflict is handled, and how information is shared. These questions, we hoped, might elicit anecdotes, examples, or other observations that we could fit into patterns that might reveal larger conclusions. We asked people to answer these questions in the present state of their organizations; subsequently we asked them to consider whether they would have answered the questions differently at the time before the grant experience.

Because self-reporting involves inherent perspective bias, we drew conclusions only with a sense of caution. Given a conscious attempt to avoid over-reach, we are able to state our findings with a reasonable degree of confidence.

A list of recommended sources in the literature of leadership, change, and culture appears in Appendix 2. It includes sources identified by the authors as well as recommendations received from EmcArts.

The Study Population

The grantees included 11 theaters, 8 performing arts presenters, 4 jazz organizations, 3 dance groups, and 3 service organizations. Nine of the funded projects centered on technology, 7 on artist enrichment, 7 on audience engagement, 2 on organizational sustainability, 2 on research, and 2 on social impact.

The grant contact at each organization was asked to identify the most appropriate individual to speak to the impact of the grant program on the organization as a whole. For most organizations that person was the chief executive or artistic director. In some cases we were directed to the leader

[2] The preferred, but much more costly, method for identifying cultural attributes would have been direct observation in the field. This preference is determined by the difficulty of identifying cultural attributes and trends from within the culture. In the event, self-reporting proved adequate to the purpose.

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of the individual program or project, regardless of seniority within the organization. Those accustomed to thinking about the organization as a whole generally were best equipped to answer questions pertaining to culture.

Project Staff

Edward A. Martenson, Project Director, is Professor (Adjunct) and Chair of Theater Management at Yale School of Drama and a consultant to arts organizations and their supporters. Previously Martenson was Vice-President for Education at National Arts Strategies, Executive Director for the Guthrie Theater, Theater Program Director for the National Endowment for the Arts, and Managing Director for the Yale Repertory Theatre and the McCarter Theater.

Martha Olivo Jurczak, Project Manager, is Chief Operating Officer and Associate at Organizational Design and Development Associates. Previously she was Managing Editor of the Yale Theater Management Knowledge Base, Associate Managing Director of Yale Repertory Theatre, and Assistant Director of Development for Institutional Giving at Court Theatre in Chicago.

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Acknowledgements

The authors are grateful to the arts leaders who made time to talk with us about their organizations' continuing explorations of change. They were generous, insightful, and candid. We also are grateful to the staff and consultants for EmcArts, who helped us understand the concepts and objectives of the Innovation Lab. Dr. Elizabeth Long Lingo's 2010 in-progress evaluation of the Innovation Lab was a valuable baseline. DDCF's Ben Cameron, Cheryl Ikemiya, and Lillian Osei-Boateng were helpful in every way.

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Context and Findings

Organizations in the dance, jazz, presenting, and theatre fields are almost all less than 50 years old, and the vast majority of them are less than 25 years old. In many organizational respects these are young fields, and while they have grown quickly in number they are still are building capacities that are critical to success. While the organizational development cup remains half full, important progress has been made in relation to (1) the capacity to reach a large audience, (2) the capacity to create a large volume and wide variety of art, (3) the capacity to generate original works and interpretations, (4) to a lesser extent, the capacity to sustain a profession, and (5) the capacity for resilience (sometimes called "stability" in the past).[3]

The last critical capacity to receive field-wide organizational development attention has been the capacity for adaptation.[4] Though the need to develop this critical capacity was clear even before the dislocations that accompanied 9/11, the sheer necessity for it has been powerfully reinforced by the great recession that began in 2008 combined with the ever-accelerating pace of technological change on how people engage with culture. Observers and field leaders now are aware that sustainability doesn't consist only of resilience – the ability to bounce back from adverse events while preserving identity; sustainability also requires the ability to adapt to changes in the environment that are not temporary – by modifying practices, strategies, or even mission.

A range of grantmakers and technical assistance providers are focusing on the field's need to build adaptive capacity, and the DDCF Arts Program has been a leader in that effort through an emphasis on innovation. Though all change is not innovative, all innovation requires change. By choosing grantees that have the desire to innovate, DDCF is also choosing grantees that express the desire to overcome barriers to change within their organizations. In a sense, the "success" or "failure" of the specific innovation project matters less than the awareness and skills that are accumulated during the process of designing and implementing it. (This is not to minimize the potential usefulness of the projects in advancing the success of the organizations and demonstrating new avenues for progress in their fields.) The grant programs, including the technical assistance provided through the Innovation Lab and other sources, appear to us to be both effective and valuable.

At the outset, DDCF guidelines emphasized the innovation project (and the process of implementing it) as the purpose of the grant programs, and the desire to build adaptive capacity was left unstated. The guidelines later adopted this as an explicit secondary objective, expressed as "a culture of continuing innovation."

Capacity for Adaptive Change

This, then, brings us to the first of our findings, which is that the secondary objective would be more usefully expressed as "enhanced capacity for adaptive change."

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[3] It is essential to note that these observations about progress in capacity building are valid only at the field level. At the level of individual organizations few possess all of these capacities, and most possess only one or two. The ongoing challenge for organizations with capacity in one area is to develop capacity in others as well. The necessity to build adaptive capacity plays a different role in different organizations, according to their progress in building other capacities.

[4] The distinction between resilience and adaptation within the concept of sustainability was an active element of the literature in other fields before being adopted in business management. One early use was in the field of ecology, as in Holling, C.S.: "Resilience and Stability of Ecological Systems." *Annu. Rev. Ecol. Syst.* 4:1–23, 1973.

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All of the grantees enrolled in the idea that a specific change would be beneficial, and with some scattered initial reluctance they all also enrolled in the idea that defining and implementing the change would require them to learn new skills. In retrospect, grantees agreed that these commitments should have resulted in enhanced capacity for change beyond the project itself. However, they did not enroll in the idea of a culture of continuous change, and many of them did not agree that this would be an appropriate objective for their organizations.

There is a crucial distinction between "enhanced capacity for change" and "culture of continuing innovation" that explains why grantees embrace the former but resist the latter. In the literature and theory of both innovation and adaptive change, it is accepted that there is a cycle in which initial implementation of an innovation or change is followed by a period of consolidation and refinement in which the innovation or change is made to be efficient and its value is "extracted." Most of the grantees expressed views consistent with this cycle, many saying that it would take years to digest the innovation project fully before they would be ready to undertake another such change.

Consistent with the distinction between capacity for change and culture of continuing innovation, we were not able to conclude that the organizational cultures had changed throughout the grantee population. We found some pronounced cultural shifts, but in a minority of the grantee organizations. In other organizations, we found substantial resistance to the concept of culture change as an objective of the grant program. Where this was present, grantees made a sharp distinction between organizational change and change in their products or services, and did not agree that the latter always required the former. (We agree with this distinction, too, and discuss it further below.)

Notwithstanding, we found sufficient evidence to conclude that *enhanced capacity for adaptive change* was achieved broadly among the grantee organizations, and believe that DDCF should view this outcome as a success even though the objective was not expressed in this way. Important management tools learned during the innovation process were internalized and are still in use, and there is ample evidence that the responsibility for leadership is more dispersed through the organizations than before. More important, the grant programs strengthened the credibility and influence of change agents within the organizations. Change is a leadership responsibility, and there is no doubt that these leaders are more prepared to initiate and lead future changes in their organizations than before they participated in the grant programs.

Culture of Continuing Innovation

In exploring the idea of a culture of continuing innovation in conversation, we drew attention to the unchanging cultures of organizations that innovate continuously, using examples like Yale, IDEO, and Apple. Only 2 or 3 interviewees said their organizations aspire to generate new knowledge or projects with the rapidity of these examples. These and other interviewees agreed that such an ambition would not be possible without a culture that supports research and rapid innovation, and is not, in itself, subject to change. One insightful interviewee spoke of the difficulty involved in marrying a production operation (in which efficiency demands predictability) to a creative approach to art (in which flexibility is prized). Importantly, this insight applied more clearly to larger organizations that had high capacity for resilience and lower capacity to generate original works and interpretations. In such organizations, cultivating a culture of continuing innovation might be precisely the intervention that is most needed.

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Where such a culture is desired but does not exist, it would have to be cultivated through insightful and skilled leadership. Several interviewees said that help in pursuing that objective would be valuable. However, more interviewees agreed that the existing innovation programs are not well-suited to that purpose. We go further: if DDCF were to adopt a "culture of continuing innovation" as a grant program objective, it should consider facilitating design of a separate program for that purpose. We would expect such a program primarily to address the challenges encountered by institutions that reach substantial audiences but that aspire to a higher level of artistic vitality.

Receptivity to Change

Twelve of 28 interviewees rate their organizations as moderately receptive to change; 11 say they are highly receptive to change, and 4 say they tilt more towards continuity. With respect to impact of the grant, only 13 of 28 interviewees say their organizations are more receptive to change after the grant than before, and 2 of these attribute the shift to another cause.

The combination of humanistic values and cultural leadership associated with arts and cultural organizations makes it reasonable to expect them to be moderate with respect to change. Because the DDCF innovation programs were based in part on the perception that arts and cultural organizations were being held back by a lack of capacity for adaptive change, grantees were selected in part on capacity and readiness for change. For this reason, the grantee population in this study was slightly more receptive to change than we would expect of the field as a whole. In this dimension, as in others, the cultural shift was pronounced within the minority of organizations that reported it.

Decision Making

Six of 28 interviewees rate their organizations as moderate in their concentration of decision-making authority, while 11 say that authority is relatively concentrated and 10 say that authority is relatively diffused. Only 10 of 28 interviewees say their organizations' approaches to decision making have changed since the time before the grants, and 3 of them attribute the shift to other causes.

The Innovation Lab's emphasis on teams that cut across departments and levels of hierarchy seems to have had a recognizable effect in making people more aware of different viewpoints. However, we saw confirmation of the importance of leadership in initiating and managing change, with associated challenges to leadership in the form of increased conflict among stakeholders as the change was implemented.

Information Sharing

Ten of 28 interviewees rate their organizations as moderate in the degree to which information is shared; 4 report information being relatively concentrated, and 13 report information as being relatively dispersed. While the Innovation Lab emphasis on teams might have been expected to influence organizations in the direction of greater transparency, only 9 of 28 said the grant experience affected their practice in this area and 16 said their practice was unaffected.

This result may have been influenced by the fact that most organizations in the interview population are small. On the other hand, a number of organizations had grown while implementing the project,

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with more people and more need for supervision pushing in the direction of more specific job descriptions and reporting routines.

Managing Conflict

Ten of 28 interviewees rated their organizations as moderate with respect to avoiding or embracing conflict; seven tended in the direction of avoidance, and 10 tended to embrace conflict. Only 8 of 28 interviewees said their organizations' approach to conflict was influenced by participation in the grant programs; of these, 6 said they were more receptive to conflict and 2 said they were less receptive to conflict on account of the grant experience.

In general, interviewees seemed more self-aware in this dimension than in others, and to have given the challenge of managing conflict a good deal of thought. While we might suppose implementation of innovation projects would build skill in managing conflict and a greater acceptance of it, in practice the organizations seem to have been sensitive to the greater levels of conflict that arose from the disruption of change.

Impact of Technical Assistance

While the Continuing Innovation grantees were free to select technical assistance on their own, most of the interviewees represented organizations that had been through the Innovation Lab and therefore assessed the impact of assistance in that context. All interviewees said the technical assistance had a beneficial impact on their organizations' approach to subsequent challenges. Nine said the impact was moderate, 12 said the impact was high, and 6 said the impact was low. All of the facilitators were praised, and the team retreats were appreciated as well. The Innovation Lab played a significant role in refining the projects; in a few cases, the proposed projects were abandoned in favor of a different idea, and these were seen as successes. In a few extreme cases, organizations went away and new ones emerged; in these cases, facilitation was said to be critical. Tools for forming decision-making units, handling conflict, and eliciting information from a variety of sources are still in use. Leaders seem to have been empowered, not limited to the people in formal authority.

Program Design & Implementation

Interviewees generally had positive views of the DDCF grant programs and the Innovation Lab (and other technical assistance providers in some cases). They were highly aware of the special confluence of generosity and flexibility in the DDCF grantmaking approach. They believed their organizations had been improved by the projects, and that their leadership had been strengthened by the learning and advice they'd received. We believe that DDCF innovation interventions should continue to focus on strengthening the change agents within organizations.

There was some degree of reservation about the EmcArts definition of innovation as leading to "new pathways to mission fulfillment," primarily among people who had a more expansive view of innovation as change that influenced the field. This concern was rendered moot because EmcArts had modified its definition as "new pathways to creating public value." Consistent with this change, we believe that DDCF innovation interventions should emphasize outputs and organizational effectiveness.

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A substantial number of interviewees said their organizations had engaged their initial facilitators to continue working with them after the grant periods. Others told us their projects would have been strengthened if the grant periods were longer or if there had been periodic check-ins. A few went out of their way to tell us how much they appreciated the opportunity posed by the interview itself to reflect on their experiences. And a few others gave us information about the progress of their projects that we later discovered was unknown to EmcArts and DDCF. We concluded that it would be helpful if the Innovation Lab intervention were lengthened to include a follow-up period.

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Interview Results

Note on Interpreting the Interview Data

To stimulate reflection among interviewees in preparation for the phone interview, we distributed a questionnaire in advance that required numerical responses. The questions did not immediately address the overall question being investigated, but sought to illuminate meaningful component parts: receptivity to change, decision making, information sharing, managing conflict, and impact of technical assistance. The numerical responses were intended to catalyze self-analysis; we view them as being of secondary importance. The anecdotes, insights, and other observations elicited in the interview were primary. This also means that our conclusions sometimes rely on our interpretation of patterns of response rather than numerical results.

We expected the numerical answers to show a normal distribution, with most answers in the middle and fewer answers at each extreme. One reason for this is that questions were formulated to channel respondents in that direction. However, the more significant reason for expecting a normal distribution is that arts organizations are moderate in their orientation to change, even if their capacity for it is well developed. In any case, the expectation of a normal distribution allowed us to easily recognize departures from the anticipated pattern.

The numerical results, relevant quotes, and interpretations (where necessary) appear below in sections that correspond to the preparatory questions. We also provide a section for observations about the design and execution of the programs.

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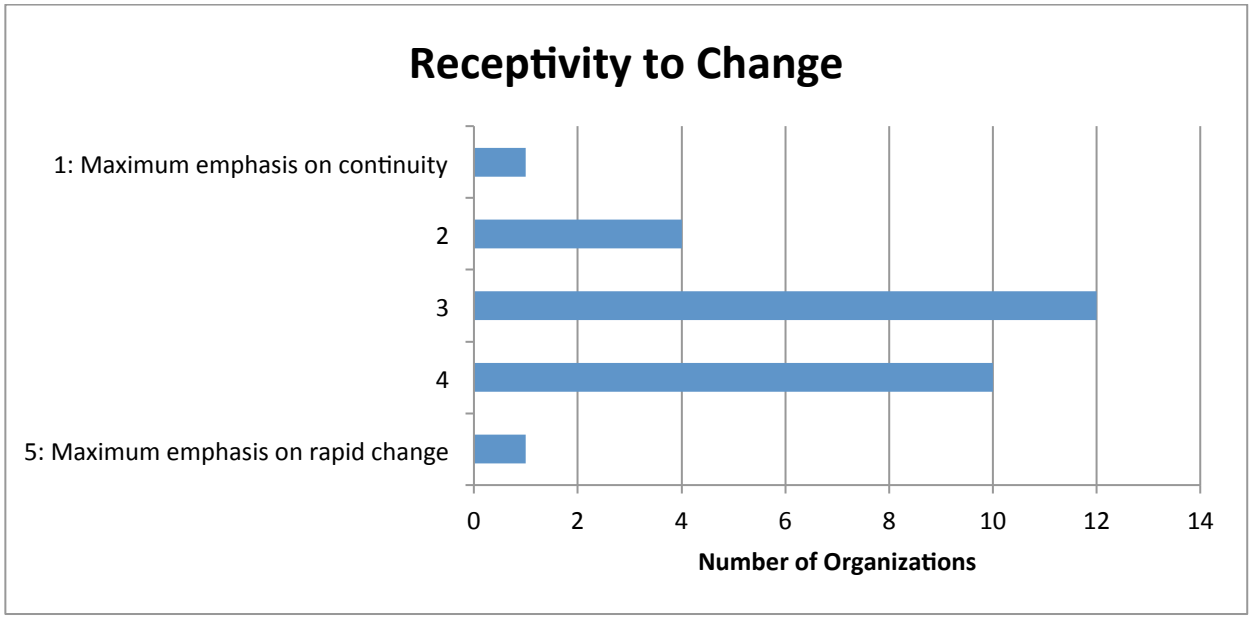
Receptivity to Change

On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 as maximum emphasis on continuity (e.g., a great research university) and 5 as maximum emphasis on rapid change (e.g., a tech company whose products must be replaced rapidly), where would you place your organization's approach to change?

As expected, the majority of respondents placed their organizations near the middle of the scale, indicating they are moderately receptive to change.



This result was expected, given the moderate nature of arts and cultural organizations. The art forms at the center of their missions are old; historically, the art forms themselves have been remarkably resilient. On the other hand, the organizations that facilitate the art forms operate in markets, and are as subject to environment-induced stresses as any other kind of organization. Generally speaking, one would not expect them to hold either a great research university or a tech company as their model for receptivity to change.

- *Our project was the thin edge of the wedge of change.*
- *Our approach to change is organic/gradual/evolutionary, not revolutionary.*

Notwithstanding the normal distribution we expected, the pattern of responses skewed somewhat to the rapid change end of the spectrum for two reasons. First, the organizations were selected competitively in part because of their capacity and readiness for change. Second, a number of the organizations are based in, or oriented to, technology.

- *The organization was innovative and flexible before. The Innovation Lab demanded an unaccustomed level of interdepartmental work; that beneficial change remains. But we are not* more *receptive to change than before.*
- *We're on the same path now as before.*

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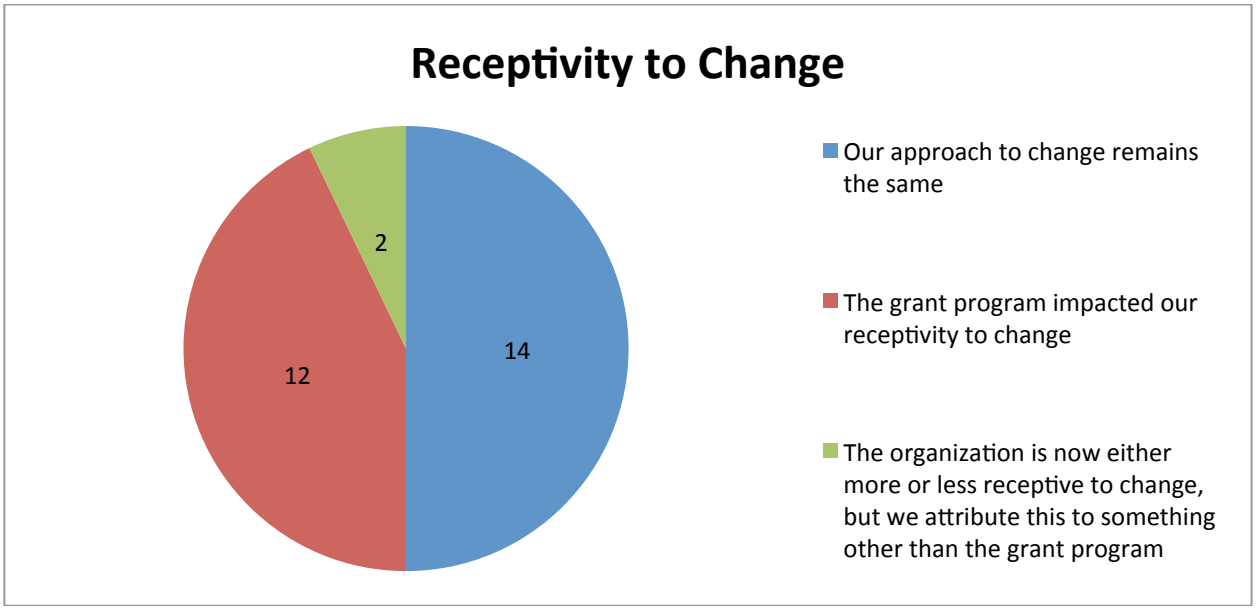
(Receptivity to Change, continued)

During the interview, each respondent was asked whether he or she would have answered the receptivity-to-change question differently prior to participation in the Innovation Lab and/or Continuing Innovation programs.



The respondents were evenly split between those who perceived a shift in their organization's approach to change since the issuing of the grant and those who do not. Among those who do perceive a change, 12 respondents indicated their organizations are *more* receptive to change than they were prior to grant program participation.

- *The structure/focus of our organization is very changed as a result of the Lab.*
- *The Lab gave us a heightened appreciation for planning for change.*

On the other hand, one respondent said his/her organization was *less* receptive to change as a result of the grant program:

- *After the Innovation Lab experience of trying to implement a "great idea," we're realizing that change is not so easy.*

A number of respondents attributed their organization's receptivity to change (modified or not) to a causal factor *other* than the grant program. These respondents cited leadership turnover or a variety of environmental stresses as the reasons for the change sought by their organization.

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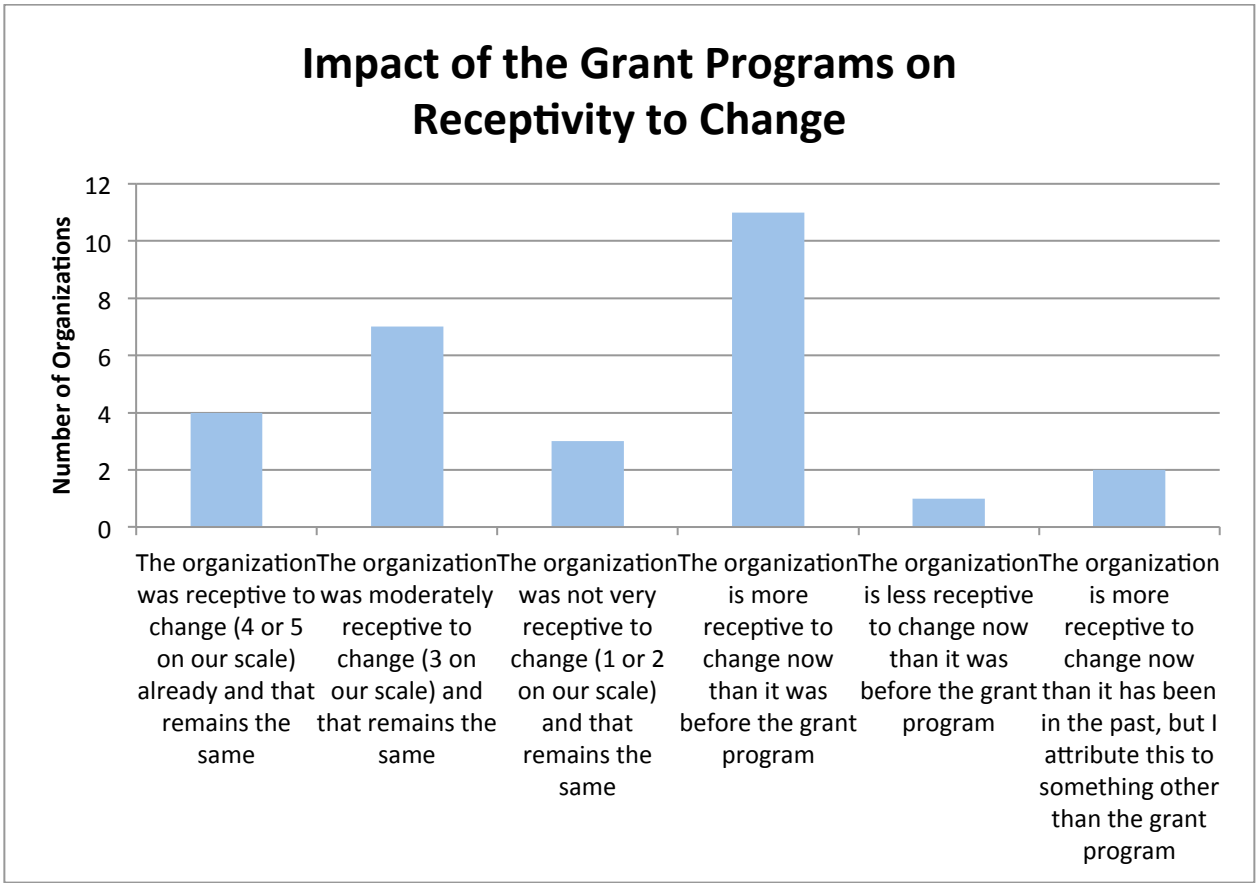
(Receptivity to Change, continued)

Here we break down the different ways in which receptivity to change was influenced by participation in the grant programs.



Only 13 of 28 interviewees say their organizations are more receptive to change after the grant than before, and two of these attribute the shift to another cause.

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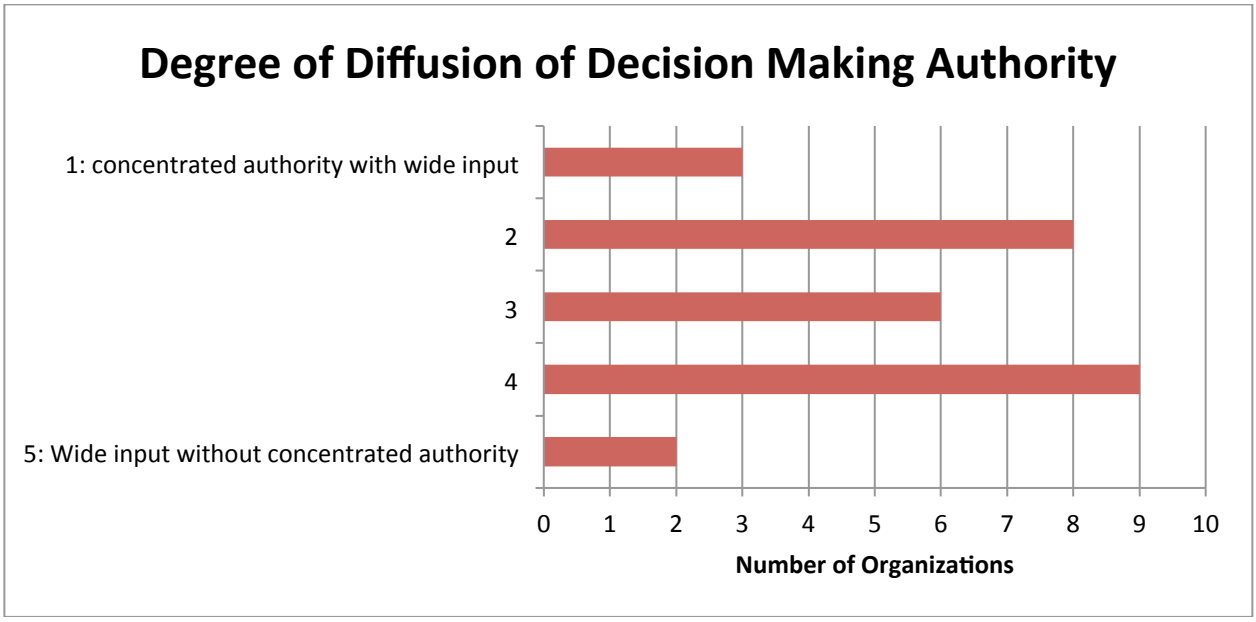
Decision Making

On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 representing concentrated authority with wide input and 5 representing wide input without concentrated authority, where would you place your organization's approach to making decisions?

While we expected to see the largest number of responses in the middle of the scale, instead we saw high concentrations of responses above and below the middle.



Upon further consideration, this result makes more sense than on first impression. Some organizations found that implementation of their project required them to hire more staff, define areas of responsibility in more detail, and distribute decision-making responsibility to more people with independent authority. Some organizations found that the need for a strong change agent to drive the innovation lasted longer into the implementation period than expected, delaying the desired shift toward more group decision making. Only 11 of 28 organizations reported that authority was shared, and some of them view this as a weakness.

- *The freedom of staff members to decide to run with their ideas is an important part of our culture.*
- *We talk things to death/until everyone acquiesces.*

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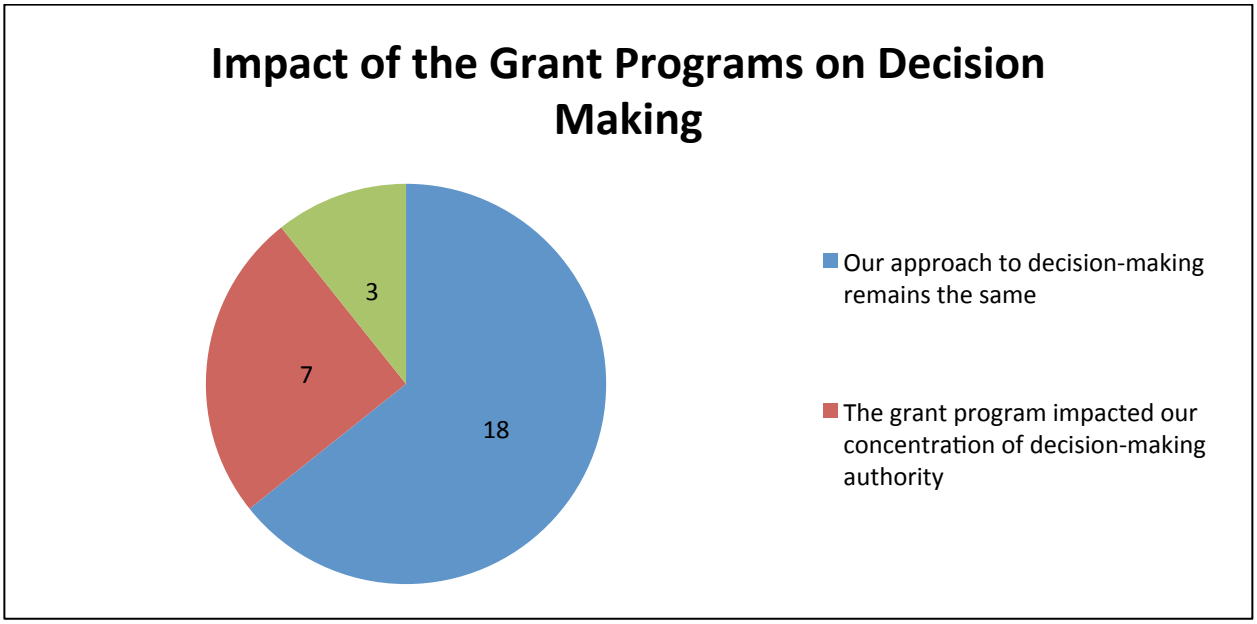
(Decision Making, continued)

During the interview, each respondent was asked whether he or she would have answered this question differently prior to participation in the Innovation Lab and/or Continuing Innovation programs.



Eighteen of 28 respondents said the concentration of decision making authority in their organizations had not changed from the time prior to participation in the grant programs. Within the minority of organizations that reported a change in this dimension, several said that their evolution was the result of factors other than the grant programs. Only 7 of 28 interviewees said that the grant programs influenced their approaches to decision making.

- *We discovered that innovation required more concentrated authority than we were used to.*
- *The Lab allowed us to address elephants in the room.*
- *Our programs and staff expanded as a result of the Lab and therefore decision-making authority must be more diffuse.*
- *In spreading out decision-making authority, I've needed to make senior managers more accountable for results.*
- *We discovered our organization needed more structure.*
- *The Lab experience made us more aware of the opinions of stakeholders outside our organization.*
- *Our lab project generated a lot of public data about our stakeholders so there is less mystery surrounding decision-making.*

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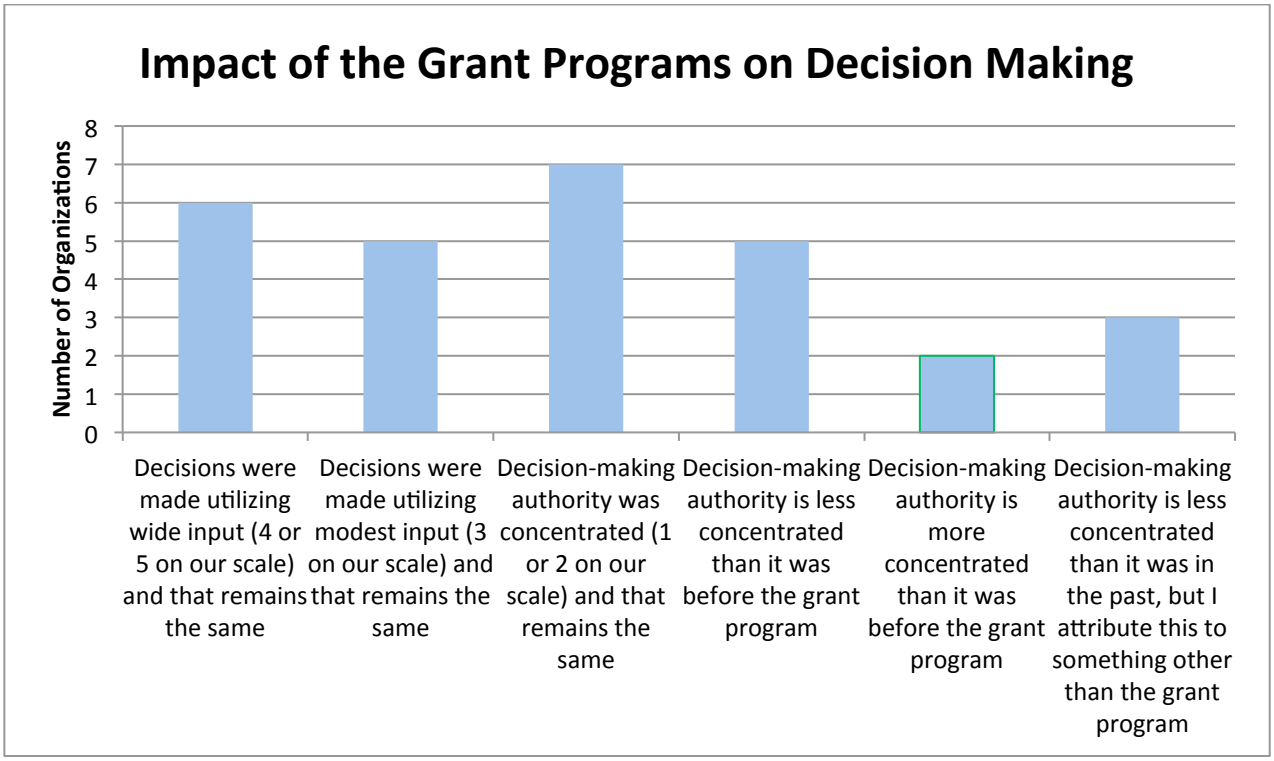
(Decision Making, continued)

Here we break down the different ways in which decision making was, or was not, influenced by participation in the grant programs.



Eight respondents said decision-making authority is now more diffuse than it had been in the past, but 3 of these respondents attributed the change to something other than the lab, namely organizational growth that necessitated additional layers of hierarchy and leadership change. Two interviewees said their organizations now have more concentrated decision-making authority.

The numerical responses aside, the interviews revealed a substantially increased understanding of the views and needs of various stakeholder groups. This factor influences which decisions are made rather than how they are made.

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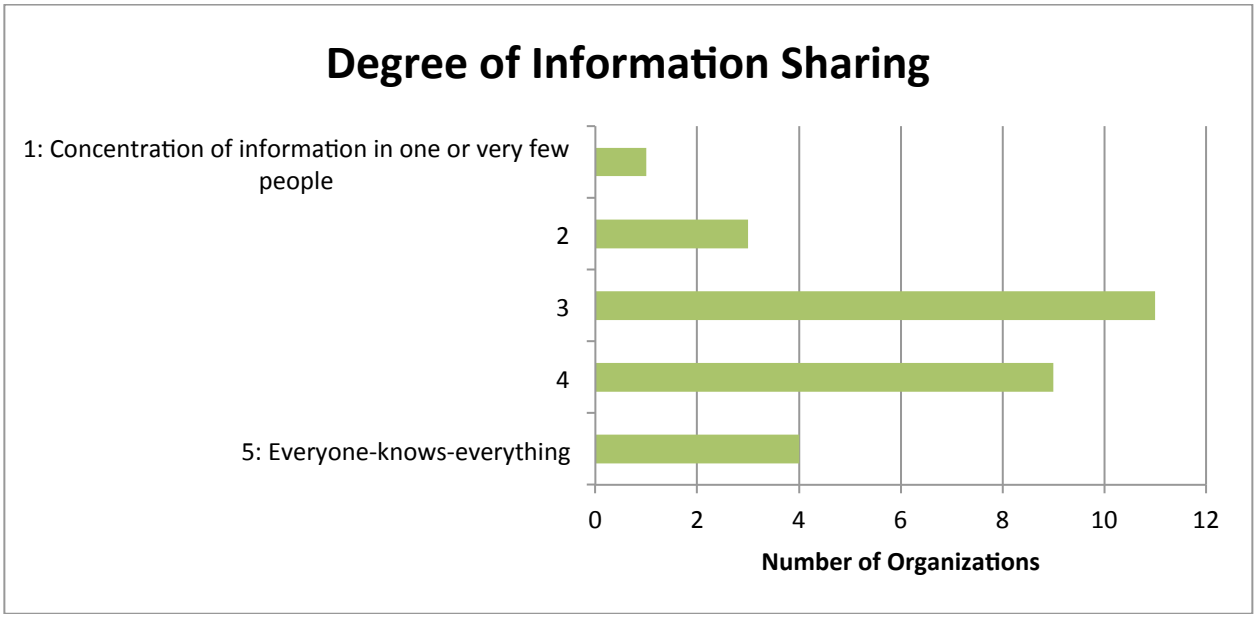
Information Sharing

On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 representing concentration of information in one or very few people and 5 representing everyone-knows-everything, where would you place your organization's approach to information-sharing?

As expected, the majority of responses clustered around the middle of the range with few at the extremes, indicating a norm of moderation. Only one respondent indicated that information is concentrated in one or very few people in his/her organization, and only four respondents described their organization's information-sharing habits as "everyone knows everything."



Nevertheless, more organizations indicated a tendency towards dispersed information than towards concentration of information, a result that could reflect the positive influence of technical assistance in favor of team processes. This result also could be explained by the fact that many of the organizations are relatively small and compact.

- *Our small space/small staff means everyone hears/knows everything. (3 respondents)*

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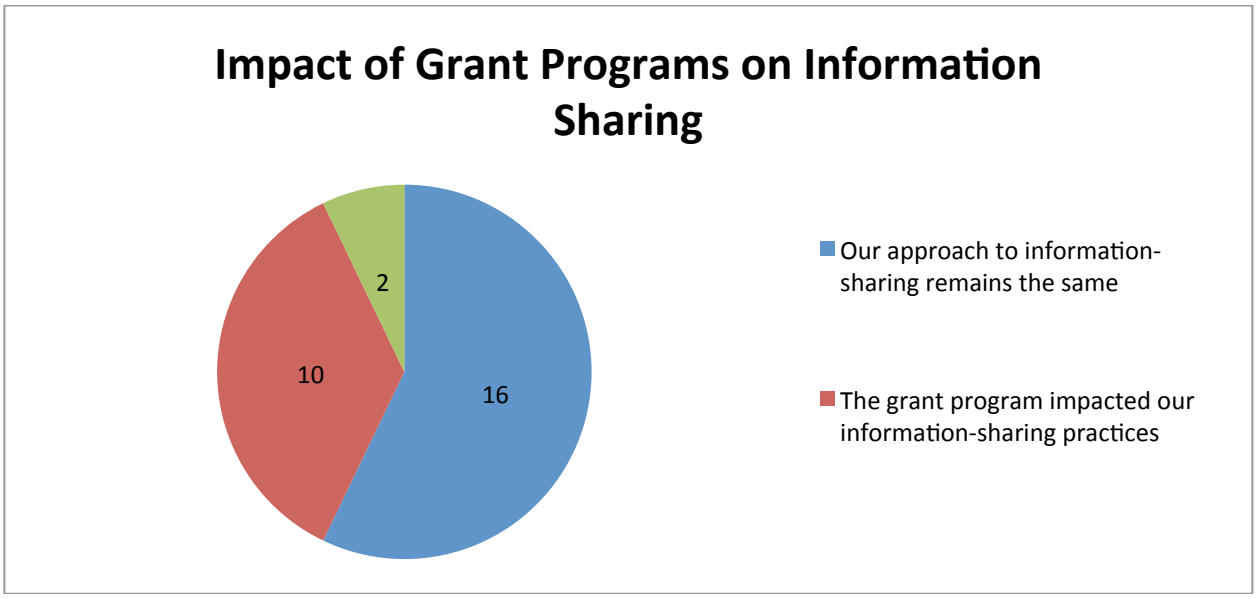
(Information Sharing, continued)

In fact, when we asked whether respondents would have answered the question differently prior to participation in the grant programs we learned that the majority of organizations reported no before-and-after change. Indeed, just over one-third of the organizations reported that the grant experience resulted in a shift in their approach to information sharing.



While the grant experience didn't change information-sharing practices in most organizations, where it did so the effect was pronounced.

- *Helped the organization become "newly porous, transparent".*
- *More information sharing has led to greater trust among staff and across departments.*
- *Every staff meeting now has a long range/strategic and/or field-level component. (2 respondents)*
- *Junior staff are now more involved/engaged.*
- *Sharing information is key to lessening resistance to change.*
- *External communication is greatly changed.*

Two interviewees said their approach to information sharing was changed, not as a result of deliberate choice but because of transformation in the scale of their organizations.

- *Information is now shared more freely because the staff has shrunk to a size that does not support a siloed operation.*
- *Growth has limited the extent to which we can have everyone know everything. Hiring more people means more specialization in job descriptions, more need for supervision, and therefore more structure.*

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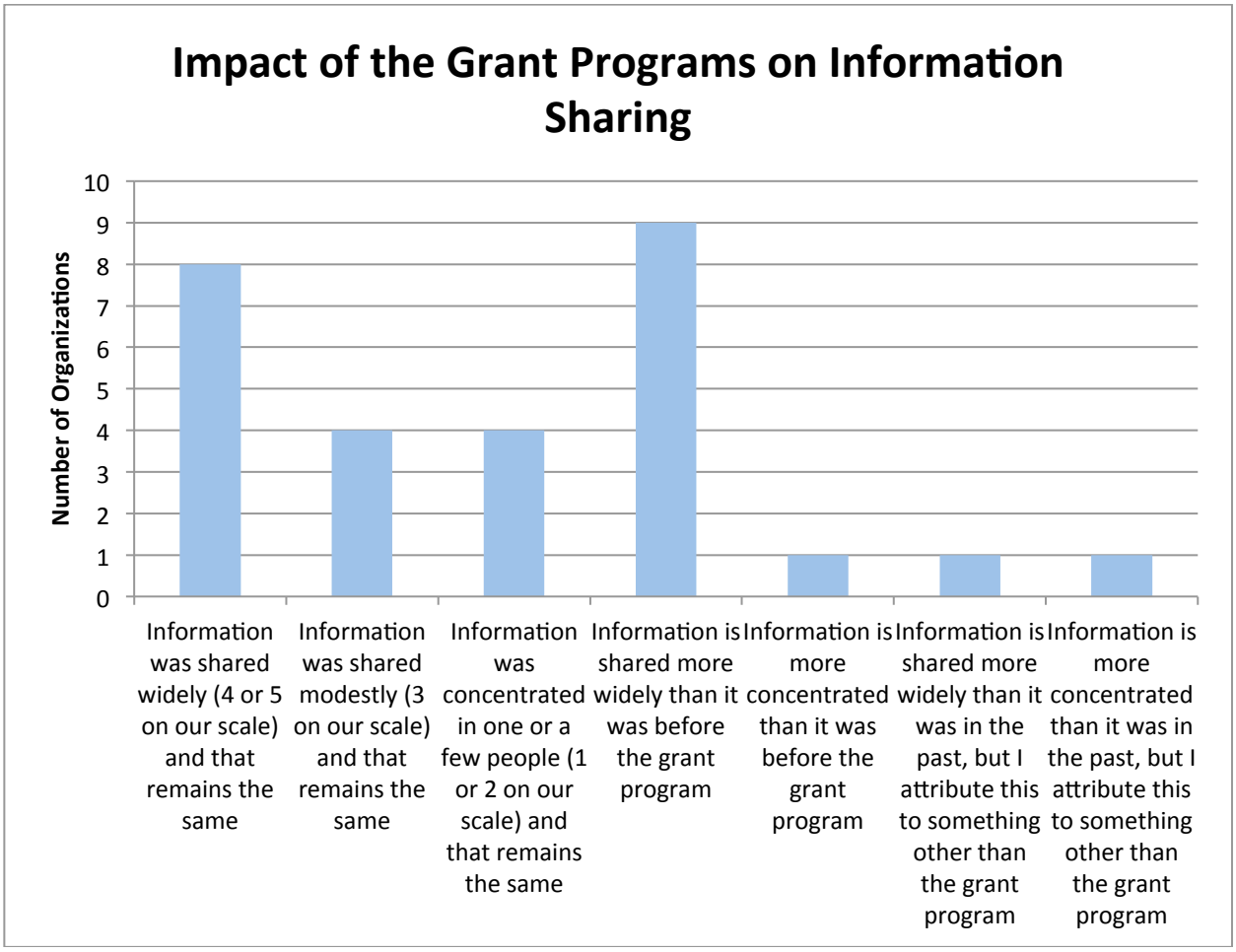
(Information Sharing, continued)

Here we break down the different ways in which information sharing was, or was not, influenced by participation in the grant programs.



Sixteen respondents said information-sharing habits had not changed. Nine respondents said their organizations are now more open with information as a result of grant program participation, and one said that information has become more concentrated. One organization saw information become more concentrated and attributed this change to organizational growth.

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Managing Conflict

On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 representing avoiding conflict and 5 representing embracing conflict, where would you place your organization's approach to disagreement?

As expected, we saw responses clustered around the middle of the range, reflecting a norm of moderation in this dimension.

With respect to managing conflict, we detected a somewhat higher degree of self-awareness than in other areas, reflecting a level of satisfaction with the status quo in some organizations and a level of dissatisfaction in others. An underlying theme, never stated, is that people are aware that airing different perspectives would be beneficial but don't know how to do it without it turning into unrestrained conflict.

- *There is a lot of behind the scenes lobbying/grumbling to avoid open conflict.*
- *Our local culture is conflict-averse (e.g. "Midwest nice").*
- *Our group is in the habit of being nice/polite.*
- *Our group dynamic has to accommodate our legitimate cultural differences that stems from our embrace of diversity; our Latino staff members want to argue, but our Asian staff members think it's rude to do so.*
- *Deep staff commitment tends to turn conflicts personal.*

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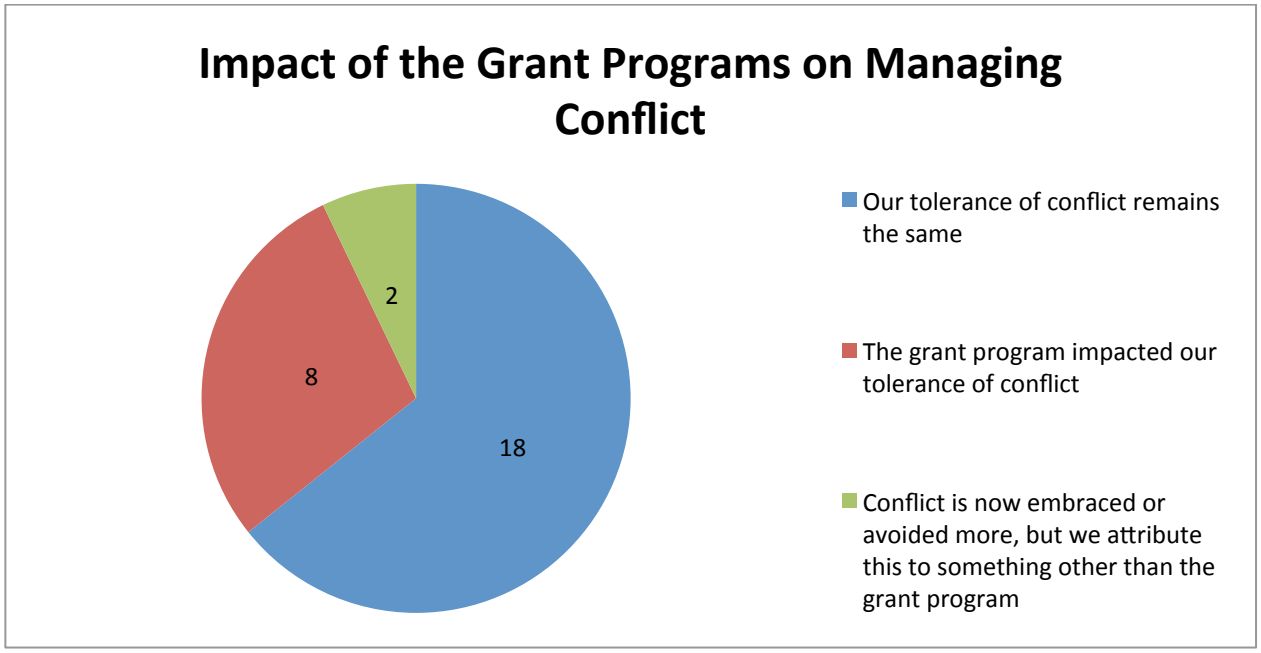
(Managing Conflict, continued)

In the subsequent interview, each respondent was asked whether he or she would have answered this question differently prior to participation in the Innovation Lab and/or Continuing Innovation programs, with the following results:



A substantial majority of organizations reported no change in their cultural approach to managing conflict. Fewer than a third reported an impact from the grant programs on how conflict is handled, but here, too, we saw a relatively high degree of self-awareness and concern for managing conflict more beneficially in the future.

- *We would like to be more embracing of conflict.*
- *Conflict is avoided because there is no forum for it outside the decision-making process; it is then too late to disagree.*
- *Our leadership is conflict-averse.*

In some cases, the enhanced self-awareness resulted from an actual increase in the level of conflict within the organizations due to the change implemented during the grant experience.

- *The change represented by our project met with lots of resistance/tension.*
- *Concentrated authority allows us to have open conflict; one decider resolves it.*
- *Decisions are made with more input now, but this has led to more conflict as well.*
- *New direction for the organization has led to board members questioning staff leadership's decisions to an unprecedented extent.*

(Managing Conflict, continued)

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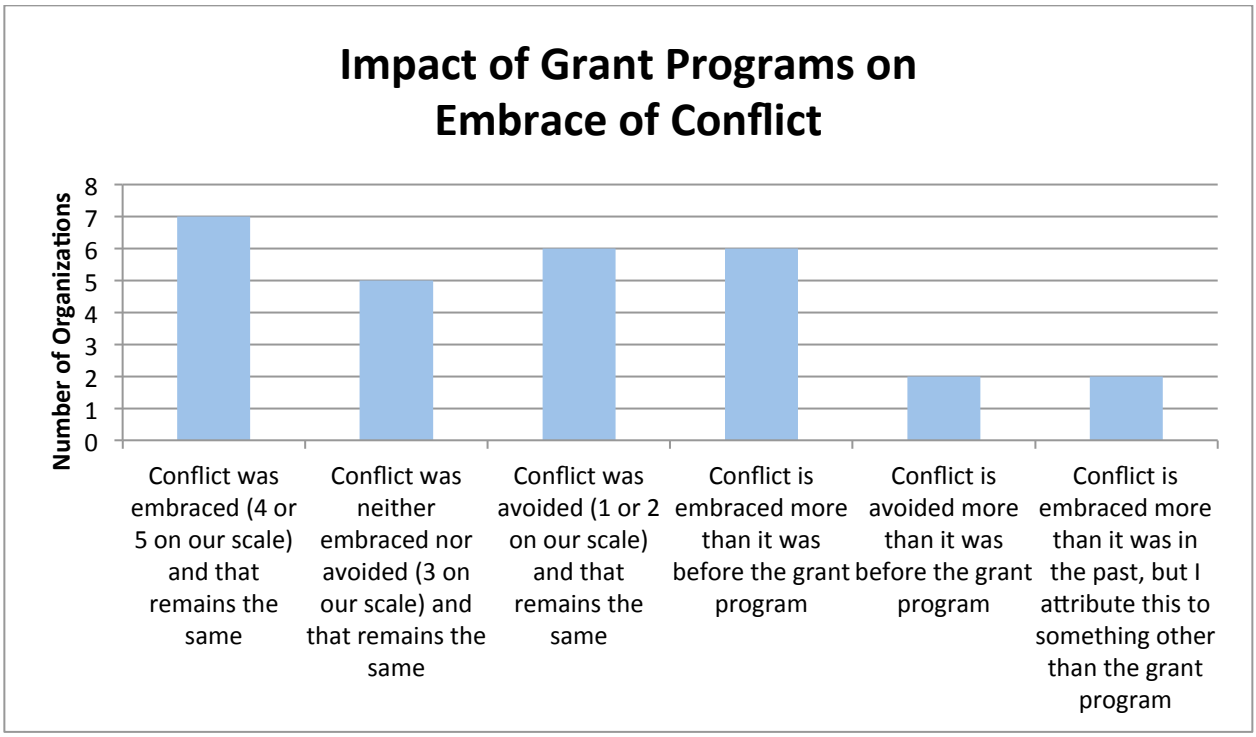
Here we break down the different ways in which management of conflict was, or was not, influenced by participation in the grant programs.



Eighteen respondents saw no change. Six respondents attributed a greater embrace of conflict to the effects of the grant program; two respondents attributed greater conflict avoidance to the grant program. Two respondents saw a move toward greater embrace of conflict, but attributed it to factors other than the grant program, namely a change in leadership and the carrying out of a cultural shift that was already underway.

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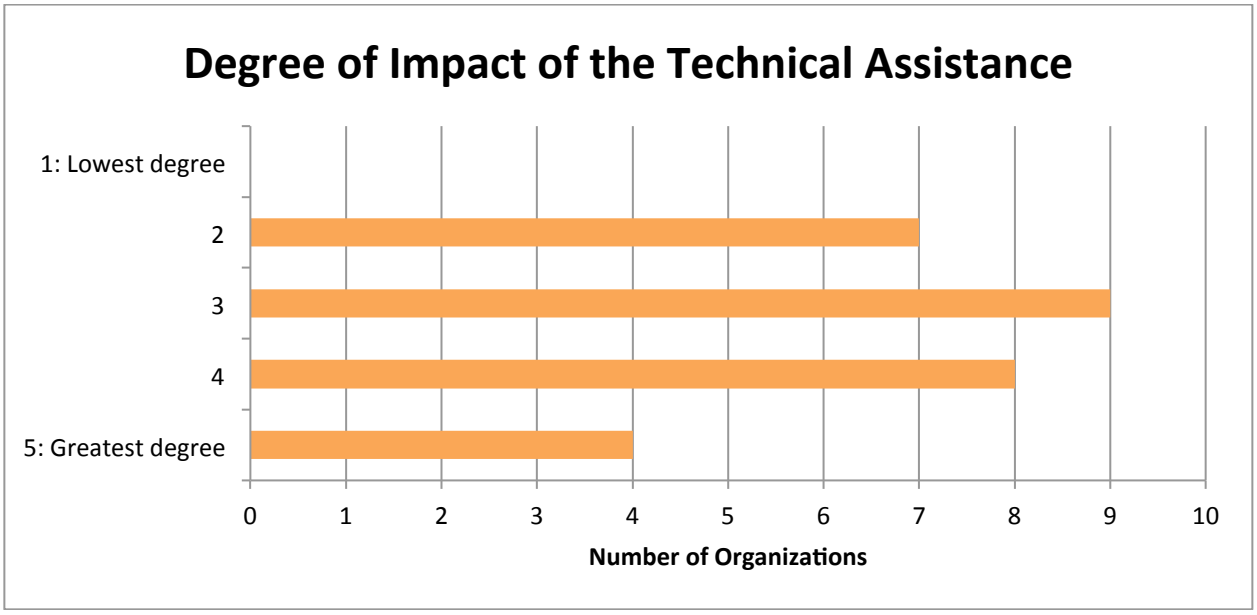
Impact of Technical Assistance

On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 representing no change and 5 representing a complete 180, to what extent has your organization's behavior changed as a result of the technical assistance from the grant?

Every respondent said the grant program changed his/her organization's subsequent behavior. Nine reported a moderate impact; 7 reported a somewhat lesser impact, 8 reported a greater than moderate impact, and 4 respondents indicated the technical assistance had been something like transformational.



We asked respondents to update us on the status and impact of the funded projects. We heard a range of comments. At the extremes were organizations whose projects achieved highly positive results and others whose projects were not fully implemented.

- *Our project is stuck/stalled/proceeding more slowly than anticipated due to lack of funds or staff time, or because urgent things keep coming up.*
- *The project led directly to additional funding.*
- *Board member participants had a profound bonding experience—with each other and the organization.*
- *One of the board participants gave the organization a "game-changing gift."*
- *The grant lent us legitimacy.*

We heard a number of comments about the effects of the Innovation Lab or other technical assistance on the projects or the organizations beyond the projects.

- *The whole experience was transformative.*
- *Our project represented a field-level innovation [that enhanced our reputation].*
- *Opportunity to innovate at the field level propelled us onto the national stage.*
- *The impact of the grant has been at the field level, shifting a long-held notion about our art form.*
- *Our project made our mission relevant to a whole new audience.*

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(Impact of Technical Assistance, continued)

- *We anticipate we will encounter less resistance to the next "big idea."*
- *We didn't know exactly what we wanted to do and the Lab helped us figure it out.*
- *Our project changed significantly during the Lab process.*
- *We knew what we wanted to do and the Lab helped us implement it.*
- *One way the Lab succeeds is that it points to additional things that should be done, but then there's no money for them.*
- *The project itself was simple, it really was an opportunity for organizational review and change.*
- *The Lab was incredibly important in focusing all the key players in a concentrated period without distractions.*
- *The organizational reexamination during the Lab may have been as helpful as the project itself.*
- *Our facilitators recognized that our project was masking deeper organizational issues and encouraged us to shift focus to those issues.*

Many comments complimented the skill and impact of the Innovation Lab facilitators. All of the facilitators were praised by name. Many Innovation Lab participants engaged their facilitators for continued help after the conclusion of the program. Many of the Continuing Innovation grantees also engaged outside consulting assistance, and they, too, said the outside help had been both effective and critical.

A common result was that the Innovation Team concept had a continuing effect in making organizations less "siloed"; the value of interdepartmental and cross-hierarchy participation seems to have stuck in many places. Some interviewees reported that their Innovation Team still functions as a leadership group within the organization, and others said they now regularly assemble cross-departmental teams composed of senior and junior staff to address organizational challenges.

In addition to the Innovation Team concept, a number of other ideas and skills translated nicely to respondents' everyday operations.

- *We started an "opportunity fund" within our organization that staff can apply for, modeled after the Lab.*
- *We designed a new project/product development process modeled on the Innovation Lab.*
- *Implemented techniques learned at the Lab to manage conversations/conflict among staff members.*
- *We brought the Ladder of Inference back and shared it with the entire staff.*
- *Enrollment coaching proved useful when we encountered pushback from our local community.*
- *Some of the interaction tools have been incorporated.*
- *Our new way of working can be exported not only to other areas of our organization, but also throughout the field.*

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(Impact of Technical Assistance, continued)

Interviewees – almost entirely organizational leaders – noted that their own work had been influenced by the Innovation Lab experience in a variety of ways.

- *The experience gave me a new way of talking about our work/put our work into context.*
- *I've adopted the habit of always thinking about what's next for my organization.*
- *I've learned that my leadership style was not suited to the organization so I've tried to change it.*
- *I've implemented techniques learned at the Lab to manage conversations among staff members.*
- *The Lab experience made me less afraid of conflict.*
- *The Lab experience improved my relationship with our board.*
- *My leadership was transformed along with our program.*
- *We are now more organized, with clearer responsibilities.*
- *Managerial leadership has been enabled, which has raised our level of professionalism and opened the possibility of further innovation.*
- *"Enrollment" coaching proved useful when we encountered pushback from our local community.*
- *The experience showed us the value of getting "outsiders'" perspectives on projects, gathering community input.*
- *The writing of the master plan was really painful, but we can refer back to it now when we find ourselves starting to reinvent the wheel or lacking motivation.*
- *We have a new appreciation for data; often hear staff members say "what would the study tell us?" when faced with a decision.*
- *Experience had a huge impact on staff leader's leadership choices/style.*
- *Can't pinpoint anything exactly, but feel there was an impact.*

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Program Design & Implementation

At the outset of the Innovation Lab, EmcArts defined *Innovation* as "instances of organizational change that result from a shift in underlying assumptions, are discontinuous from previous practices, and provide *new pathways to mission fulfillment*." (Emphasis added.) However, we discovered that a number of interviewees had reservations about that definition of the term and voiced the opinion that an "innovation" should have an impact beyond the internal concerns of the organization. We were intrigued to learn that EmcArts had modified its definition of "innovation" in mid-stream to conclude with " provide new pathways to creating public value."

Many respondents expressed their appreciation for DDCF's philosophical approach to grantmaking, which reflects a high degree of understanding of real-world challenges combined with a specific focus on increasing capacity for adaptation as a critical means of achieving sustainability. To an impressive degree, interviewees were aware of the special confluence of generosity and flexibility in the DDCF approach. Interviewees also praised the Innovation Lab, which brings high levels of experience together with a firm foundation in the best thinking of social scientists.

- *This was my first ever R&D money and it was extremely valuable to have a source willing to be on a project, willing to see it fail. (2 respondents)*
- *I'm grateful to DDCF for its flexibility and forward-leaning posture.*
- *DDCF's programs are among the very few that allow room for organizational change.*
- *DDCF's approach to managing/monitoring the grant was more compatible with an evolving, dynamic project than that of any other funder we've worked with.*
- *The significance of the Lab was not so much money; it was a process that helped with a very big change so there was a big return on the investment.*

Because the concept of a culture of change was central to the purpose of this study, we were alert to how the interviewees talked about it. From the first interview it was clear that an organization's determination to make a specific major change was not followed by an intention to embrace ongoing change.

- *A state of constant change in the organization is not our objective; we aspire to a stable organization that encourages programmatic flexibility.*
- *Culture change was not our objective; we wanted only to implement an innovative project.*
- *Organizational transformation wasn't our goal and it's not in our nature.*
- *Culture change was not our objective.*
- *The experience showed us that we need a strategic review of likely outcomes and constituent expectations instead of pursuing new ideas at the drop of a hat. We actually feel more selective about potential changes.*
- *The Lab set in motion an approach to working together that we have carried through.*
- *Impact of the Lab was limited to those who participated.*
- *We already were committed to change. The Lab saved us time; without it we would have found other money and other technical assistance.*
- *I can't say that this was a grant that transformed the way we operate as an organization.*
- *We've reached a beneficial new normal, but now it will be as much or more of a challenge to be responsive to the next big idea.*

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(Program Design & Implementation, continued)

- *We experienced significant culture change, but the changes are still too new to know whether the new normal will hold.*
- *All our programmatic change is additive; we are not good at phasing out programming.*
- *The funding and involvement of EmcArts/DDCF legitimized the specific change we wanted to make.*
- *Protecting continuity was what was most important to us.*

A substantial number of interviewees were concerned that the concept of innovation is over-emphasized in the grant making community, with too many funders focusing on it without adequate understanding of its proper place in the development of an organization. Many were concerned about the sustainability of the changes they had implemented as well as the process of achieving the changes.

- *It's time for funders to get over "innovation"; it's too trendy, too funder egocentric.*
- *The capacity to maintain existing relationship as we build new ones is emerging as a serious problem; DDCF made it safe to focus on innovation, maybe DDCF could also make it safe to talk about maintaining relationship.*
- *DDCF's arm's length approach to grantees—usually a good thing—may be problematic in circumstances where the organization has a good idea, but not the capacity to implement it smoothly.*
- *Shifting foundation priorities caused us "whiplash"; I worry that another major priority shift will require us to change course again and now we have too much on our plates to do that.*
- *A big challenge for us is sustainability of our program after the grants run out.*
- *The speed and intensity of the lab created a lot of stress for our organization; taxed our capacity.*
- *Innovation is disruptive; it is major to carve out time for work that has no earned income or ongoing support.*
- *What is supposed to happen to an organization after it innovates? Where does the funding come from to maintain changes? How do we keep innovating?*

Some interviewees went out of their way to tell us how much they appreciated the opportunity posed by the interview to reflect on their experiences.

- *This interview/these questions provided a useful opportunity to reflect on the experience/consider the big picture.*
- *We wish there was some follow-up built into the process because we could have used longer-tem support and periodic check-ins with our facilitator.*

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Appendix 1: Interviewed Grantees & Projects

EmcArts Innovation Lab for the Performing Arts

Cohort 1, 2009

1. The Civilians (NY): new media initiative to enhance audience interactivity
2. MAPP International Productions (NY): social media capacity of its website
3. Roadside Theater/Appalshop (KY): multi-arts model for creating work
4. STREB (NY): assess and implement projects that address audience diversification

Cohort 2, 2009

5. Children's Theatre Company (MN): transformed relationship with audience
6. HERE Arts Center (NY): harness the Web to expand audience reach
7. Oregon Shakespeare Festival (OR): online virtual collaborative workspace
8. Yerba Buena Center for the Arts (CA): transformed relationship with constituents

Cohort 3, 2009

9. Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company (NY): strategic alliance with Dance Theater Workshop
10. COCA-Center of Creative Arts (MO): program to use creativity and innovation in business
11. Liz Lerman Dance Exchange (MD): re-figured leadership structure for succession
12. University Musical Society (MI): social media strategy

Cohort 4, 2010

13. Denver Center Theatre Company (CO): strategies to reach young people
14. Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company (DC): connectivity principle to build new audience relationships
15. Wooster Group (NY): technology to reach larger audiences while keeping the organization small

Cohort 5, 2010

16. Dad's Garage Theatre Company (GA): expand theater work onto a multi-arts platform
17. Flynn Center for the Performing Arts (VT): using technology to connect with stakeholders
18. Pearl Theatre (NY): sustainability in the resident company model
19. Springboard for the Arts (MN): replicating its artist services model in other communities

Cohort 6, 2011

20. Northwestern University Settlement Association/Adventure Stage Chicago (IL): engage neighbors in a completely interactive theater process
21. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts (DC): use music and technology to promote peace in global conflict zones
22. New Dramatists (NY): re-configure the Playwrights Lab to accommodate widest range of artistic processes

Continuing Innovation (w/out participation in Innovation Lab)

23. Columbia University Center for Jazz Studies (NY): Jazz Composers Orchestra Institute
24. Jazz Arts Group of Columbus (OH): new approach to programming for young adult audiences
25. Theatre Bay Area (CA): the Intrinsic Impact project
26. Fractured Atlas (NY): open source ticketing platform
27. National Public Radio (DC): technology to create jazz listening club and foster appreciation
28. Wesleyan University (CT): infusing generative artists into curricular life around environmental issues

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Appendix 2: Sources

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Appendix 3: Interview Protocol

Purpose: to identify evidence, if any, that participation in the Innovation Lab or Continuing Innovation programs has resulted in beneficial changes in organizational culture.

Nature of Information: The information sought from the interviews is self-reported, and is of three types: open response, numerical rankings, and anecdotal examples. The numerical rankings will be obtained in advanced via email, if possible. The information will be qualitative, therefore potentially elusive, and the main emphasis in the interview itself is on eliciting concrete examples of post-grant organizational behavior - anecdotes that may be revealing in themselves but also potentially could fit into patterns across organizations. The numerical rankings are requested mainly to hedge against the risk that no such patterns will be revealed.

Time allotted: 60 minutes

Tone: Conversational, collegial.

1. 5 minutes: Break the ice, help interviewees be comfortable with desired level of candor. Assurance of confidentiality in re individual responses and anonymity in re quotes. Assurance that the project is to evaluate the effectiveness of the grant program, not the individual organizations, grantees. Explicit request for candor. OK to record?

2. 10 minutes: How receptive is your organization to changing your programs or methods in response to the environment? On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 as maximum emphasis on continuity (e.g., a great research university) and 5 as maximum emphasis on rapid change (e.g., a tech company whose products must be replaced rapidly), where would you place your organization's approach to change? Get specific example, if possible. Would you have answered this question differently before participating in the grant program?

3. 10 minutes: How does your organization make important decisions? On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 representing concentrated authority with wide input and 5 representing wide input without concentrated authority, where would you place your organization's approach to making decisions? Would you have answered this question differently before participating in the grant program?

4. 10 minutes: How is information shared in your organization? On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 representing concentration of information in one or very few people and 5 representing everyone-knows-everything, where would you place your organization's approach to information-sharing? Would you have answered this question differently before participating in the grant program?

5. 10 minutes: How is disagreement is handled in your organization? On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 representing avoiding conflict and 5 representing embracing conflict, where would you place your organization's approach to disagreement? Would you have answered this question differently before participating in the grant program?

6. 10 minutes: In retrospect, what impact did the technical assistance have on your organization's approach to subsequent questions/challenges? On a scale of 1 to 5, to what extent has your organization's behavior changed as a result of that experience? In what ways?

7. 5 minutes: Wrap-up. Any concluding thoughts? Thanks for participating.

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Appendix 4: Texts of Communications

July 2, 1012
I am writing to you today as a recipient of a past grant from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation (DDCF) designed to help your organization undertake an innovative approach to organizational issues—a grant you received through the EmcArts Innovation Lab for the Performing Arts and/or through DDCF's Continuing Innovation Program.

We periodically review our grantmaking programs, engaging independent evaluators to assess our work and have asked Ed Martenson to assess the above-mentioned programs. Ed will already be known to many of you—former head of the National Endowment for the Arts Theatre Program, Executive Director of the Guthrie Theater, Vice-President for Education for National Arts Strategies and currently Chair of Theatre Management at the Yale School of Drama.

Ed or his associate Martha Jurczak will be contacting you to request time to interview you about the longer-term impact of this grant on your organization. We will be awarding your organization an honorarium of $100 should you elect to participate in the evaluation—an amount we wish could be larger but one that we think is important to offer.

To be clear, the objective of this study is not to determine whether these grants succeeded in their original intent (although if they did, we are delighted), but to hear more about the impact—if any—the grants had on the organization in a long-term way, if indeed that can be determined. We have always said that funding of innovation will inevitably mean that we will support projects that "fail" and that more appropriate criteria for success may lie in what was learned, regardless of the outcome of the project. We urge you to be absolutely candid with Ed about your project, helping him—and us—learn how our grantmaking might be improved.

We also understand that your time is precious, that the individuals in charge of the project may have left the organization, that you may not feel you can offer any perspective on the grant, and that there may be other reasons you choose not to participate. We absolutely understand should you decline Ed's request but hope, of course, that you will be able to give him some time, both for our sake here as well as for the sake of the larger field.

All the best to you, as always.

Ben Cameron
Program Director for the Arts
Doris Duke Charitable Foundation

July 6, 2012
I'm writing to introduce myself, Martha Jurczak, and Ed Martenson. As Ben noted, we will be contacting you to schedule interviews about the impact of your innovation grants on organizational culture. I will be contacting each organization individually to work out scheduling, but in the meantime, I would appreciate your help in identifying the appropriate individual at your organization to speak to our topic. (A few of you have already responded with this information. We thank you, and there is no need to respond again.)

We would ideally like to schedule our interview with the person leading your organization or the organizational unit involved in executing the project funded by the grant, OR, for Innovation Lab grantees, the person leading the innovation team. I would be grateful if you could put me in touch with the person who fits one or all of these descriptions at your organization.

Prior to each interview, Ed and I will send the interviewee a list of topics and questions to spur our conversation so that we make the most of our limited interview time.

Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions. Ed and I look forward to working with you and learning more about your organizations, and we are grateful for your participation in this study.

Best,
Martha

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Staggered timing, week before scheduled interview
Thank you for agreeing to participate in the study we are conducting on behalf of the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation (DDCF). Below are six questions we'd like you to respond to via email prior to our one-hour interview on [Monday, August 6 at 10:30am]. We expect these questions will take you 5 minutes to answer. During our talk, you will be asked to follow up your quantitative responses with related anecdotes about your organization. We hope that these questions will prompt you to think about related stories, which will allow us to delve deeply into our topics of interest in the short time we have allotted for our talk.

We're being asked to evaluate whether your organization's participation in the DDCF program has had a lasting effect on your organization's attitude toward innovation—a cultural change. We know that the concepts of innovation and organizational culture are elusive so we will ask about a few topics in order to bring the concepts into focus: responsiveness to environmental changes, decision making, information sharing, and conflict/disagreement.

This study is intended to evaluate the efficacy of the DDCF grant program; we are not charged with evaluating your organization. All of your answers will remain confidential; Ed and I will not share them except with one another. We may quote you in our final report, but all quotations will be anonymous.

[Ed or I] will conduct your interview on Monday. [He or I] look[s] forward to speaking with you. Please don't hesitate to be in touch if you have any questions or concerns.

Best,
Martha

QUESTIONS (please answer with a number, 1-5):
1. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 as maximum emphasis on continuity (e.g., a great research university) and 5 as maximum emphasis on rapid change (e.g., a tech company whose products must be replaced rapidly), where would you place your organization's approach to change?

2. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 representing concentrated authority with wide input and 5 representing wide input without concentrated authority, where would you place your organization's approach to making decisions?

3. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 representing concentration of information in one or very few people and 5 representing everyone-knows-everything, where would you place your organization's approach to information-sharing?

4. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 representing avoiding conflict and 5 representing embracing conflict, where would you place your organization's approach to disagreement?

5. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 representing no change and 5 representing a complete 180, to what extent has your organization's behavior changed as a result of the technical assistance from the grant?

6. Finally, would you have answered any of these questions differently before participating in the grant program? If so, please think of specific examples of how things have changed so that you may share them in our interview.

Staggered timing, after interview
Thank you for participating in the study we are conducting on behalf of the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation. Your insights will inform and enrich our report to the Foundation about the impact of the Innovation Lab and Continuing Innovation grant programs on the organizational cultures of the grantees.

The enclosed check for $100 is a token of gratitude, from us and from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, for your commitment of time and energy to helping the Foundation improve its grant programs.

Sincerely,

Ed Martenson

Sincerely,

Martha Jurczak

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