



IDEAS
Collaborative

**FINAL REPORT SUMMARY
PHASE 1
FEBRUARY 15, 2011**

The IDEAS Collaborative (Initiative to Develop and Engage Audiences in Syracuse)

is supported by



**The John Ben Snow
Foundation**

Summary of Findings and Recommendations

Strengthening the Fabric of the Cultural Community

The IDEAS Collaborative (Initiative for Developing and Engaging Audiences in Syracuse) was launched in May 2010 in response to national declines in arts audiences and funding and a movement among grantmakers to provide sustainable support for cultural organizations through collaborative funding models. The intent of this initiative is to strengthen the fabric of the cultural community in Syracuse and Onondaga County. By working together, funders, grantees, and community members share the common goals of increasing cultural participation, identifying and growing sustainable audiences, and uncovering opportunities for cooperative activity and resource sharing.

This effort is a partnership between six local funders (the funding group)¹ and 43 Onondaga County organizations² ranging in budget size from under \$100,000 to over \$10 million. These organizations came together over the course of nine months to use market research, audience feedback, community engagement, and facilitated internal discussions to establish common goals and a design for this unique venture.

The IDEAS Collaborative (led initially by the funding group) hired Surale Phillips, President of Decision Support Partners, Inc., to launch the project's first research phase after hearing of the company's successful initiatives in other communities.³ In general terms, these initiatives helped increase cultural participation—most communities saw between 5% and 10% growth in audience quickly. However, the most compelling benefits revealed by cultural leaders in these communities were the ways in which organizations changed in response to the research results, the overall picture the research provided about the local consumer base, and how collaboration strengthened existing networks of cultural organizations. These projects led to new program development as well as promotional collaborations both large and small. In some cases the projects opened up new earned and contributed revenue streams for the lead agencies and many of the participants.

In their preliminary investigation, the IDEAS Collaborative funding group also learned that the most successful collaborative initiatives were the ones where financial resources for implementation grants and technical assistance were provided to the participating organizations. While this first phase of the IDEAS Collaborative project was limited to aggregate research, the funding group understood from the beginning that additional phases of collaboration, beyond data and survey analysis, might be in order for Syracuse.

¹ The funding group includes the Allyn Foundation, Central New York Community Foundation, Gifford Foundation, Reisman Foundation, John Ben Snow Foundation, and the Cultural Resources Trust of the County of Onondaga.

² The participating organizations are listed at the end of this document.

³ Memphis, TN; Kansas City, MO; York, PA; Orlando, FL, Milwaukee, WI, and Erie, PA.

The Benefits of a Collective, Sustainable Strategy

Ms. Phillips came to Syracuse in May 2010 to meet with organizational leaders and the funding group to discuss the project's potential. A formal presentation was made to a group of more than 80 individuals with an invitation to participate. Forty-three organizations opted in and, with nearly 100% buy-in to Phase 1 (aggregate geodemographic market research and community engagement), the project commenced in June 2010. Geodemographic research was completed in September and community engagement was completed in November.

Since an integral part of this project was balancing the intent of the funding group with the goals of participating organizations and the needs expressed by community residents, the consultant distributed a draft of her findings and recommendations for comment to all organizations involved in the Collaborative. She also met in small groups with the participating organizations prior to completing her recommendations to ensure that the results were supported by a majority of participants and a variety of perspectives.

Although the majority of organizations were eager to take part in the initiative, some were wary. A few had concerns over how investment in collective efforts and specific funding for audience development might impact their ability to seek general (unrestricted) operating support from the Cultural Resources Trust and the five private foundations making up the funding group. The study coincided with political battles over local arts funding and county cutbacks, which increased the worry that money to individual organizations would be re-directed to the Collaborative. What would be the cost of this marketing project to general operations for arts and cultural nonprofits? This is not an uncommon reaction; other communities have had to struggle with similar issues.

To quote Russell Willis Taylor, President of National Arts Strategies, *"An arts leader's role with regard to community is not to seek institutional structural preservation, but instead to look at how connections can be made that will benefit the community."*⁴ While some in the funding group may in the future revisit how they choose to invest in arts and cultural development, their investment in the IDEAS Collaborative is not a zero-sum approach to strengthening the cultural sector. One of the key goals of the IDEAS Collaborative is to ultimately increase resources for arts, culture, and heritage and to make those resources go farther and last longer. This project is much more than the sum of its parts and cannot be measured by gains and losses of individual organizations.

The funding group is concerned that there are aspects of current funding practices for arts organizations in Syracuse and Onondaga County that are not sustainable. Funders are often in a reactive rather than proactive role responding to organizations on a project by project basis with little connection to one another and to how the whole ecosystem is working together. Some organizations rely on emergency operational funds from the Cultural Resources Trust which is a finite resource. The funders group also believes that it is imperative for grantmakers to work together to find creative ways to insure the long-

⁴ Keynote address at the Bolz Center Collegium at the Wisconsin School of Business in Madison, September 16, 2010.

term viability of providers of cultural activities and by taking a longer view, they will be able to collaborate better and create a system whereby a larger pool of resources can be built.

By channeling investment in the overall arts ecosystem into new audience development and a sustainable system for ongoing collective marketing, the funding group hopes to leverage long-term benefits that are sustainable as well as responsive to larger economic development opportunities. A stronger arts and cultural landscape in Syracuse benefits the entire region by improving quality of life, increasing tourism, engaging residents and strengthening workforces, and can act as an economic engine to revitalize the community. In turn, a more vital Onondaga County benefits each and every one of the arts and culture organizations through an increased tax base, healthier businesses, and population growth.

If this project is successfully completed over the next few years, then in the future these organizations can have a more powerful voice in advocating for and receiving increased governmental, corporate and private support locally and nationally.

The recommendations in this report include an approach for subsequent phases of project work and a new funding mechanism based on input from all participants, and in response to concerns that funding through the initiative might supplant general operating support—a vital part of the revenue mix. However, it is important to underscore that the funders in this group set their own guidelines and criteria; how each foundation, or the Cultural Resources Trust, chooses to provide arts and culture funding beyond or outside of the IDEAS Collaborative may differ. The IDEAS Collaborative offers a new collective funding strategy that can fund the collective marketing needs of the arts and cultural community in Syracuse, and eventually provide grants for specific audience development initiatives tailored to an organization’s unique circumstances and challenges as revealed in the research.

IDEAS: The Time Has Come

While the cultural sector of Onondaga County creates a quality of life unmatched by many communities its size, a next generation of audiences for arts and cultural programs can’t be presumed. Shifting demographics, rising inflation, limited arts exposure in public schools, reduced public and private funding for the arts, and our national economic recession are all tearing away at the fabric of the cultural community. Continued investment in sustaining current audiences while also building future audiences is vital to the sector’s health. This is not new information, and it’s not the first time that Onondaga County has identified the need to develop and engage new audiences. In fact, the need to cultivate new audiences (as well as “money” and “leadership”) was among the three findings of the Onondaga Citizens League (OCL) 2002 study on the arts.⁵

⁵ The State of the Arts: A report presented by the Onondaga Citizens League (Report No. 23, 2002).

“Attracting younger and more diverse participants to the arts is a major challenge faced by our community. For arts and cultural institutions, the challenge is to identify and offer meaningful arts and cultural experiences that will overcome the gaps in economic, social, and cultural realities. Opportunities exist within the education system; however, resources are not always available to capitalize on those opportunities. Lastly, the media underestimates its role in cultivating an audience for arts and culture.”—
The Onondaga Citizens League

There are several recommendations in the 2002 OCL report that are echoed in this IDEAS report. Among the items that have yet to be fully realized by the community are:

- *“Develop and maintain a website that serves as a cultural guide, media directory, and ticketing agent for all of Central New York;”*
- *“Facilitate more collaborative activities between cultural organizations such as joint marketing, promotions, ticket sales, event planning, and fund raising;”*
- *“We need a transportation infrastructure linking all cultural destinations in the area; it should be free or low cost, safe and easy to use. Parking should be improved, especially at night;”*
- *“The media can make the arts accessible by providing ‘what to know before you go’ features...the newspapers are in a particularly good position to provide maps to the artistic and cultural experiences that are off the beaten path. Arts and cultural groups must take more initiative to get more attention from the media outlets as well as think creatively about reaching audiences through websites and alternative venues within the community;”*
- *“Attract more visitors to the area by promoting the greater Syracuse area as an arts and culture destination;”*
- *“Market cultural tourism to attract more visitors to the area. This calls for even more collaborations between the Cultural Resources Council (CRC) and the Syracuse Convention and Visitors Bureau, NYS Council on the Arts, and the NYS Tourism Committee to ensure that arts and culture are represented in all Central New York tourism promotion.”*

In 2008, the Cultural Resources Council hosted the New York State Council on the Arts “Blue Prints” meeting for arts organizations in central New York. (The Blue Prints project is modeled on the Empire State Development Corporation regional development initiatives.) One of the key goals identified at this convening was the need for a unique arts and culture website that the general public could visit for current and comprehensive information about arts and cultural activities.

The arts are also on the forefront of efforts to improve downtown. CNYSpeaks⁶ includes art and aesthetics in its current Downtown Agenda; the ultimate goal of which is to “support, market and expand Downtown’s cultural assets while working to bring a little glitz and glamor to its streets.” The

⁶ CNYSpeaks is a nonpartisan, nonprofit effort that seeks to spark constructive conversations with Central New Yorkers about critical issues in the region. It is a partnership started by *The Post-Standard*, Syracuse.com, and Syracuse University’s Maxwell School. Using facilitated live forums, online social networking tools, surveys and journalistic articles, CNYSpeaks works to get beyond platitudes and move toward consensus. Community conversations are distilled into Citizen Agendas that help guide policy makers, business leaders and others that shape the world around us.

action steps in its Citizen's Agenda include many efforts that address ways in which downtown cultural assets can work together with other agencies and each other to bolster the cultural scene.

Nine years later, community members are still concerned about these issues. Now is the time to implement the IDEAS Collaborative strategies and to ensure that they are appropriately resourced.

The IDEAS Community Vision

Between May 2010 and January 2011, the consultant visited Syracuse three times to hold meetings with the participant organizations and the funding group to establish common goals for the research, establish the research approaches, and subsequently vet the research findings and report recommendations.

In an early visioning session, the participants outlined their vision for the future of their arts and cultural community; below is a summary of that vision. Each of these themes expresses a common hope for the future of arts and culture in the community and each was embedded into the research protocol in the form of topics, questions, and approaches:

- to create sustainable resources;
- to collaborate strategically;
- to improve the health of the community through arts and culture'
- to increase public value for arts and culture;
- to innovate in the areas of audience development and marketing;
- to engage youth and families more effectively; and,
- to be accessible and to engage a broader public.

While the 2002 Onondaga Citizens League report analyzed the cultural sector's needs from the inside out, the IDEAS Collaborative research studied the needs from the outside in, looking deeply at the characteristics of the consumer base and current audiences in the area, and engaging the community directly in the conversation about the future of arts and culture.

IDEAS Research Specifics (Phase 1)

Phase 1 of the IDEAS project involved aggregate market research. To study the market and the aggregate arts/culture/heritage audience, Decision Support Partners:

- analyzed existing audience characteristics and compared them to the population at large;
- identified consumer demand for arts and culture in local market segments;
- collected community input through public meetings and surveys;
- tested solutions for removing barriers to cultural participation; and,
- recommended solutions for implementation in future project phases.

Research specifics included:⁷

- geodemographic analysis of more than 77,000 households affiliated with the IDEAS Collaborative organizations;
- overlap analysis of audience households among the IDEAS Collaborative organizations;
- community conversations and a public forum (hosted by CNY Speaks) in nine city/county locations involving more than 150 area residents; and,
- community survey of close to 3,000 area residents representing current and potential audiences.

This report is the first step in a process that is anticipated to last three years. It provides an aggregate look at the current audience makeup for the cultural sector and identifies needs and opportunities from the perspectives of organizations providing programming and services, those who fund them, and the community at large. The findings here are supported by research documents available to all members of the Collaborative.

Should the funding group approve the recommendations in this report, more specific findings, recommendations, and technical assistance will be provided to IDEAS organizations in the early stages of Phase 2, along with implementation funding for collective audience development/marketing efforts and other technical assistance.

⁷ Detailed methodology of all research efforts can be found in supporting research documents.

Summary of Research Findings

(1) The arts and cultural sector has strong market penetration in the greater Syracuse area.

- Residents of Onondaga County take part in local cultural life in big numbers. The geodemographic analysis of audience household records submitted by the IDEAS Collaborative organizations showed that, in the aggregate, the cultural sector is reaching upwards of 34% of local households. Add to this number the participant households that go undocumented (walk-ins, university campus programs attendees, festivals, and free events) and the true market penetration is likely to be much higher.
- Audiences are diverse. A MOSAIC⁸ study of the households affiliated with IDEAS Collaborative participants shows that there are 43 different MOSAIC groups dominant in the area, and the cultural sector has some reach into each of them. Within the strongest demand groups for the arts, penetration into specific MOSAIC clusters (the most affluent, most educated, and least ethnically diverse) exceeds 70%. The groups have names like “Upscale Suburbanites,” “Affluent Urban Professionals,” and “Small Town Success.” But the sector also has strong penetration into a few MOSAIC groups that tend to skew lower in income and are diverse in race, geography, and lifestyle. These include groups such as “Minority Metro Communities,” “Unattached Multicultures,” “Young Cosmopolitans,” and “Ethnic Urban Mix.”

Implications

- ✓ These are strengths on which to build; it is as important to maintain this strong market as it is to look at future issues of sustainability.

“I was really interested in reading about the consumers. Who they are, what their interests are, and where they live. The demographics surprised me in a few cases.”—IDEAS Collaborative Organization

⁸ MOSAIC is the lifestyle segmentation system used for the geodemographic analysis. The system, which is a product of Experian, breaks the consumer market into a series of lifestyle groups with unique names that are further described with key demographics, media preferences, and other types of activity and behavioral tendencies. Methodology and MOSAIC descriptions are fully explained in the Geodemographic Analysis Report.

(2) The greater Syracuse community strongly values arts and cultural opportunity.

- The overwhelming response to the community survey (more than 3,000 people) shows a strong community interest in cultural development. These survey respondents, while interested enough in the topic to respond to a survey, were for the most part not very frequent arts and cultural patrons.
- Community residents responding to the survey place a high value on the contribution that arts and culture brings to the area:
 - 89% believe that the work of artists and cultural organizations contributes to a positive sense of community;
 - 78% believe that the work of artists and cultural organizations contributes to the economic vitality of the region;
 - 73% believe that the work of artists and cultural organizations reflects the diversity of cultures and people in Syracuse/Onondaga County; and,
 - 72% report that they go out for arts and cultural events about the same or more than they did before the economic recession.
- Community residents also believe it is important to personally engage in an art form of some kind (rating of 7.34 on a 10-point scale), but that it is even more important to be able to attend or visit art shows or cultural experiences (8.51 on a 10-point scale). Even residents who do not attend believe it is important for them to have opportunities to attend.
- Comments heard in the community conversations that took place throughout the city and county prior to the survey were extremely positive with regard to the abundance of events, the quality of many of the offerings, and the fun, creative, moving, and intellectual experiences offered through local arts and cultural organizations. Community suggestions for increasing participation centered on fairly basic issues: providing adequate public and private resources to support arts and culture; making the arts more prominent in the landscape of the city and region; and making activities more accessible to more people.

Implications

- ✓ Tell the story of the impact of arts and culture better and more often as part of an overall public marketing and PR campaign. Share voices and images from the community in making the case for how the arts benefit people's lives and the community.
- ✓ Invest in efforts that create more access for active participation (personal creativity) and passive participation (attending).

"Keep funding, promoting and advertising the arts and culture that already exists and encourage more to come to Syracuse. I feel lucky that there is so much to experience in Syracuse now."—IDEAS Collaborative Survey Response

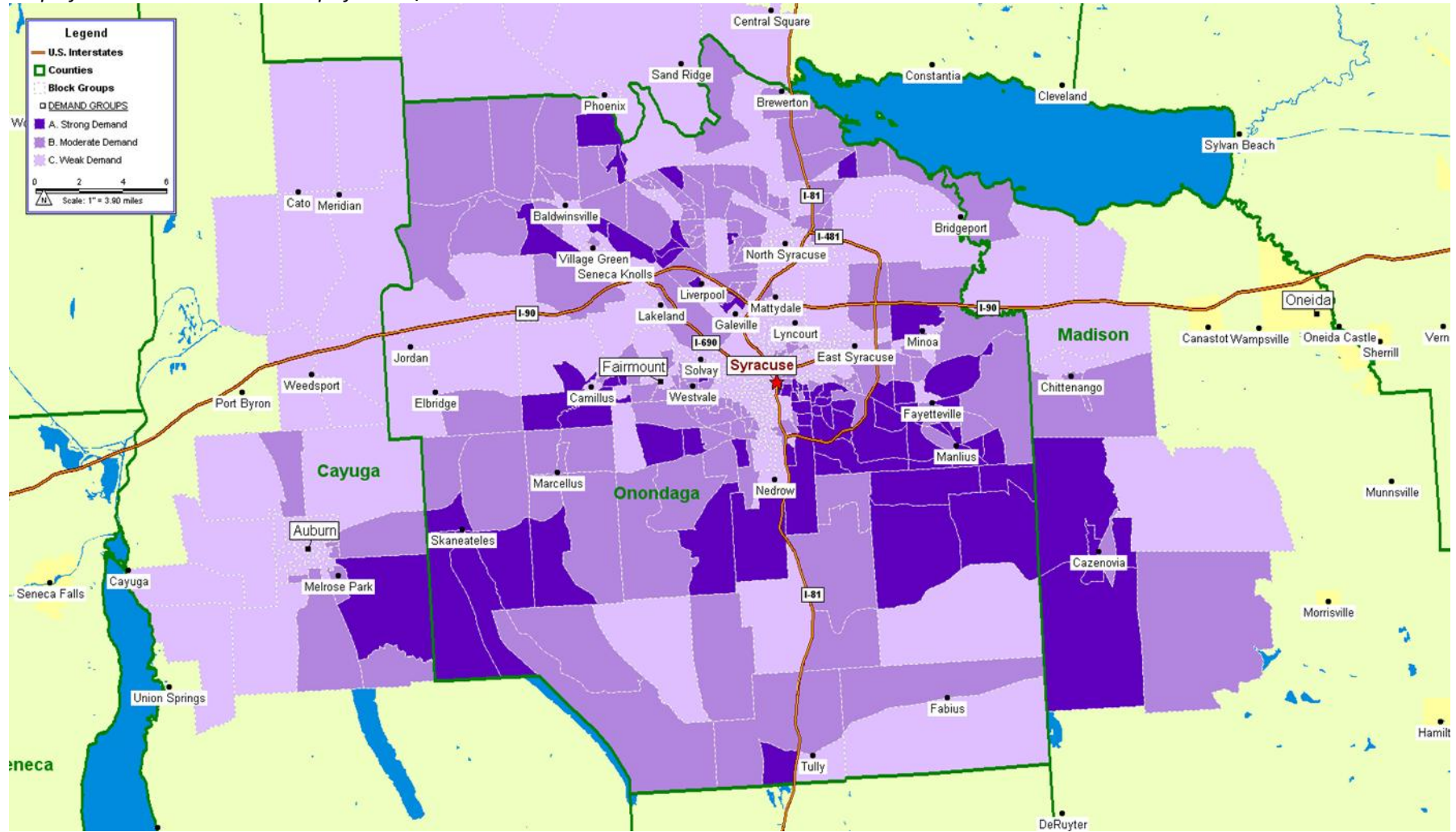
(3) There are three distinct arts/culture market segments in the greater Syracuse area that need attention.

- From a consumer perspective, Onondaga County breaks down into three distinct cultural “demand” groups. There are different types of opportunity in these groups and each needs its own strategic marketing approach.
 - A strong demand group that, while small (15% of households), still needs to be maintained through continued high-quality programs and improvements in products and services.
 - A moderate demand group that is large (32% of households) and warrants investment into strategies that address practical barriers such as low awareness, high price points, and lifestyle relevance (families with children, young professionals, seniors, etc.).
 - A weak demand group that is very large (53% of households) and will require innovative strategies that address complex barriers to participation such as early exposure, low education levels, social isolation, fear, and extremely low and/or fixed incomes.

- Findings from the community engagement research underscore these results. Community meetings that were held in neighborhoods located in the strong demand markets identified barriers to participation such as too many competing events, few programs of exceptional quality, information that is hard to find, and a concentration of activities downtown and at night. In meetings located where demand is moderate, the barriers to participation centered on issues of awareness; lack of variety in the experiences; poor use of social media technology; no identity (brand) for Syracuse culture; poor lighting, parking and pedestrian corridors; and lack of enticing promotions. In weak demand areas, barriers to participation centered on price (particularly for families), lack of transportation, lack of diversity in the offerings, and impressions of elitism.

- An overview of the geodemographic characteristics also shows that the demographics of the populations that dominate these areas are quite different, as are the ways in which each group uses media, and the types of activities they tend to prefer.

Map of Consumer Demand Groups for Arts/Culture



Implications

- ✓ Invest in collaborative solutions that improve coordination of and access to arts/cultural information.
- ✓ Invest in collaborative solutions that improve the overall cultural “experience,” particularly downtown.
- ✓ Invest in organizations directly addressing community needs and countering the barriers that were identified in the research.
- ✓ Invest in organizational risk-taking that may bring organizations and community members out of their “comfort zones” to try new activities.

“It is often cost-prohibitive for my small family of three to afford tickets to the Symphony, Open Hand Theatre, children’s ballet like the Nutcracker, or even events at the Red House. We would do a lot more if we could afford to. Festivals like the Blues Festival (canceled this year) and free music series like the Hanover Square series (now defunct) were great places for my family to go for free performances.”—IDEAS Collaborative Survey Response

“Appeal more to people in my age demographic (20s) than to families with kids/teens. We have more money and time to throw around. Not to generalize, but we tend to also be more supportive of the arts, and we want to see stuff that’s new, different and exciting. You need to give us reasons to come out and participate.”—IDEAS Collaborative Survey Response

“I joyfully attended cultural and theater events my whole life, but now that I can no longer drive at night, my options are limited. I attend matinee performances at Stage and Opera, but sorely miss the Symphony, Friends of Chamber Music and other evening-only events that I always loved.”—IDEAS Collaborative Survey Response

(4) Consumer demand for arts and culture could be better linked to the supply.

- The trade area for this study includes Onondaga County and a few adjacent communities (around Cazenovia, Auburn, and Fulton) termed the “local market.” There are 228,161 households and a population of 562,125, according to 2010 Census estimates, in this area. While local market penetration is strong overall (34%), some geographic pockets within might be described as over-saturated. In some cases, ZIP code penetration is more than 90%; there is virtually no untapped demand in the areas showing the strongest arts and cultural participation. An analysis of total untapped demand for arts and cultural participation from consumer households in the local trade area is estimated to be 12,000 households, about 5% of the total household market.
- Other geographic pockets show moderate market penetration and untapped consumer demand—mainly in the outer suburbs of Syracuse in places such as Jamesville, Cazenovia, Marcellus, Camillus, Liverpool, Fabius, and Baldwinsville, along with several Syracuse ZIP codes.

Combined, this moderate demand market holds 3,500 untapped households. Inner city (Syracuse) and mostly very rural areas of Onondaga County show low market penetration, but they show the most untapped consumer demand—11,500 households.

- The abundance of cultural opportunity in the area is a major asset to the region, but it also presents challenges for certain types of organizations, particularly those who may be offering very similar programs or program formats (according to consumers). Respondents to the community survey describe arts and culture in ways that go beyond what the organizations and programs represented in the IDEAS Collaborative have to offer. For example, people say their cultural participation includes local fairs and festivals, going to movies, walking around neighborhoods looking at architecture and public art, culinary activities and events, competitions, collecting antiques, and other informal arts activities. The limitations of this study can't account for all of that participation, but when added to the mix of what is available to a market the size of Syracuse, untapped consumer demand is probably less than we can determine through this research.
- Almost a third of survey respondents say that there are too many events taking place on the same dates and times. Community conversations also revealed concerns about seasonal programming, with too many schedules directed at retiree lifestyles and snowbirds, rather than at the working population throughout the calendar year.

Implications

- ✓ Better coordinate and plan as early as possible.
- ✓ Ensure that strategies are developed to reach more local audiences and to attract regional day-trippers and more overnight visitors to the area with packages.
- ✓ Use more daytime and weekday hours, and spread out programs more evenly during the year.
- ✓ Make event information more accurate and searchable by times/ days/ months /seasons/ after-school/daytime/etc.
- ✓ Develop product, and experiment with formats for how the product is delivered.
- ✓ Consider cultural way-finding as part of the marketing program; orient people, even locals to the cultural assets that surround them.
- ✓ Consider conducting case studies of supply, demand, and facility, comparing the greater Syracuse area to other benchmark cities such as Rochester, Buffalo, and Albany, NY; Springfield, MA; Grand Rapids, MI; and Erie, PA.

“Sometimes it seems like there’s not much going on for several weeks at a time, then suddenly multiple events are happening the same weekend or over the same day. It’s unfortunate where there are two or three different things you’d like to attend, and you’re forced to choose one over the other.”—IDEAS Collaborative Survey Response.

(5) Ticket prices, scheduling conflicts, and a lack of compelling, broad-based, accurate and easy-to-find information are the practical barriers to more cultural participation.

- Community survey respondents do not feel they are well-informed (rating of 6.17 on a 10-point scale). While there are several organizations and websites that offer event calendar listings, they are not comprehensive, do not offer direct communication opportunities, and are not always up-to-date.
- More than half of the community respondents say they hear about events too late to take advantage of them; the main complaint is that there is no central “go-to” source of information specific to arts and culture. Media reviews and features often take place after programs are over.
- Most community respondents turn to *The Post-Standard* print edition or its online edition www.syracuse.com for information about arts and entertainment. However, those who use www.syracuse.com feel the least informed, on average. Respondents who use www.syracusearts.net feel the most informed, but they complain that while it offers basic calendar information it does not complete the marketing message by helping them understand the offerings enough to aid in decision-making. The Cultural Resources Council (CRC) provides a link to www.syracusearts.net on its website, www.mycnyarts.org, but the CRC website is not a marketing site for arts and culture, but the organizational site of the CRC. The *Post-Standard* print edition is where most current audiences turn for calendar information and look for critical reviews. Working with traditional media more effectively is important because many of the strong demand group MOSAIC lifestyle segments, while heavy internet users, are also heavy users of traditional media, including newspapers.
- Consistent promotions would help keep people informed; 88% of community survey respondents would welcome a monthly notification of upcoming events from a central source.
- Price is a barrier to participation for 40% of the community respondents.
- Almost a third of respondents say that there are too many events taking place on the same dates and times and that evening events start too late.

Implications

- ✓ Establish a task force to oversee development of a website (an integrated web-based tool for public marketing, data capture and warehousing, internal communications, and potentially opt-in list sharing). While considering options for collective marketing tools, it is important that these be developed with input from companies and people running current sites. The goal should be one arts/culture site with one engine that can neatly populate

other public sites, and mobile devices, and adapt as new information technology tools enter the market.

- ✓ Consider collective packaging that can be advertised with cost-sharing among organizations.
- ✓ Consider ways in which a central entity such as the Cultural Resources Council might coordinate PR on behalf of organizations that do not have adequate resources.

“Syracuse.com is not the answer. It leads with sports and weather; we lead with arts and culture.”—IDEAS Collaborative Organization

“My husband and I frequently find out about really great events AFTERWARDS or in some cases the DAY it’s going on. We are busy people who love to enjoy our community and culture—we do not have the time (nor energy) to explore a bazillion different avenues to figure out what is available. A dedicated ... Events and Activities website—well organized and thought through—would be invaluable! And I would definitely have it bookmarked.”—IDEAS Collaborative Survey Response

“The Post-Standard may increase ad revenue from arts organizations if it invests in restoring critics and feature writers. Perhaps we need a freelance marketing talent that works with ALL the organizations on a collective project that packages information and ticket offers which can be advertised through existing media as well as offered at convenient locations in the community.”—IDEAS Collaborative Organization

(6) Broadening audiences may require more variety of programs and delivery formats to increase how often people engage with arts and culture.

- Highly saturated areas are the strongest markets for arts and cultural participation, but they don’t hold much room for growth in “new” audience. The characteristics of the households in these areas skew the highest for age, education, and income. Programming for and marketing to households in these areas might help to maintain the audience, but it is not likely to increase participation or broaden the audience base. The household characteristics of untapped households—those in which interest in arts and culture is evident—are very different from the characteristics of households in the strongest markets. Such households are more likely to be younger singles and young families with children; they are likely to be less educated and have lower income. They have different needs, interests and barriers. Awareness and familiarity with small and mid-size cultural organizations is likely to be very low because there is no direct communication with households who are not on long-held mailing lists, and often these organizations do not have sufficient advertising dollars to reach these households.
- Community members suggested training for organizations in how to use social media effectively and conduct audience surveys. These participants want an avenue to comment on their satisfaction and to share their interests. Specific to marketing promotions, community members mentioned loyalty programs, trials, and samplers, such as those found in the commercial sector.

They also suggested that more programming links between cultural organizations and non-arts organizations and causes (e.g. animal rescue, food banks, etc.) is a way to attract their attention.

- The need for a lead agency to take on overall marketing for the arts and culture sector was mentioned often in the community engagement research. But the lead agency was also described as being an entity that could provide more services (even fee-based) that go beyond a marketing website. For example, this agency might provide:
 - coordinated PR efforts for organizations in need;
 - coordinated tourism promotions with the CVB;
 - facilitation of sector-wide partnerships with national agencies (AARP, AAA), local business (workplace promotional packages, dining and shopping promotions) and national grantmakers;
 - collaborative group sales;
 - cultural concierge program to provide people who work with public tours the information and incentive to promote arts and culture;
 - workplace ambassadors program;
 - collaborative prospecting list based on MOSAIC groups; and,
 - training or resources to conduct audience surveys.
- IDEAS Collaborative organizations feel a comprehensive arts and culture website is also a means for them to continue to truly collaborate—to plan together, share information, and expand revenue opportunities unrelated to marketing programs and events. For example, a comprehensive site might afford local artists and organizations a space to collectively promote what services they have for hire (i.e. a “You can Hire Me” section).

Implications

- ✓ Invest in the CRC as the area’s local arts agency/service provider to take on the planning, coordination, and implementation of collaborative efforts. Consider rebranding this agency so that it is more easily understood as the “go-to” place for anyone looking for arts and cultural information.
- ✓ Invest in support grants for organizations taking informed risks.

“I think collaboration at this point is imperative. I realized this especially when I read the piece about audience overlap. We all may feel we target the same audience and the same media, but I think if we collaborate more we can actually interest the media more. This is a small town and collaboration may be in the best interest of each of our organizations.”—IDEAS Collaborative Organization

“Communication between organizations is incredibly important. If the only form of collaboration once the study is over is that all organizations put their events on one easy-to-access calendar (which would be great), then we have not fully succeeded. I genuinely hope more than just a calendar is the

result. We need to continue to work together to get people into our institutions.”—IDEAS Collaborative Organization

“Creating a one-stop clearinghouse for arts and cultural events and information that is distributed in a number of ways (social media, email, website, print component, presence in other local publications/sites) to reach the widest possible audience.”—IDEAS Collaborative Survey Response

“The scene is too confusing, too many small groups with too many different events overlapping and competing for the public. Simplify and cooperate and partner up.”—IDEAS Collaborative Survey Response

“The arts need to be more collaborative and work together either offering joint offers or actual programming in order to take advantage of their already established audiences, as well as expose new patrons to more than one organization.”—IDEAS Collaborative Survey Response

“I was very excited about the 40-Below promos with Syracuse Stage and Syracuse Symphony. It would be great to see more volume discounts like those.”—IDEAS Collaborative Survey Response

(7) Onondaga arts and culture needs a brand identity fully supported by a marketing program.

- The primary take-away message from the community input (both conversations and survey) was the need for a branded arts and cultural image and overall marketing campaign that is supported by one comprehensive “go to” place for information. Elements such as a website, billboards, signage, logos, etc. should all support the brand. In addition, the brand needs a leader. Currently there is also no clear way to find information and the leadership image on the arts and cultural development front is fragmented.
- A website is envisioned as much more than a calendar of events. It should guide people easily to what they are interested in, link immediately to the information they need, and offer the ability to opt-in to get periodic alerts, promotions, and reminders about what is available. Community members expect up-to-the-minute accuracy as well as long planning windows. Last-minute decision-makers want cultural offerings immediately on their radar; planners want to know what is on the horizon months out. Audiences and organizations might also benefit from a central location that posts links to reviews of previous shows as a way for the public to learn more (before reviews appear) and to post audience feedback as well.
- Respondents from the community survey are heavy internet users who search out entertainment options and access arts and cultural content (e.g. looking at performance videos, art) online.

- A list of “big ideas” was tested on the community survey (the list was developed through the community conversations and meetings with IDEAS Collaborative participants). The top scores from community members were for ideas that are marketing related, followed by other accessibility issues that have been echoed in previous studies but which marketing can’t fix. For example, “more walkable corridors in and around arts/entertainment venues,” and “more accessible and well-lighted parking or parking security,” were both issues that scored among the top 10 items that would increase participation. However, these are larger issues that the cultural sector needs to address with other civic partners; they aren’t marketing- or programming-related.

In priority order, solutions proposed by the community that support the idea of an overall marketing program include:

Communication:

- a centralized, professional website showcasing all arts, culture, and entertainment offering with links to information, tickets, and an up-to-the-minute calendar;
- better communication from local universities; and,
- more critical reviews, feature stories, and overall media coverage of arts and cultural events.

Pricing and Promotions:

- flexible/customized ticket packages;
- discounted dining/shopping partnerships;
- arts/cultural samplers that discount and mix organizations;
- discounted group prices for community groups; and,
- “pay what you can” programs.

Implications

- ✓ Create identity and plan for overall marketing campaign before designing or launching a website. Think big when it comes to the identity of this sector, looking at strong models in other communities.
- ✓ Invest in the top collaborative solutions and have the CRC facilitate planning for these projects with the IDEAS Collaborative organizations.
- ✓ Secure the talents of local professional media and marketing professionals through competitive bid.
- ✓ Involve the IDEAS Collaborative participants in decision-making.

“I find it compelling that there is an internal image of the community as a vibrant arts and cultural destination and that the community does not perceive that our sector is attracting visitors and tourists to the region.”—IDEAS Collaborative Organization

“I would also like the site to contain images for events and exhibits, rotating feature articles on a homepage with a link to the organization to buy tickets. Discount packages could also be created through this site. All organizations should be involved in promoting the site. Bus wraps and billboards could also be used. The Connective Corridor could design and donate the bus wraps.”—IDEAS Collaborative Organization

“An organization needs to take the lead on putting together the website—one that is respected by the other organizations in the field and can create buy-in.”—IDEAS Collaborative Organization

“We are always looking for things to do with the kids on weekends, especially in the winter and would like more options than movies and ice skating. And we need to know where to access what is out there.”—IDEAS Collaborative Survey Response

(8) Implementing the best “Big Ideas” can also help to diversify the audience base.

- An analysis of to what degree the “Big Ideas” would encourage community members to more frequently participate in arts and cultural entertainment, showed that most of the marketing efforts have strong appeal among households with similar characteristics to the “untapped” households in the area: younger adults, families with children, and populations of color. Following are the most notable differences in how personal/household characteristics influenced the ratings:
 - Solutions that appeal more to **younger residents** are technology-based, neighborhood-based, and price-specific. Solutions that appeal more to **older residents** include parking improvements.
 - Solutions that appeal more to residents with **income that trends lower** are related to price and transportation.
 - Solutions that appeal more to residents with **education levels that trend lower** are related to price, transportation, and orientation at venues (where to park, enter, etc.).
 - Solutions that appeal more to **residents of color** are related to communication, price, transportation, and neighborhood.
 - Solutions that appeal to **respondents with children under 18** are related to price and neighborhood.
 - Solutions that appeal to **respondents without children** are related to media, parking, and transportation.
 - Solutions related to parking were more appealing to survey respondents who live **outside of the City of Syracuse**.
- While community members see value in art and culture in the community, this group does not believe strongly that arts and cultural opportunities are accessible to all local citizens or that they are attracting visitors to the area.

- There is a value to “free.” Free programming connects lower-income residents with local arts and cultural opportunities and may be used more effectively to attract families. Lower respondent income on the community survey correlates with more frequent free attendance. However, those community survey respondents with children who reported price as a barrier do not necessarily go to free programs more often than paid programs. They pay when they go but make choices between events due to costs. There may be opportunity in specific promotions that offer deep discounts or free access for children accompanied by paying adults for more variety of offerings. Free also provides an introductory platform, or threshold experience, to which value-added services can be offered in tiered pricing structures.
- The community survey also reported a clear correlation among the respondent groups between being taken to arts and cultural events as children and paying for cultural experiences now. Finally, 59% of community respondents say they accompanied a child to an arts or cultural destination one time in a 12-month period, but only 10% did so more than five times.

Open comments from the survey with suggestions for increasing participation in arts and culture in Syracuse and Onondaga County closely mirrored the “Big Ideas” that were tested. These include:

- more *affordable* or free parking (not necessarily safety);
- more programs for children and teens;
- more funding for arts and culture;
- better and more diverse program offerings;
- more coordination among organizations;
- more outreach and free programs;
- improvements to downtown, public art, and amenities;
- neighborhood-based programs, both urban and rural;
- banners, signs, marquees, outside marketing images/billboards; and,
- more hands-on cultural opportunities, particularly for children.

Implications

- ✓ Invest in the CRC as the area’s local arts agency/service provider to take on the collaborative efforts.
- ✓ Provide enough resources to truly elevate and empower the CRC and ensure that it is sustainable.
- ✓ Invest in support grants for organizations to address access issues.
- ✓ Consider subsidized admissions that allow for more free programming and educational opportunities to marginalized populations.

“Make the arts available to children at little or no cost. Children who grow up with the arts seek them out as adults.” IDEAS Collaborative survey response

(9) Existing audiences are the hottest market for increasing frequency and variety of cultural participation.

- This study analyzed the overlap among 77,000 households affiliated with the IDEAS Collaborative organizations. Overlap is moderate; 31% of households are affiliated with multiple organizations. There are more than 23,000 households of known cultural participants that are affiliated with only one organization. Leveraging participation from this existing base could be the single most productive means of increasing overall participation at programs, events and different types of organizations. The greatest opportunity to increase participation is among the current base of “arts” audiences (as compared with audiences of other types of cultural providers). Households affiliated with traditional arts organizations in the study currently show very little overlap with other types of cultural organizations; only 15% are also affiliated with organizations like the Rosamond Gifford Zoo, MOST, Onondaga Historical Association, or Matilda Joslyn Gage Center. Arts consumers also show very low overlap with local sports; only 1% of households in the arts group are on sports attendee lists provided by OnCenter or Syracuse University.
- On the flip side of this equation, audiences of organizations that are not arts-specific prove also to be arts patrons. Almost half of the households affiliated with organizations such as the Erie Canal Museum and Matilda Joslyn Gage Center are also affiliated with arts groups. More than a third of the audiences affiliated with organizations such as the Rosamond Gifford Zoo, MOST, and Friends of the Central Library are also affiliated with arts organizations.
- Public media audiences (households affiliated with WNCY and WAER-FM as members) are also a strong potential patron base for increased participation at arts and cultural programs; 43% of these households are already affiliated with arts organizations, but only 15% are affiliated with other types of cultural providers.
- Sports audiences may be overlooked as potential audience—particularly “new” audience. While the current base of arts patrons does not show much overlap with sports, isolating specific sports audiences shows that a third of these fans are also affiliated with arts and cultural organizations.
- The 77,665 households studied showed that the average number of organizational affiliations ranges between 1.5 on the low end and 8.5 on the high end. It is likely that a vast number of cultural patrons aren’t being tracked (meaning they can’t be directly marketed to). According to the community survey, community members are affiliated with 8.5 organizations on average.

- While market penetration is strong, the community survey results suggest that paid participation is infrequent. Frequency of participation might be generalized as less than six times a year for paid activities; more than half of respondents bought tickets to performances between one and five times in a 12-month period, and 66% paid admission to visit an arts or cultural destination.
- The community survey results show that there is a significant correlation between age and frequency of attendance; younger respondents attend less often than older respondents, on average. Programs and promotions that suit younger adult lifestyles should be continued and expanded.
- Younger respondents to the community survey and those who live in the City of Syracuse show the least variety in their organizational affiliations; older respondents, respondents from the county, and specifically grandparents, show the most variety.

Implications

- ✓ Invest in the capacity of organizations to track audiences.
- ✓ Explore implementing a professional opt-in list trade system (not joint box office, e.g. Boston's Big List, LA Theatre Alliance list share, SF Arts Commission, CIVIC).
- ✓ Explore ways to cross-pollinate audiences with new partners.
- ✓ Target "after work" audiences and grandparents.
- ✓ Explore promotional partnerships with non-arts entertainment (e.g. movie theaters, sports, recreation).
- ✓ Explore ways to better leverage the strong connection between public media and arts/culture.
- ✓ Use Phase 2 report on overlap specifics as a guide to potential collaborators.

"Another good element of a site would be a place for all of us to communicate with each other and bounce around ideas—like a listserv. In order to be successful we all need to truly care about each other's success, not view everyone else as a competitor."—IDEAS Collaborative Organization

"I feel that collaborating is the best way for all of us to be a bit more relevant."—IDEAS Collaborative Organization.

(10) Understanding what drives enjoyment can inform what types of experiences are most compelling to different types of audiences.

- Exceptional quality, supporting local groups and people they know, and profoundly moving experiences are what community residents seek most in their arts and cultural experiences. Community survey respondents overall scored these statements as being most important to their enjoyment of arts and cultural programs. Respondents, in general, tend to be less motivated by entertainment that is “familiar” or “popular” (not be confused with exceptionally high-quality programs that may also be *well-known*).
- Older respondents are more driven by product features (e.g. the artist, the show, the program), and younger respondents are more driven by the experiential features they associate with it (e.g. interactivity, themes, knowing people there, celebration, communal experiences). Older respondents also tend to enjoy programs that leave them emotionally or spiritually moved, and younger audiences tend to enjoy programs that are interactive, hands-on, and dynamic (multiple experiences). Younger audiences also tend to enjoy going to places where they will know people, and to programs that bring people together in celebration and where they are supporting local groups.
- Income plays no role when respondents describe what they enjoy about their arts and cultural entertainment with the exception of quality. Higher-income respondents scored the importance of programs of exceptionally high quality as more important, on average. Education level plays a significant role in what community respondents say they enjoy about their arts and cultural entertainment. High-quality, profoundly moving, and somewhat unconventional programs are more attractive to community respondents with higher education levels. Programs that are interactive, for families with children, that offer multiple experiences or themes, and take place at familiar venues, are more attractive to community residents with lower education levels.
- There is little difference in the types of experiences community respondents enjoy based on their race. Of slightly more importance to respondents of color are programs that provide reflection, inspire personal development, and provide exposure to traditions of the diverse local population. Programs that have a hands-on, participatory component are of more interest to community respondents with children than those without children.

Implications

- ✓ Implementation grants should address the following:
- ✓ understanding who the target audience is for programs/projects;
- ✓ improvements or investments in very high-quality work, new work, renowned artists;
- ✓ dynamic and interactive experiences, multi-venue experiences; and,
- ✓ social opportunities and social connections driven by peer networks.

Recommendations to the IDEAS Collaborative

These recommendations are endorsed by the organizational participants of the IDEAS Collaborative. It should be noted that these recommendations are a starting point and will likely be modified as the project unfolds with specific details to be added as part of a larger plan.

Continue the IDEAS Collaborative with Phase 2 (2011-12) and Phase 3 (2012-13)

Supporting Notes/Rationale:

Phase 2 should be considered a transition phase, but with a priority to immediately identify the agency to oversee the project and also manage an arts and culture website and branding campaign. It will be important during this phase for the independent agency to serve as the liaison between the funding group and the organizations. The Cultural Resources Council (CRC) is recommended to take over administrative of the IDEAS Collaborative because its mission aligns with the goals of the project, the organizations support this direction, and the CRC understands the needs of both funders and grantees.

The CRC has its finger on the pulse of a wide range of organizations, including small community-based organizations through its re-grant programs and technical assistance. It also works closely with established institutions through its affiliation with the Arts and Culture Leadership Alliance of Central New York, its work with the NYS Cultural Data Project, and its state issues advocacy and collaboration. It will be important for the funding group to connect with the pool of grantees through this conduit to ensure that the successful transitions in Phase 2 and the design of Phase 3 engenders true, authentic buy-in and diminishes the perceived power dynamic of funder influence.

The role of Decision Support Partners, Inc. during this phase would shift from providing a great deal of onsite interpretation of reports for organizations (budgeted as part of Phase 2) to the role of advisor to the funding group and CRC, and providing some technical assistance to organizations as needed and within the budget.

Phase 2:

1. The funding group should determine resources required and available for Phase 2.
2. Transition project management from the funding group to the CRC.
3. Set up an IDEAS Grant Fund (for Phase 2) at the Central New York Community Foundation and establish funding criteria for Phase 3 (implementation funding).
4. Implement the collaborative marketing website as part of a branded campaign for arts and culture. This might be done through funds that supplement the \$45,000 that the CRC has already secured for website development and rebranding. This campaign would include special

collaborative promotions developed by the IDEAS Collaborative organizations in response to the community research.

5. Assign Decision Support Partners, Inc. the role of Technical Advisor to the funding group and the CRC. Provide participating organizations with data reports and recommendations specific to their own organizations as companions to the full study (this is already budgeted and accounted for as part of Phase 2). Provide a workbook-style support document to enable all groups to benefit in some way from the research results on their own.⁹
6. Limit one-on-one technical assistance for organizations who express a strong desire for interpretation. Offer brief phone counsel to other IDEAS Collaborative organizations who request it. Technical assistance should not exceed 20% of the budget allocated to Phase 2.
7. Schedule a national guest speaker that has undertaken a similar initiative to speak to a broad group of community leaders (e.g. elected officials, business, and CenterStates CEO, etc.)
8. Increase access to national best practices in audience development and marketing by providing scholarships for a few organizations to attend the National Arts Marketing Project Conference (Americans for the Arts) with the Technical Advisor bringing back resources and presenting lessons learned to the IDEAS Collaborative organizations.
9. The funding group should work with the CRC and Technical Advisor to plan for Phase 3 (e.g. seek outside resources such as regional and national funding, develop application mechanics, evaluation protocol, and policies relative to the fund).

Phase 3:

1. The funding group should determine the resources available for a pool of implementation grants (see draft guidelines that follow).
2. Determine the criteria, mechanism, and evaluation metrics for implementation grants to be funded by the IDEAS Grant Fund (at the CNYCF) and administered by the CRC (see draft guidelines which should be refined by the funding group).
3. Establish an IDEAS Grant Advisory Committee that includes the funding group, the Technical Advisor, and an equal number of other arts benefactors/community members who are diverse in age, ethnic makeup, and geographic representation. The Committee would determine grant awards through a formal process and scoring system.
4. Offer Technical Assistance to organizations wishing to apply for IDEAS Grants on how to make best use of the existing research reports (detailed Survey Report and Geodemographic Analysis). Technical assistance may be provided by consultants other than Decision Support Partners.

⁹ Technical assistance can help organizations make the most informed applications with regard to grant guidelines as they are proposed.

5. Create grant guidelines and offer IDEAS Implementation Grants beginning in 2012 (determine any matching requirements or other organization buy-in methods).
6. Establish a policy regarding the involvement of other organizations that were not part of the original IDEAS Collaborative.
7. Document the project in such a way that lessons learned can be presented to the field at conferences such as Grantmakers in the Arts and Americans for the Arts.

Increase the capacity of the Cultural Resources Council.

Supporting Notes/Rationale:

As project leadership and management shifts from the original funding group and consultant to the CRC (if designated), it will be important that the funding group maintain oversight of the project working directly with the CRC Executive Director and the Technical Advisor.

Decision Support Partners, Inc. should serve as Technical Advisor to the funding group and the CRC in Phase 2, thus reducing direct involvement with IDEAS organizations and costs associated with that work. Where there is Technical Assistance to the participating organizations this would include: a) a report of the unique organizational data provided, b) a brief “how to guide” to using the information, and c) brief phone calls to answer questions about the reports. It may also include participation in the workshop series as funds allow. Determination of workshop topics should be made through a survey of IDEAS participants.

More customized Technical Assistance may be offered in Phase 3 to organizations choosing to apply for an IDEAS Grant (see draft guidelines). This will keep the project administrative costs down and direct more resources directly to the arts community while also ensuring that the organizations are equipped to make a strong application to the new program.

Implementing a collaborative marketing program for local arts, culture, and entertainment can benefit all cultural providers and community residents. Since there are several local websites that are not well-used, it is strongly recommended that the CRC establish a **Task Force** that includes individuals from the local media, local universities, the Convention and Visitors Bureau, and all entities currently coordinating and disseminating “cultural calendars” to ensure that efforts are not duplicative and local resources are leveraged.

It is recommended that this website not be limited to just promoting the arts. It should include an online mechanism for artists, organizations, and others to communicate with one another, plan and coordinate events and activities. A variety of options and models should be explored before developing the site. In addition, the site should also be considered as only one element of an overall campaign. Professional services should be secured to create a compelling and contemporary branded campaign that includes

collaborative promotional tactics. The campaign might be presented in phases with the overall design and basic elements of the public website coming first.

The CRC should be appropriately supported so that it can grow as a full-service local arts agency. Strong arts councils are true stewards of cultural development in their communities because they focus all resources and energy on ensuring that the cultural sector is healthy, effective, and thriving. They are the nexus between supply and demand—they keep one eye on important community agendas at all times and facilitate the involvement of the cultural sector in doing whatever it can to help advance those important agendas. They help the sector stay viable, vital, and relevant.

The CRC is primed to take on this larger role as the next step in its re-emergence as a proactive arts council. Now operating in the black with a new strategic plan, the CRC has eliminated extraneous programs while initiating stronger arts services, including arts education, state advocacy, support for the NYS Cultural Data project, and other topical concerns to the community. The CRC has already raised significant dollars for a web-based marketing initiative and rebranding, and is poised to develop a new technology tool for outreach to the region for grants, arts promotion, and professional development. By leading the next steps of the IDEAS Collaborative, the CRC will be able to link cultural providers more intentionally with other local initiatives and networks—an important element to engaging a broader and more diverse audience for arts and culture. To work more effectively as a true partner in tourism, more resources directed to the CRC can strengthen the regional market, which is essential to increasing participation.

1. Provide the CRC with a management consultant well-versed in successful local arts agency operations to conduct a brief assessment and agency plan that will ensure the agency has the capacity for sustainable growth, and that it can lead and administer the IDEAS Collaborative in the short term.
2. The funding group and the CRC should meet early on to discuss concerns and approaches to this transition and the future of the Collaborative.
3. With assistance from the management consultant and Technical Advisor, the CRC should provide the funding group with a plan and budget detailing the resource requirements to:
 - a. Serve as a liaison between the funding group and participating organizations/grantees, thereby becoming the “lead agency” for the IDEAS Collaborative.
 - b. Oversee and contract for the development of a professionally branded marketing program for local and regional arts and culture that is supported by a comprehensive arts and culture website (see notes below).
 - c. Facilitate the creation of collaborative arts and culture promotions with business and tourism, especially with the Convention and Visitors Bureau, which has shown keen interest and support of the IDEAS Collaborative thus far.
 - d. Oversee the development of an opt-in list share database and marketing support services program (e.g. San Francisco’s and Boston’s Big List).

- e. Oversee and coordinate IDEAS Phase 2, including workshops, project communications, and periodic group meetings (as requested by several of the participants).
- f. Continue to bring IDEAS organizations together (as they have requested through the research process) to look for synergistic opportunities.
- g. Facilitate the integration of local university offerings and their community services into the broader promotion of arts and cultural offerings.
- h. Report on ongoing project status and results to the funding group.
- i. Administer IDEAS Implementation Grants in Phase 3.

Preliminary Guidelines for IDEAS Grants

The following guidelines begin to paint a picture of how the IDEAS Collaborative might move forward with regard to implementation grants. The basic premise of the IDEAS Grants is for organizations to address audience development challenges that are specific to their circumstances. It is recommended that this funding pool not replace general operating support that is made available to nonprofit arts and cultural organizations, where applicable.

Below are recommendations regarding the design of implementation grants.

- Consider a three-year grant cycle that includes annual one-year mini-grants.
 - Larger organizations have more moving parts and will have systems in place that need to be considered as they embark on new initiatives. While some collaborative projects can save on expenses, collaborative projects take a lot of time to plan and, often, more work to execute. Allow enough time to achieve reasonable results.
 - Smaller organizations, often more nimble, may be quicker to take action on a new idea, but may benefit by a longer window in which to build their internal capacity to take on a new initiative. Often the most under-resourced, smaller groups may be crippled by unrealistic timelines.
 - A three-year cycle would add stability, allow enough time to track results, and also reduce grant-writing time.
- Keep it simple. It is recommended that the funding group allow for a broad framework in which organizations can design audience development projects that are authentic and true to mission while also taking some risk. It is also recommended that organizations showing success in existing efforts be able to seek funding to continue those efforts (or expand marketing for those programs) if the program fits the criteria (Example: 40 Below partnerships/promotions with the arts).

Consider the following focus areas and develop metrics and an evaluation protocol for each. These three categories should encompass an assortment of requests that stem from the research results—both geodemographic findings and the community survey. The applicant organizations will have had access to the aggregate data reports as well as their own information and technical assistance from which to base their request. **Organizations that do not address how their funding request takes the implications of the research into account should not be considered for IDEAS Grant funds.**

- **Audience Development Core Support (at least one focus area below):**
 - a. **Enhancing quality and new product development**
 - b. **Enhancing opportunities to communities (expanded outreach/marketing)**
 - c. **Engaging the future—expanding participation of youth and families**

These grants might include longer-term activities, communications, and very specific programs that require visiting artists, subsidized ticket programs, open houses, outdoor celebratory events, or introductory workshops, scholarships, co-creation of work/presentations with community members/youth, transportation services, and residencies. It is a wide category that ensures grantees have an opportunity to request core support that also speaks to the initiative objectives.

- **Audience Development through Institutional Links and Collaborations**

While collaborations can be key to reaching new communities, new sources of support and better community integration, “collaboration” should not be a prerequisite for IDEAS Grants. Forcing collaboration doesn’t work; fostering and supporting naturally synergistic opportunities does. These grants might go toward sustaining recent successful collaborations or creating new ones that are clearly for audience development.

Collaborations might include projects around resource- or venue-sharing, off-site or satellite programs, promotional collaborations, cross-organization discounts, coordinated themed programs or tours, reciprocal membership days, coordinated services to special populations, group sales, etc. These grants might include strategies to partner with other IDEAS Collaborative organizations, with non-traditional arts providers, schools (outside of regular business), and collaborations that are not being addressed by the CRC’s leadership on collective activities.

- **Mini Audience Development Grants**

One of the recommendations heard through community input (both organizational and residential) was a need for mini grants. Often organizations have very simple capacity issues preventing them from moving forward with audience development. Other times, providing access to smaller quick grants makes the difference between trying something new and not sticking with the status quo.

These grants would be intended to address basic needs and experimentation with new marketing. They would likely be short-term projects or specific purchases (like up-to-date software) or projects that last less than a year or season. These might include strategies such as data collection from audiences, audience surveys to test program ideas and interests, short-term program activities with new constituents or groups, or targeted direct prospect marketing (list purchase/direct marketing). They might also include one-time projects, or new annual events, transportation grants, scholarships, etc.

Mini-grants should be limited to organizations under a certain budget size (e.g. \$100,000).

Other Grant Guideline Recommendations

- Create simple, but clear evaluation metrics for funded organizations that incorporate at least one element of **audience feedback** as part of the protocol. Providing resources through the grants for this element alone can go a long way to developing audiences, as many organizations do not engage their customers in any direct feedback (e.g. surveys, focus groups).
- Create reasonable expectations and clear grant guidelines, but allow for experimentation. There is some risk-taking in this endeavor and organizations should be encouraged to explore new ways of connecting with a broader public through programs, prospect marketing, or collaboration. When this topic came up for discussion with the organizations they welcomed the opportunity to try new tactics with a bit of a safety net and are willing to share their stories of success and failure with one another. While the IDEAS Collaborative program goals and individual grant goals should be clearly articulated, organizations should not be penalized if specific projects did not meet their goals, provided that the lessons learned are documented and shared with the Collaborative.
- Allow for a one- to six- month planning period for IDEAS grants during Phase 3 and allow for course corrections. Consider offering the Technical Advisor to assist with early planning assistance and periodic “check-ins” on projects so that there is an objective voice that can report on the project status and outcomes to the funding group and CRC, and can also evaluate grant requests. Allow for organizations to request a percentage of grant funding for technical assistance from other individuals with specific expertise who may better meet their needs.
- Require that grantees participate in an IDEAS learning community by making their funded programs, projects, or research **transparent**. The program should encourage risk-taking and sharing of project successes and failures so that others benefit from the experience and lessons learned. Document these grants in a way that tells the story behind the organization’s response to the community input.
- Do not make application requirements too stringent as to be exclusionary (e.g. don’t require a business plan/long-range strategic plan; don’t require that a specific demographic group is targeted; or don’t exclude organizations that are carrying a deficit). If the requirements are too restrictive smaller, community-based organizations are less likely to take advantage of the opportunity—they are an important part of the equation when it comes to audience development.
- Ensure that grantees reflect a diverse mix of organization sizes and types, and that the focus categories are a balance of stabilizing efforts and innovation (core support with a focus area, collaboration, mini-grant, etc.)

- Ensure buy-in through clear criteria regarding audience development and use of research. Do not require a fee to participate. However, consider matching requirements for higher-level grants.
- Continue to co-create the IDEAS Collaborative; involve the funding group and the grantees in the ongoing discussion of how the program might evolve. Have the CRC lead these conversations with the funding group and Technical Advisor. This project will be more successful if it is not seen as an unwelcomed intervention by the funding community or stipulated as mandatory.
- While each grantee will be required to report on the outcomes of their grant, success of the IDEAS Collaborative should set metrics that measure more than quantitative results. Rather than focusing the measure of success on how well each grantee achieves its stated objectives, the funding group could create a set of measureable outcomes related to the overall IDEAS Collaborative goals. As possible, the Cultural Data Project aggregate data on IDEAS participants should be used as the baseline quantitative data. Consider success in any one of the following areas to also be indicators of success in addition to increases in audience participation:
 - Improved fiscal strength of The IDEAS Collaborative organizations (e.g. fewer budget shortfalls, diversification of revenue sources, and increased earned income).
 - Diversity in audiences of The IDEAS Collaborative organizations (e.g. racial, geographic, socio-economic, household makeup, etc.).
 - A stronger network for The IDEAS Collaborative organizations together and through deeper relationships with community artists, for-profit creative sector businesses, informal and non-traditional cultural providers.

In Summary

This report can serve as a guide for all members of the IDEAS Collaborative—funders and grantees—to refine the ways in which audience development happens. Working together, the cultural community can become more deliberate as well as more inventive in the ways in which it bridges community interests, needs, and expectations with cultural product and service.

By developing the capacity of the CRC through this project, the IDEAS Collaborative is funding a network that is key to sustaining a healthy cultural sector. In most communities, the local arts council would have led and managed this type of study from the beginning. The funding group, knowing that the capacity of the CRC in early 2010 was limited, took the unique step of coordinating the project themselves. The goals and intent of the overall audience development initiative remain at the forefront, but the additional benefit of restoring the CRC to its rightful place as an advocate and leader of arts services is a bonus.

Truly vital and seismic transformations can occur when thoughtful intentions are paired with bold maneuvers. Syracuse and Onondaga County are now on the cusp of such a moment. It will not happen overnight and it will take patience and innovation. The potential is there, the pieces are in place; the transformation is already beginning.

IDEAS Collaborative Participants (Phase 1)

IDEAS Collaborative Funding Group

- Allyn Foundation
- Central New York Community Foundation
- Dorothy and Marshall M. Reisman Foundation
- Trust for Cultural Resources of the County of Onondaga
- Gifford Foundation
- John Ben Snow Foundation

IDEAS Collaborative Participants

- | | | | |
|-----|--------------------------------------|-----|--|
| 1. | ArtRage Gallery | 23. | Salt City Center for the Performing Arts |
| 2. | CNY Jazz Arts | 24. | Skaneateles Festival |
| 3. | Community Folk Art Center | 25. | Society for New Music |
| 4. | Cultural Resources Council | 26. | Spanish Action League |
| 5. | Erie Canal Museum | 27. | Syracuse Children's Chorus |
| 6. | Everson Museum of Art | 28. | Syracuse City Ballet |
| 7. | Friends of the Central Library | 29. | Syracuse Community Choir |
| 8. | Gifford Family Theatre | 30. | Syracuse Convention and Visitors Bureau |
| 9. | Landmark Theatre | 31. | Syracuse Friends of Chamber Music |
| 10. | LeMoyne College | 32. | Syracuse Gay and Lesbian Chorus |
| 11. | Matilda Joslyn Gage Center | 33. | Syracuse International Film Festival |
| 12. | Museum of Science and Technology | 34. | Syracuse Opera Company |
| 13. | Northside Urban Partnership | 35. | Syracuse Poster Project |
| 14. | Oncenter Complex | 36. | Syracuse Stage |
| 15. | Onondaga Community College | 37. | Syracuse Symphony Orchestra |
| 16. | Onondaga Historical Association | 38. | Syracuse University (Sports) |
| 17. | Open Hand Theater | 39. | Syracuse Vocal Ensemble |
| 18. | Parents Promoting Dance | 40. | Wacheva Cultural Arts |
| 19. | Paul Robeson Performing Arts Company | 41. | WAER-FM |
| 20. | Rarely Done Productions | 42. | WCNY-Public Broadcasting |
| 21. | Red House Arts Center | 43. | Y-Arts |
| 22. | Rosamond Gifford Zoo | | |