

Australia Council for the Arts



Meaningful measurement

A review of the literature about measuring artistic vibrancy

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Other resources


This paper may be read in conjunction with a set of resources on the Australia Council for the Arts website which we hope will be useful for companies thinking about how to evaluate their artistic vibrancy. They are:


- [*Defining artistic vibrancy: a discussion paper*](#) - a look at what artistic vibrancy means, and the traits of an artistically vibrant company
- [*“Tell me honestly...”: good practice case studies of artistic self-assessment in performing arts organisations*](#) - a set of Australian and international examples of companies which have made artistic self-assessment a meaningful and useful process, and how they did it
- [*“Artistic vibrancy: self-reflection tool”*](#) - a set of questions and tools to help performing arts organisations and their boards evaluate their own artistic vibrancy

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Executive Summary

Meaningful Measurement is a summary of the key research in the area of measuring artistic vibrancy. It looks at:

- performance measurement in the arts
- proposed models of performance measurement in the arts
- the notion of “public value” and the arts
- the intrinsic impacts of the arts
- assessing artistic vibrancy, including models and examples

Performance measurement in the arts

Researchers agree on the following core principles of good practice in artistic performance measurement:

Commitment and leadership

Staff and management have to be committed to the process and have a genuine intention to *change* what they do on the basis of their performance assessment

Self-assessment

Assessment should be done by the company itself, but not by a single individual in the company. The company should also ask stakeholders for their assessments: staff, guest artists, funders, peers, audience, public.

Shared artistic purpose

A clear artistic statement of shared artistic purpose is the first step in establishing a meaningful artistic planning and evaluation process. Quantitative and qualitative measures can then be used to monitor whether the company has achieved its artistic goals and if not, why not and what they will do about it in the future.

Role of funding bodies

Funding bodies have a key role in influencing the focus of arts organisations’ self-assessments. Arts companies currently focus on financial assessments of performance, or quantitative measures such as audience numbers, largely because these are easy to measure. Funders have a role in shifting the current emphasis in reporting to encourage frankness about artistic aspirations, lessons learned and future plans.

Proposed models of performance measurement in the arts

Researchers have developed various models for performance measurement in the arts. The models emphasise:

- external and internal views of the organisation’s performance (eg audience, funders, artists, peers, staff)
- organisation’s ownership of the measurement process makes it meaningful
- employees and management must be engaged in the measurement process
- measures have to match the organisation’s mission

They have also found that funding bodies have a major impact on performance measurement. Funding bodies that emphasise financial reporting lead to arts organisation reports which are heavily skewed towards reporting on financial success, rather than artistic progress.

“Public value” and the arts

The notion of “public value” of the arts refers to the way in which everyday people might value the arts. The research into “public value” and ways to measure it may help practitioners looking for ways to assess an arts organisation’s community relevance, which is part of artistic vibrancy.

Intrinsic benefits of the arts

“Intrinsic benefits” of the arts include the spiritual, cognitive, emotional and social benefits of an arts experience for an individual. They are an important part of the artistic vibrancy equation, as they can help to assess an audience’s engagement and stimulation.

Assessing artistic vibrancy

There is some research into how to assess specific elements of artistic vibrancy, including:

- Audience engagement and stimulation
- Community relevance
- Innovation and excellence

Several researchers have developed specific models and tools for assessing artistic quality in opera and audience response to dance, which may also be of use in other artforms.

Guides to performance measurement for arts organisations

A number of funding agencies and philanthropic foundations have released guides to assist arts organisations with performance measurement, including self-assessment. Several examples are included in this paper.

Examples of measuring artistic vibrancy

A number of funding bodies and arts organisations have developed their own approaches to measuring artistic vibrancy. These examples might be useful for those looking at developing their own system of meaningful measurement.

1. Introduction

“...performance assessment [in the arts] is feasible, though not easy; valuable to the organisation, though not cheap; and rewarding to the individuals in the organisation, though not comfortable.”¹

This paper is a summary of some of the key research about how to measure artistic vibrancy.

There has been limited research on this issue. Most of the literature comes from arts management, with some researchers working in cognitive psychology and sociology. Turbide and Laurin, who conducted a survey of non-profit arts companies in relation to performance measurement, noted that:¹

- the research literature in this area is limited, and mostly looks at how non-profits should measure performance as opposed to how they actually do it
- researchers are still struggling with the definition of performance for non-profit organisations and governance practices which would improve performance
- the performance of non-profit organisations is an area still to be explored

Therefore, this paper is limited to what the researchers have looked at. This includes:

- performance measurement in the arts
- notions of value and the benefits of the arts
- ways to measure artistic vibrancy
- other findings which are relevant to artistic vibrancy

A note about definitions

This paper uses a working definition of artistic vibrancy, which includes:

- artistic excellence
- audience engagement and stimulation
- innovation in the preservation or development of the artform
- artist development
- community relevance

This definition is based on consultation with the Australian performing arts sector, the literature contained in this paper, and the separate discussion paper “Artistic vibrancy discussion paper,” Australia Council for the Arts.

¹ Turbide, Johanne and Laurin, Claude, “Performance measurement in the arts sector: the case of the performing arts,” *International Journal of Arts Management*, 11(2) Winter 2009, pp. 56-70 at p. 58; Forbes, D.P., “Measuring the unmeasurable: empirical studies of nonprofit organisation effectiveness from 1977 to 1997,” *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 27(2), pp.183-202, 1998.

2. Performance Measurement In The Arts

Key points

Researchers agree on the following core principles of good practice in artistic performance measurement:

Commitment and leadership

Staff and management have to be committed to the process and have a genuine intention to *change* what they do on the basis of their performance assessment

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2.1 The development of performance measurement in the arts

“There is really not much point in an arts organisation deciding to devote resources to performance assessment if the top managers (or the “shop floor” workers, for that matter!) have no intention of changing what they do, if they cannot agree a way of assessing the success of what they do, if the funding bodies are wholly committed to continued funding (or no more funding), or if the staff just cannot understand or respond to the performance assessment procedures. Performance assessment is only likely to be useful to organisations (and to funding bodies seeking to impose it) if these prerequisites have already been attended to.”¹

The aim of performance measurement is to enable a company to see whether it is on track against its goals; how the company is “performing.”

Researchers originally developed performance measures for commercial, for-profit companies.² Traditional performance measures were very much focused on a company's profits.

Kaplan and Norton criticised this for being too narrow and leaving out key areas of a company's performance. They introduced the concept of the "balanced scorecard"³ which adds together:

- customers
- growth and innovation
- internal business processes
- financial perspective

According to Kaplan and Norton, these metrics, if linked to a strong organisational strategy or plan, can be used as forward-leading indicators of whether a company is on track. For example, they argued that a company's level of innovation was just as important to its overall performance as its bottom line.

Sawhill and Williamson further developed this approach. They suggested that stakeholders other than customers should also be considered. These included employees, community, governments. They contribute to an organisation's achievements, and can assess its progress against its mission.⁴

In the 1990s, academics and practitioners looking at performance measurement in non-profit organisations went even further. They argued that non-profit companies should use a "multidimensional set of indicators, primarily based on *non-financial* indicators [emphasis added]."⁵ Researchers Turbide and Laurin argued that financial indicators are not the relevant indicators of whether a non-profit organisation is achieving its mission.

2.2 The benefits of performance measurement in the arts

In the 1990s, non-profit organisations began to introduce performance measurement systems. They saw the main benefits of adopting and implementing quality systems as:

- maintaining credibility and legitimacy
- pre-empting funders' new requirements
- organisational self-reflection, learning and development⁶

Researchers have also argued that performance assessment in the arts can lead to:

- "clearer vision and sense of direction
- increased understanding of the key success factors in the organisation
- greater feeling of achievement
- improved public image
- improved share of arts funding"⁷

² Turbide and Laurin, "Performance measurement in the arts sector: the case of the performing arts."

³ Kaplan, R.S. and Norton, D.P, "The balanced scorecard – measures that drive performance," *Harvard Business Review*, 70(1), pp71-79, 1992

⁴ Atkinson, A.A., Waterhouse, J.J. and Wells, R.B., "A stakeholder approach to strategic performance measurement," *Sloan Management Review*, 38(3), pp25-37, 1997.

⁵ Turbide and Laurin, "Performance measurement in the arts sector: the case of the performing arts," p56.

⁶ Cairns, Ben, et al, "Improving Performance?: The Adoption and Implementation of Quality Systems in U.K. Nonprofits," *Nonprofit Management & Leadership*, 16(2), Winter 2005, pp. 135-51, p.141.

⁷ Keens, William, "The Value of Evaluation: Finding Approaches that Work," *Working Paper* No.11, www.wolfbrown.com, p. ii

According to Keens, performance evaluation gives an arts organisation more “knowledge, self-assurance and ability to improve in the future.”⁸ After interviews with arts leaders, he wrote that performance evaluation means that:

- organisational planning and programming are grounded in an understanding of what works
- the true return on investment is clearer, which helps to build a stronger case for support

According to Keens, poor evaluations result from:

- too much reliance on quantitative rather than qualitative measurement
- lessons learned don’t accumulate in the wider field, so every subsequent program design seems to re-invent the wheel

Keens’ interviewees stressed the following:

An evaluation is not about auditioning for more funding. It’s about the hard work of improvement

- Funders should make it clear that an evaluation report is not an “audition for the next round of funding,” but that they “value an honest appraisal of the positives and negatives of a grantee’s experience”⁹
- Funders should involve grantee organisations when developing the evaluation, to make sure the evaluation is valuable to them.
- Many organisations approach evaluation as “simply as a means of securing a (hopefully good) grade for their activities. But meaningful evaluation should engage all stakeholders in the hard – but essential – work of improvement.”¹⁰

Evaluation improves an organisation’s programs because it makes them accountable for their decisions

- Evaluation helps organisations to strengthen programs because they have to “go after the reasons beneath the choices we made” and go beyond the “stars in kids’ eyes as our only measure of accountability.”¹¹

Evaluation should be done by audience and peers

- It’s important to involve partners in the evaluation process. “When evaluating our programs, we find it critical that the artistic work is genuine and authentic. What better way to do so than to engage [students and teachers] not only in the process of making art, but in the assessment process as well.”¹²

Arts organisations need to know if they are on track

⁸ Keens, William, “The Value of Evaluation: Finding Approaches that Work,” p.2.

⁹ Elizabeth T Miller, Director, New Ventures in Philanthropy, Washington Regional Association of Grantmakers, as cited in Keens, William, “The Value of Evaluation: Finding Approaches that Work,” p.4. Emphasis added.

¹⁰ Dr Dennie Palmer Wolf, “Evaluation as more than a report card,” *Sounding Board: Perspectives on Nonprofit Strategies by WolfBrown*, Vol 21. Emphasis added.

¹¹ Gigi Antoni, Director of Big Thought, as cited in Keens, William, “The Value of Evaluation: Finding Approaches that Work.” She established an area of the organisation devoted to evaluation and accountability.

¹² David Dik, Managing Director, Metropolitan Opera Guild, as cited in Keens, William, “The Value of Evaluation: Finding Approaches that Work.”

- “We do not try to claim that the arts are different when it comes to demonstrating effectiveness...We ask: “How will you know you are moving in the right direction and making progress towards the results you seek? How will you measure change?”¹³

2.3 Limitations of performance measurement in the arts

Researchers have also identified the limitations of the qualitative measures used by non-profit performing arts companies.

According to Cavaluzzo and Ittner,¹⁴ the factors limiting the development of performance measurement systems in non-profit organisations include:

- difficulty of measuring qualitative outcomes
- lack of technological capability to generate timely information
- weak management commitment
- lack of employee training

Cairns et al, in a study of American and Canadian arts institutions, found that the main limitations of performance measurement were:

- confusion over the multitude of systems, what value each one has, and how to decide which one to use¹⁵
- organisations may be required to use a particular system but do not feel that it relates well to their objectives, way of working, or size
- there is a danger that performance measurement is a matter of just ticking boxes
- most study participants, especially those from smaller organisations, felt that implementation of quality systems had been impeded by lack of staff time and other resources

In their research, the picture emerged of companies using quality systems to satisfy funders, rather than as a “product of customer orientation or as an effective route to goal achievement.”¹⁶

Bovaird notes that inappropriate performance assessment may be “damaging, resulting in:

- unreliable information
- escalating and largely unjustified claims about achievement
- wasted resource inputs in the assessment process
- misinterpretation of performance information by funding bodies and other interested parties
- wholesale discrediting of the process in the eyes of all concerned.”¹⁷

¹³ Moy Eng, program director, performing arts, William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, as cited in Keens, William, “The Value of Evaluation: Finding Approaches that Work.”

¹⁴ Cavaluzzo, K.S, and C.D Ittner, “Implementing performance measurement innovations: evidence from government,” *Accounting, Organisations and Society*, 29(3/4), pp.243-267, 2004.

¹⁵ Cairns, et al, “Improving Performance?” p.142.

¹⁶ Cairns et al, “Improving Performance?” p.148.

¹⁷ Cairns et al, “Improving Performance?” p.148.

3. Proposed models of performance measurement in the arts

Key points

Researchers have developed various models for performance measurement in the arts. The models emphasise:

- external and internal views of the organisation's performance (eg audience, funders, artists, peers, staff)
- organisation's ownership of the measurement process makes it meaningful
- employees and management must be engaged in the measurement process
- measures have to match the organisation's mission

They have also found that funding bodies have a major impact on performance measurement. Funding bodies that emphasise financial reporting lead to arts organisation reports which are heavily skewed towards reporting on financial success, rather than artistic progress.

This chapter looks at:

- models of performance measurement in the arts
- funding bodies role in performance measurement
- difficulties in assessing artistic excellence

3.1 Models of performance measurement in the arts

Researchers have developed a number of models to measure performance in the arts. Each model emphasises different key issues, such as stakeholder views, or staff engagement in the process.

Model 1: stakeholders are paramount (Turbide and Laurin)

Turbide and Laurin suggest that one way to think about why a company evaluates performance, and how, is to ask the question: who do I have responsibility to?

- my board
- funders
- community
- other artists
- my employees

These are the stakeholders whom an arts organisation might consult in working out how it has performed in relation to its organisation's strategy and performance indicators such as:¹⁸

- artistic achievement
- audience satisfaction
 - satisfaction with programming
 - satisfaction with services provided
 - audience growth

¹⁸ This is a direct excerpt from Turbide and Laurin, "Performance measurement in the arts sector: the case of the performing arts." For more details and sub-categories, see p.65.

- funder satisfaction
 - satisfaction of funding organisations
 - appreciation of donor
 - growth in sponsorship and donations
- employee satisfaction
 - time spent on project management
 - satisfaction of f/t employees
 - satisfaction of p/t employees
 - satisfaction of artists
 - satisfaction of volunteers
- financial management
 - cost control of productions
 - revenues and expenses
 - actual results vs budget
- growth and competitiveness
 - market share
 - new programming (innovation)
 - return on advertising costs
- image and reputation
 - image within the artistic community
 - image in community at large

Model 2: leadership is critical (Kushner and Poole)

A company's "effectiveness" has four elements:

- satisfying audiences, donors and volunteers
- identifying and obtaining financial and human resources
- organising resources to present art performances
- achieving the program's objectives

Kushner and Poole tested their model by collecting information from 19 performing arts organisations. They found that the most effective were those where employees were highly engaged in monitoring the organisation's effectiveness. They recommend that managers create structures which promote this kind of engagement.¹⁹

Model 3: performance evaluation as a defence (Gilhespy)

To "protect" non-profit organisations against adverse performance evaluation by funders, organisations should evaluate:

- measures of artistic excellence
- innovation
- social cohesion
- public attendance
- financial objectives

¹⁹ Kushner, R. and Poole, P., "Exploring arts organisations," *Nonprofit Management and Leadership*, 7(2), pp119-136, 1996.

Model 4: mission statements matter (Krug and Weinberg)²⁰

A good performance measurement system in the arts has three elements:

- contribution to mission
- contribution to money
- contribution to merit

Krug and Weinberg tested their model in eight American and Canadian art institutions and found that arts companies' decision-making would only be effective if the companies:

- expose managerial assumptions
- conduct more rigorous measurements
- fix "fuzzy" mission statements, inadequate financial systems and overly subjective (or absent) performance evaluations

Model 5: self-determination (Cairns et al)

Cairns et al emphasise staff commitment for a quality management system to work. According to the researchers, quality management needs to be "fully integrated into strategic planning processes, work plans, and organisational reviews."²¹ Effective implementation is more likely to take place in organisations with leaders who are committed to the selected system and can act as quality champions.²²

The extent to which a system is perceived as useful depends on:

- the ability of the non-profit to make a choice about adopting a quality system
- the ability to choose or negotiate the use of a system that complements existing organisational culture and systems
- the allocation of dedicated resources to implementation
- the performance improvement system needs to be context sensitive and have a clarity of purpose

Model 6: focus on customer (Tony Bovaird)

Bovaird lists core principles of a package of "total quality management" for an arts organisation as follows:

- standards are to be set by the customers/clients, not by the professionals
- there is no acceptable reason for failing to deliver customer satisfaction
- the process of serving the customer/client is often as important as the actual service delivered
- everyone in the organisation has a role in monitoring customer satisfaction and suggesting ways of enhancing it
- a quality management system must have explicit, clear standards which are monitored, reported and acted upon
- the costs (financial, organisational and social) of providing and rectifying low quality are higher in the long run than then costs of providing high quality.

According to Bovaird,²³ self-assessment of performance indicators is more valuable as a learning process and more reliable than external assessment, when it is done by the

²⁰ Krug, K. and Weinberg, C.B., "Mission, money and merit: strategic decision making by nonprofit managers," *Nonprofit Management and Leadership*, 14(3) pp325-342, 2004.

²¹ Cairns et al, "Improving Performance?" p.145.

²² Cairns et al, "Improving Performance?" p.146.

²³ Bovaird, "Performance Assessment," p.28.

people who will have to implement any changes resulting from the information. However, some regular external audit of performance indicator information is essential and some external consultancy support for performance assessment procedures may be valuable, at least occasionally.

Measuring artistic excellence

In relation to measuring artistic excellence, Bovaird notes that assessments must be done by the appropriate stakeholders according to appropriate expectations, using a combination of quantitative and qualitative measures. For example, if the artistic activity is a work-in-development, the appropriate stakeholders to assess its merit may be the staff of the company or the peer group in the artistic community, and funders would adjust their expectations accordingly.

In measuring an arts organisation's effectiveness, Bovaird suggests measuring:

- "Throughput," which refers to the number of people affected by the activity (total audience, participants); and
- "Impact," which refers to the quality of experience given by the activity

According to Bovaird, effectiveness = throughput x average impact.

Throughput indicators:

- Audience numbers
 - Throughput of target group members
 - % of throughput accounted for by target group members
 - % of target group members who attended the activity
- Number of people indirectly affected by the activity
 - % of indirectly affected people who are target group members

Impact indicators:

- Changes in client state as a result of the experience [this is where Brown's research comes in]
 - Increased enjoyment
 - Increased cultural appreciation
 - Increased educational standards of achievement
 - Improved psychological state
- Changes in welfare if indirectly affected people
 - Increased economic growth through "happier" workforce
 - Increased employment and earnings through inward investment and tourism attracted by arts activities
 - Increased sense of pride in local area
 - Enhanced confidence (on part of non-attenders) in the availability of future arts activities
 - Enriched local, regional, national or other ethnic culture
- Levels of client satisfaction
 - % of attenders responding favourably to surveys
 - % of repeat visitors
 - Level of excess demand
 - Willingness to pay²⁴

²⁴ Bovaird, "Performance Assessment," pp.15-17.

3.2 The role of funding agencies in performance measurement in the arts

Turbide and Laurin found that funding agencies have a major impact on the way companies focus their evaluative efforts. If a funding agency over-emphasises financial and budgeting performance over measures of artistic quality, arts managers will similarly skew their performance measures to finances over mission fulfilment.²⁵

Turbide and Laurin surveyed three hundred organisations in Quebec to uncover how they managed performance. The researchers found that financial monitoring was more widespread than artistic monitoring, even though the overwhelming majority of companies noted artistic achievement as their key mission. This may be because financial monitoring is easier than artistic monitoring, and that, although respondents thought artistic achievement was their main goal, they were attracted to measuring results which were easier to understand and compare.

Turbide and Laurin also found that companies monitored performance indicators in the following order:

1. Financial management
2. Artistic achievement
3. Audience satisfaction
4. Funder satisfaction
5. Donor and promoter satisfaction
6. Employees and volunteers satisfaction

(Market competition was not explicitly monitored.)

The researchers asked companies what performance indicators they used, and found that the most popular perspective is financial, followed by artistic achievement and audience satisfaction. Only 20% of respondents measured performance related to internal processes.²⁶

3.3 Difficulties in evaluating artistic excellence

Bovaird discusses three ways in which an arts company may evaluate artistic excellence, and their limitations.²⁷

Assessed by a charismatic leader

Charismatic leadership expects *by definition* to be unquestioned. This method makes it almost impossible for a funding body to monitor artistic excellence. The funder could still decide whether the organisation's results are aligned with (the funder's) current and future objectives. However, the funder should not "pretend to influence the funded organisation; and artistic directors should not claim substantial public funding as *of right* since there is not intention of making an effort to meet the criteria of funders."²⁸

²⁵ Turbide and Laurin, "Performance measurement in the arts sector: the case of the performing arts," p. 61.

²⁶ Turbide and Laurin, "Performance measurement in the arts sector: the case of the performing arts," p.67.

²⁷ Bovaird, "Performance Assessment," p.18.

²⁸ Bovaird, "Performance Assessment," p.19.

Assessed on the basis of the stars the company can attract

This method entails relying on the opinion of so-called “high quality/best” people in the sector as to whether they lend an arts company legitimation by agreeing to perform with them. The logical extension of this approach is that the public funder could simply give the public subsidy to, for example, Carreras, Pavarotti and others and they would be allowed to allocate it to whichever companies and for whatever programs they liked.

Assessed by audience and peers

Only considering peers’ views would be too narrow, whilst only considering the audience would be too market-biased. Bovaird notes that, if a funder were to judge a company solely by audience rates, there would be no point in providing subsidy at all.

4. Measuring the “public value” of the arts

Key points

The notion of “public value” of the arts refers to the way in which everyday people might value the arts. The research into “public value” and ways to measure it may help practitioners looking for ways to assess an arts organisation’s community relevance, which is part of artistic vibrancy.

4.1 Notions of value

There are three dimensions of “value”, according to John Holden and John Knell (leading UK proponents of “public value”):

Economic value

Holden defines economic value as “the extent to which something enhances or detracts from our well-being. Something has economic value if its benefits to the well-being of society ... are greater than or outweigh its costs. Though it encompasses commercial value ... economic value is not restricted to values that are revealed through markets. The full schema of economic value incorporates commercial (or market) value; use values not captured within markets; and non-use values .²⁹”

Non-use values

“Non-use values” are “highly significant for the funding of culture, given that so much cultural value rests on the preservation of assets, practices, knowledge or locations through which it can or could be created in the future.”³⁰ Non-use, cultural value includes:

- historical value
- social value
- symbolic value
- aesthetic value
- existence value
- option value
- bequest value
- spiritual value

“If one accepts the need for arts organisations to be genuinely committed to user engagement and participation, it would be perverse if this did not lead to a more concerted effort to measure their impact, and user satisfaction, through a public value approach. Crucially, uncoupled from crude instrumentalism, and short-term assessments driven by funding rounds, **this approach might actually allow us to get closer to a real, diverse understanding of what the arts ‘do to people, what people can ‘do’ to the arts’**” [emphasis added]¹

Public Value

According to Knell, “For something to be of value it is not enough for citizens to say that it is desirable. It is only of value if citizens – either individually or collectively – are *willing to give something up in return for it*, such as money, time, or by disclosing private information (eg in return for more personalised information/services). The key things which citizens

²⁹ Holden, John, *Capturing Cultural Value: How culture has become a tool of cultural policy*, Demos, London, 2004, p.31.

³⁰ Holden, *Capturing Cultural Value: How culture has become a tool of cultural policy*, p.33.

value tend to fall into three, partially overlapping categories: outcomes, services and trust.”³¹

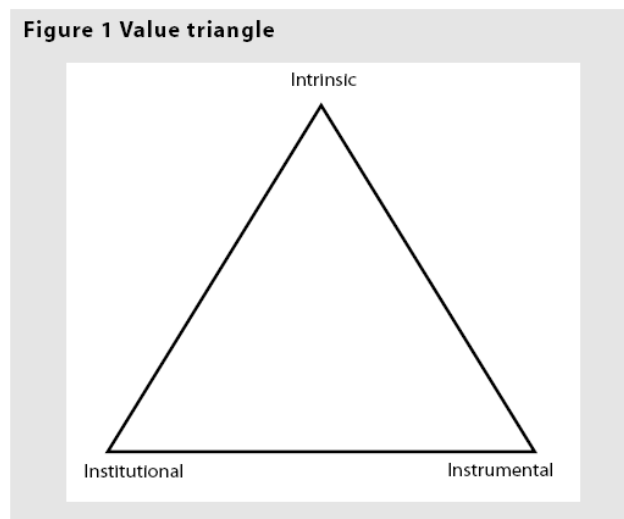
The public will attribute value to an organisation depending on:

- user satisfaction
- the degree to which an organisation is perceived to have legitimate purposes, and engages responsively with its various stakeholders

In an earlier paper for Arts Council England, Peter Hewitt suggested that arts organisations could make “more use of focus groups, consumer councils, audience reviews and ratings as part of their ongoing self-assessment...”³² Hewitt also suggested that the web could be used as a place for open discussion, but this would not be the only forum.

4.2 What the public values

Holden argues that the public values the intrinsic, institutional and instrumental value of the arts, in that order.



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Intrinsic value

According to Holden, the public, first and foremost, care about the experience they have of the arts. This refers to spiritual impact, intellectual stimulation, emotional engagement, and transcendence. Intrinsic value does not refer to ‘art for art’s sake.’ It’s about the way an individual might experience art.³⁴

Institutional value

Institutional value is the way in which an organisation creates value for the public through the ways in which it works. An organisation can create value through how they engage with their public. Institutional value can include:

³¹ Knell, John, *Whose art is it anyway?* Arts Council England, 2006. Emphasis added.

³² Hewitt, Peter, *Changing Places*, Arts Council England, 2005, p.18.

³³ Holden, John, *Cultural value and the crisis of legitimacy*, Demos, London, 2006, p 15.

³⁴ Tools for assessing the intrinsic impact of a live performance have been developed by Alan Brown and are outlined later in this paper.

“creating trust and mutual respect among citizens, enhancing the public realm, and providing a context for sociability and the enjoyment of shared experiences.”³⁵ Arts organisations, as contributors to social capital, are “creators of value in their own right....Trust in the public realm, transparency and fairness, are all values that can be generated by the institution in its dealings with the public.”³⁶

Holden posits that this is about how the public is “treated” by the arts organisation. This can include an organisation’s honesty about their performances, the quality of venues, and increasingly, the degree of public participation available.

It is also about the “rootedness that culture provides,” which Holden talks about in terms of “a sense of place and geographical location, where cultural infrastructure can anchor local identities, and in a sense of belonging to a community, either a geographical community, or a cultural community of interest.”³⁷

According to Holden,

“this concern for increasing broad public goods, this care and concern for the public, is expressed in ways both large and, seemingly, small: a commitment to showing the whole of a collection in a fine building at one end of the scale, to serving hot drinks at the other. But it is through recognising these values, and, crucially, *deciding for itself* how to generate them, that the moral purpose of an organisation becomes apparent, and where organisational rhetoric meets reality.”³⁸

Instrumental value

This refers to the impacts that the arts might have for social or economic goals, such as reduced recidivism, social inclusion, health and wellbeing. According to Holden, these outcomes of the arts are of little interest to the public, although they may be of value to policy-makers.³⁹

4.3 Public value and “The Arts Debate,” UK

Based on the idea of public value, the Arts Council England (ACE) began a major project to reform its arts funding approach. In 2006-07, it began the process with a comprehensive public consultation to find out what the British public “valued” about the arts. This was called the “Arts Debate.” It tested and developed Holden’s triangle of value.

ACE commissioned a series of public fora and focus groups, the public, artists, arts managers and other stakeholders, who were asked “what people value about the arts.” The final findings were that the arts were important to people in England in three ways:

- Capacity for life – bringing understanding, expression and others’ perspectives
- Experience of life – giving pleasure, entertainment, relaxation or solace

³⁵ Holden, *Capturing Cultural Value: How culture has become a tool of cultural policy*, p.17.

³⁶ Holden, *Capturing Cultural Value: How culture has become a tool of cultural policy*, p.17.

³⁷ Holden, *Capturing Cultural Value: How culture has become a tool of cultural policy*, p.17.

³⁸ Holden, *Capturing Cultural Value: How culture has become a tool of cultural policy*, p.17. Holden gives a number of examples of where this type of value is being measured by organisations such as the BBC: see p.18.

³⁹ See the appendix to this paper for an excerpt from Holden, *Capturing Cultural Value: How culture has become a tool of cultural policy*, in which he attempts to outline measures for the various forms of value.

- Powerful applications – providing an outlet for emotions, and thus health, self-confidence and social cohesion

The “Arts Debate” showed that Holden’s triangle of value was limited. In reality, all sorts of people can value all sorts of dimensions of the arts. Public and professionals alike appreciate the multiple values of the arts.

4.4 Community relevance as part of artistic vibrancy

According to the proponents of “public value” research, arts organisations must measure relevance to their community as an integral part of their artistic vibrancy. “Community” includes:

- artform community (peers)
- local community (city, State or country)
- community of interest (teachers, students, workers)

One of the main findings of the ACE “Arts Debate” was that there was a “strong sense among many members of the public of *being excluded from something that they would like to be able to access.*”⁴⁰ The Australia Council-commissioned Saatchi report “Australians and the Arts” reported a similar finding.

Currently, some arts organisations engage in “bad” crossovers which they tolerate for funding purposes, in an approach which presupposes that the public essentially exist to be exploited: “crossovers sell, and however compromised they may be, they are a means to a higher end.”⁴¹ Holden and Seabrook challenge companies such as the so-called heritage companies such as symphony orchestras, opera and classical ballet companies. They argue that sometimes, such companies are “pretending to maintain standards but are really just preserving status.”⁴²

Holden presents the notion of the “malign” vs the “beneficent expert:” a malign expert is someone who uses their knowledge to exclude rather than inform or share a cultural product. The challenge for arts organisations is to use expert opinion in an engaging rather than exclusionary way.

Another facet of this is the notion of “democratising the arts.” This is Knell’s idea that, “in an increasingly democratic and demanding age, artists have to establish the value of what they do through a conversation with their audiences, peers and stakeholders.”⁴³

⁴⁰Holden, John, *Democratic Culture: opening up the arts to everyone*, Demos, London, 2008, p.12.

⁴¹ Holden, *Democratic Culture: opening up the arts to everyone*, p.12.

⁴² Seabrook, John, author of *Nobrow*, as cited in Holden, *Democratic Culture: opening up the arts to everyone*, p.14.

⁴³ Leadbetter, C, *Arts organisations in the 21st century: ten challenges*, Arts Council England, 2005.

5. Intrinsic benefits of the arts

Key points

“Intrinsic benefits” of the arts include the spiritual, cognitive and emotional and social benefits of an arts experience for an individual. They are an important part of the artistic vibrancy equation, helping to assess the actual impact of art on audiences.

Several researchers emphasise the “intrinsic benefits of the arts” when measuring an arts organisation’s performance. This chapter looks at the key research in this area.

5.1 Intrinsic benefits of the arts: RAND corporation

“What draws people to the arts is not the hope that the experience will make them smarter or more self-disciplined. Instead, it is the expectation that encountering a work of art can be a rewarding experience, one that offers them pleasure and emotional stimulation and meaning.”

McCarthy et al, *Gifts of the Muse*.

The RAND corporation commissioned Kevin McCarthy et al to look at the “intrinsic benefits of the arts.”⁴⁴ In the *Gifts of the Muse* report, Kevin McCarthy et al argue that instrumental and intrinsic benefits shouldn’t be artificially separated.

According to McCarthy et al, the intrinsic benefits of the arts are satisfying in themselves, and lead to the development of individual capacities and community cohesiveness that are of benefit to the public sphere. Art is a

“...communicative cycle in which the artist draws upon two unusual gifts – a capacity for vivid personal experience of the world, and a capacity to express that experience through a particular artistic medium....Unlike most communication, which takes place through discourse, art communicates through felt experience, and it is the personal, subjective response to a work that imparts intrinsic benefits.”⁴⁵

5.2 Intrinsic benefits of the arts: Alan Brown

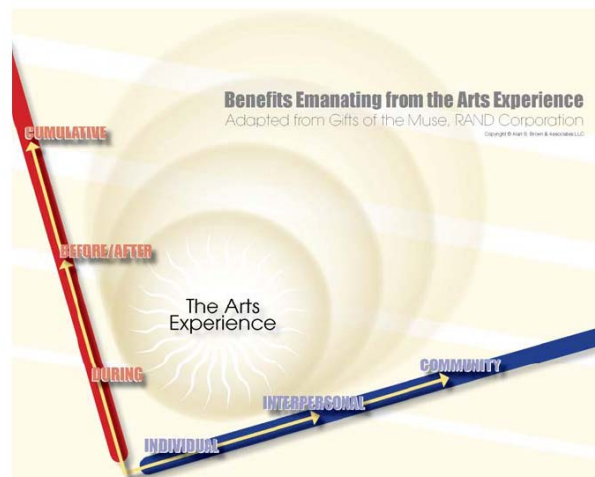
Researcher Alan Brown built on the RAND report to devise a basic scheme of the benefits of an arts experience.

According to Brown, the benefits of an arts experience can be best understood as an intersection of benefits at the individual, interpersonal (social benefits such as bonding with friends and family) and community level, which occur during the experience, before/after the experience and the benefits which accrue over time.

⁴⁴ McCarthy et al, *Gifts of the Muse*.

⁴⁵ McCarthy et al, *Gifts of the Muse*, p.xv.

Figure 1. Benefits Emanating from the Arts Experience
Adapted from *Gifts of the Muse*, RAND Corporation



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According to Brown, all the benefits which the RAND corporation *Gifts of the Muse* study identified can be captured between these two axes. These benefits are:

The “imprint” of an arts experience

This refers to the benefits which an individual receives during and immediately after an arts experience, such as captivation, spiritual awakening and aesthetic growth. Many factors influence the “imprint,” such as:

- The participant’s “readiness to receive” the art
- Quality of the experience, affected by factors such as the nature of the art, abilities of the artist, temperature in the concert hall.

Personal development

This is the growth, maturity, health, mental acuity and overall development of the person (eg character development, critical thinking and problem-solving). These sorts of benefits would normally accrue only after repeated experiences.

Human interaction

This refers to the benefits that improve relations between friends, family members, co-workers and others. Benefits could include enhanced personal relationships, family cohesion and expanded social networks, and are major motivators of participation.

Communal meaning and civic discourse

This includes benefits such as the communal meaning arising from mass participation in a holiday ritual, and those benefits which grow over time, such as preserving cultural heritage or supporting diversity.

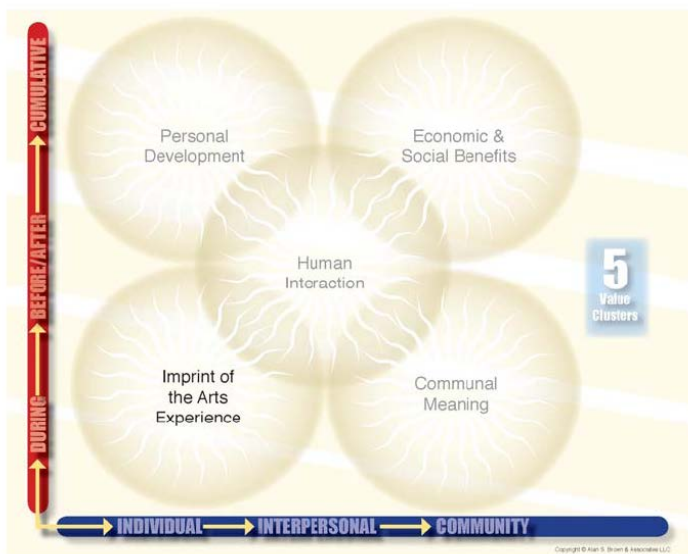
- Economic and macro-social benefits. These are second and third order benefits from sustained participation in arts, such as economic impact and civic pride or social capital.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Brown, *An architecture of value*, www.wolfbrown.com, 2006, p.19.

⁴⁷ Brown, Alan S, *An architecture of value*, p.19.

Brown adapted a second figure from the RAND report to illustrate these clusters of benefits.

Figure 2. Five Clusters of Benefits
Adapted from *Gifts of the Muse*, RAND Corporation



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Figure 3. A Map of Arts Benefits
Adapted from *Gifts of the Muse*, RAND Corporation



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Brown also noted the many factors which may affect value, including the way people participate in the art experience. He refers to five modes of arts participation identified in

⁴⁸ Brown, *An architecture of value*, p.20.

⁴⁹ Brown, *An architecture of value*, p.21.

*The Values Study, Rediscovering the Meaning and Value of Arts Participation.*⁵⁰ These different modes of participation will lead to different benefits. They are:

- “inventive” arts participation: engages the mind, body and spirit in artistic creation
- “interpretive” arts participation: self-expression, individual or collaborative.
- “curatorial” arts participation: selecting, organising and collecting art for one’s artistic sensibility
- “observational” arts participation: arts participating that you select or consent to do, motivated by an expectation of value of some kind
- “ambient” arts participation: experiencing art, consciously or unconsciously, as part of the world around you

⁵⁰ Brown, Alan S & Associates LLC, *The Values Study, Rediscovering the Meaning and Value of Arts Participation*, <http://www.culturandtourism.org>, commissioned by An-Ming Truxes, arts division director of the Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism, July 2004.

6. Assessing artistic vibrancy

Key points

There is some research into how to assess specific elements of artistic vibrancy, including:

- Audience engagement and stimulation
- Community relevance
- Innovation and excellence

6.1 Measuring audience engagement and stimulation

In 2008, Brown conducted a research project to measure the intrinsic impacts of a live performance on audience members. This project was a landmark study, the first to test and demonstrate the utility of real measures of artistic impact.⁵¹

Audience members were presented with a simple pair of questionnaires to measure their readiness-to-receive the art (in-venue, just prior to curtain) and the intrinsic impacts received from the performance (sent home with the audience member and mailed back).

The following key constructs were used:

“Readiness” constructs

- Context index: a composite picture of how much experience and knowledge an individual has about the performance and the performers.
- Relevance index: an individual’s comfort level with the performance experience
- Anticipation index: the individual’s psychological state immediately prior to the performance along a continuum from low to high expectations.

Impact constructs

- Captivation index: the degree to which an individual was engrossed and absorbed in the performance.
- Intellectual stimulation index: mental engagement, including personal and social dimensions: “cognitive traction.”
- Emotional resonance index: intensity of emotional response, degree of empathy with the performers and therapeutic value in an emotional sense
- Spiritual value index: an aspect of experience that goes beyond emotional/intellectual engagement and assesses the extent to which the respondent has a transcendent, inspiring or empowering experience
- Aesthetic growth index: the extent to which an individual was exposed to a new type or style of art, or aesthetically stretched
- Social bonding index: the extent to which the performance connected the individual with others in the audience, allowed him/her to celebrate cultural heritage or learn

⁵¹ Brown, Alan and Novak, Jennifer, *Assessing the intrinsic impacts of a live performance*, commissioned by 14 Major University Presenters, www.wolfbrown.com, January 2007.

about cultures outside of his/her life experience and left him/her with new insight on human relations.

Brown proved that intrinsic impacts derived from attending a live performance can be measured. The study confirmed that:

- different types of performances create different sets of intrinsic impacts
- an individual's "readiness-to-receive"⁵² a performing arts experience influences the nature and extent of impacts

Intrinsic impacts

Captivation

According to Brown, captivation is the "lynchpin" of impact. Attendees idealise the state of getting lost in the performance, or "going to another place." Brown empirically proved his hypothesis that factors which influence captivation include:

- Artistic quality of performance, the nature of the work of art itself
- Situational factors such as the temperature in the theatre, comfort of seating, lighting in the hall and composition and character of the audience itself (eg experience level, ability to empathise with the artist or the content)

Intellectual stimulation

42% of the study respondents left the theatres with unanswered questions that they would like to ask the performers or creators of the work. This raises the question for companies as to how they can satisfy their curiosity, and where they can go after a performance to discuss their questions, as means for deepening engagement with the audience.

A large majority of respondents discussed the meaning or merits of the performance afterwards, although only 19% had what they termed an "intense exchange." As companies turn to engagement strategies to deepen audience involvement, they may wish to use this as a useful outcome measure.

Emotional resonance

The study demonstrated that emotional resonance can be measured directly after a performance using a simple set of questions. Evidence of emotional resonance was elicited through questions around the strength of emotional response, the extent to which a respondent empathized with the performer/s and if the respondent felt the performance was emotionally therapeutic.

Spiritual value

Three questions were used to assess the intrinsic spiritual impacts of a performance, addressing the degree to which a performance was uplifting or inspiring, extent to which the respondent had a transcendent experience and extent to which the respondent left feeling empowered.

Aesthetic growth

Aesthetic growth allows for progressively deeper engagement of audiences and is the primary means of awakening new interests and unlocking additional demand. It is central to a company's long-term audience development agenda and should be a key impact area for measurement.

⁵² The audience member's expectation of an enjoyable experience was the single best predictor of a satisfying experience.

The study demonstrated that aesthetic growth occurs when:

- the works of art are new or unusual; and
- when the audience member is new to the art, regardless of whether the art is new or unusual.

Social bonding

The study found that presenters create social bonding when they:

- expose audiences to new cultures
- enable audiences to participate in their own cultural heritage
- when audiences leave the performance with a widened perspective on social issues and a deeper understanding of human relations.

6.2 Measuring the audience experience

Jennifer Radbourne et al have conducted research with audiences to uncover how the audience experience itself can be used as a measure of quality in the performing arts, and a predictor of re-attendance.⁵³

Radbourne et al found that audience experience can be measured using the following:

- knowledge/information transfer or learning: providing audiences with information to help them better understand the performance⁵⁴
- risk management: managing audience member's perception that the performance will not meet their expectations⁵⁵
- authenticity and performer interaction: the "truth" within the arts event, which includes technical standards and a sense of "emotional" truth⁵⁶
- collective engagement: the sense of being engaged with the performers and other members of the audience⁵⁷

If audiences' expectations about the above are met, they are likely to return to the arts organisation.

6.3 Measuring innovation, excellence and audience engagement

At "Measure for Measure," a seminar held in Birmingham in 8-9 February 1990, Richard Crossland of the Arts Business Ltd identified a variety of financial, workplace and access and quality indicators.⁵⁸ Innovation, audience and quality indicators included:

Innovation

- % of work created within 2 years
- Commissions per district artistic project
- Number of first regional performances/appearances
- % budget spent on new work

Audience response

⁵³ Radbourne, Jennifer et al, "The Audience Experience: measuring quality in the performing arts," *International Journal of Arts Management*, 11(3) Spring 2009, 16-29.

⁵⁴ Radbourne, et al, "The Audience Experience," p.19.

⁵⁵ Radbourne, et al, "The Audience Experience," p.20.

⁵⁶ Radbourne, et al, "The Audience Experience," p.20.

⁵⁷ Radbourne, et al, "The Audience Experience," p.21.

⁵⁸ Arts Business, *Measuring the arts*, London, Arts Business, 1991.

- % of strat. sample satisfied with arts provision
- Average score on scale 0-9 for “enjoyed” in respect of specific arts experience
- Average score on scale 0-9 for “stimulated” in respect of specific arts experience
- % of strat. sample attending <1 per year, 2-6 per year, >6 per year

Quality (of whole product, or elements such as design, dramaturgy, performance)

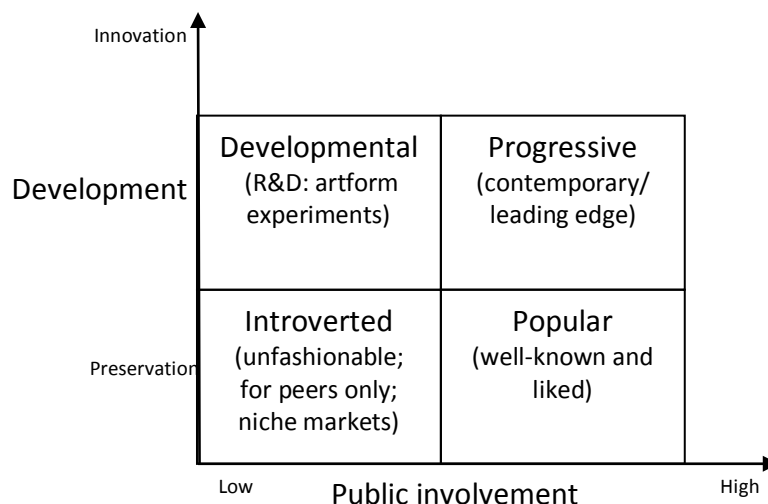
- Score (0-9) “imagination”
- Score (0-9) “execution”
- Score (0-9) “impact”
- Score (0-9) “appropriateness”
- Cohesiveness of artistic concepts (0-9)
- Enjoyment (0-9)
- Overall execution (0-9) divided by difficulty (0-9)
- Number of assessors saying “OK”
- Score on checklist of mutually agreed elements of work

6.4 Measuring innovation and preservation in the artform

Dom Henry of BDO Binder Hamlyn also gave a presentation at the “Measure for Measure” seminar, in which he discussed the “practical development of indicators” for the measurement of artistic impact.⁵⁹ In his address he identified the following non-financial performance indicators:

- Number of attendances, performances, venues
- Geographic and demographic artform profile
- Public opinion and awareness
- Critical acclaim
- Preservation of an artform
- Community development
- Commercial development

He went on to demonstrate a possible way of grouping indicators.



⁵⁹ Arts Business, *Measuring the arts*.

According to Henry, an artwork can cycle through these phases, from developmental to progressive, to popular to preservation, and in each phase, the level of public involvement vis-à-vis the development of the artform or work would shift. For example, a work which is developmental might have low public involvement but high level of innovation. An artist or company could plot their works on this type of graph to see where most of their work falls and to see if their works are in the positions they would like, according to their mission – eg a mix of developmental and popular work, or a weighting of progressive works, depending on the company’s mission.

An arts funding agency could similarly use this type of graph to plot if the sector has enough activity in each of these quarters.

6.5 Measuring community relevance

Holden suggests ways a funder could measure an arts organisation’s value to the community. For example, a funder could look at:

- Well-being: the number of communities showing a positive relationship between funding and social cohesion. This could be measured using data on participation rates and diversity; and case studies measuring social cohesion before and after funding.
- Recognition of value within the community: Community feedback could be measured through opinion polls, focus groups, unsolicited communication.
- Learning: increase in engagements with education sector, which could be measured through feedback from schools, evaluations of any links with enjoyment of education, delivery of learning outcomes.

6.6 Artistic quality in an opera company

Sabine Boerner has done extensive research into audience’s quality judgment of opera.⁶⁰ Boerner established a definition of performance quality in an opera company, splitting the musical (quality of orchestra, chorus, soloists, sound and tempo) and staging dimensions (quality of acting, staging, action, place, figures, atmosphere, genre).⁶¹

Boerner successfully tested a questionnaire to uncover audiences’ judgment of the quality of opera. According to Boerner, audiences assess an opera performance quality through an assessment of the individual aspects (eg soloists) and congruency aspects (eg the fit between staging and music dimensions). The most important aspect in an audience’s judgment of quality is the fit between the staging, acting and music of the opera, followed by the quality of the acting and staging and then the quality of the choir.

6.7 Measuring audience reactions to live performances

A three-year Australian study by Prof Katherine Stevens and Renee Glass developed an Audience Response Tool which records the emotional and cognitive responses, in the form of qualitative and quantitative ratings, to live performance.⁶²

⁶⁰ Boerner, Sabine et al, “Evaluation in music theatre: empirical results on content and structure of the audience’s quality judgment,” *Empirical studies of the arts*, 26(1) 2008, 15-35.

⁶¹ Boerner, Sabine, “Artistic quality in an opera company: toward the development of a concept,” *Nonprofit management and leadership*, 14(4), Summer 2004, pp425-436.

⁶² Stevens, Catherine, Glass, Renee et al, “Methods for measuring audience reactions,” *Proceedings of International Conference on Music Communications Science*, Sydney, December 2007. A copy of the Audience Response Tool is available on request.

The researchers have also developed a “portable Audience Response Facility” (pARF) which is a programmable, hand-held PC which samples data on a person’s responses as a performance unfolds. The pARF can be used to record from audience members of live or recorded performances of dance, music, theatre or new media. Physiological measures such as heart rate, breath rate or skin conductances can also be recorded.

The researchers also used a technique involving the recording of eye movements (eye fixations and saccades) of observers as an indirect, moment-to-moment index of cognition. This technique was used to test for differences between experts and novices watching a contemporary dance performance. Experts were found to have “rapid perceptual processing guided by expectancies and schemata in long-term memory.”⁶³

⁶³ Stevens and Glass et al, “Methods for measuring audience reactions,” p. 8.

6. Examples of measuring artistic vibrancy

Key points

A number of funding bodies and arts organisations have developed their own approaches to measuring artistic vibrancy. These examples might be useful for those looking at developing their own system of meaningful measurement.

7.1 Case studies of artistic self-assessment

Various performing arts organisations around the world have their own methods of assessing artistic vibrancy. These range across guest artist reviews, staff committees, peer and community panels, and critical appraisals to re-jig works.

Please see the separate publication on the Australia Council research hub website, *“Tell me honestly...”: case studies of artistic self-assessment in performing arts organisations* for details.

7.2 Arts Council England’s new approach to artistic assessment

ACE is currently developing tools to help arts organisations conduct self-assessment. ACE has introduced a new framework for assessment in response to the Brian McMaster report, “Supporting Excellence in the Arts,” which was released on 21 January 2008. The new framework includes:

- Self-assessment: companies will be required to make a clear artistic statement and then conduct an honest and rigorous assessment of performance against the objectives, including peers, audience views, quantitative and qualitative measures.
- “Artistic activity reports” of companies by peers: these reports are a kind of “quality assurance” mechanism for ACE to test the validity of self-assessment findings, as well as a de facto way to test the relevance and potentially also the “public value” of a company’s work. ACE will establish a diverse “pool” of reporters who will act like “mystery shoppers;” companies will not know which performance s/he would be attending. The reports will not be anonymous.
- Occasional in-depth appraisal of an individual company’s work: ACE will instigate occasional in-depth appraisals of individual companies by a team of peer reviewers. This will be done where a company is in difficulty, or where it has had a change in leadership and needs to re-think its strategy. It could also be requested by a company which believes it is doing well, in order to collect evidence to argue for further funding.
- Sector reviews by ACE and peers: ACE will conduct sector reviews, which might look at a particular artform, or cross-artform theme such as digital capacity. The scope could be national or international, depending on the nature of the enquiry.

7.3 Scottish government’s approach

The Scottish government employs independent, expert assessors to review the artistic standards of Scottish “national performing companies.” The Scottish government draws independent assessors from around Europe. The government contracts them to attend at

least two-thirds of a season, including mainstage and regional activity.⁶⁴ The position lasts for two years.

Assessors write performance appraisals, which go directly to the government. This ensures that their assessments are as frank as possible. The government then gives the reports to the company. The government also attempts to bring the peer reviewers together to talk about their reviews.

The Scottish Arts Council also has a “Quality Framework” for its funded arts organisations which they can use in their self-assessment and to develop their applications for funding. The Framework encourages organisations to assess their:

- artistic leadership
- public engagement
- governance, management and finance

It asks questions such as:

- Do you have a clear, shared artistic vision?
- Does the Board discuss artistic issues?

⁶⁴ This initially included educational activity too. A subset of specialist education peer-reviewers has since been assembled from opera and educational communities around the UK.

7. Guides to performance measurement for arts organisations

A number of funding agencies and philanthropic foundations have released guides to assist arts organisations with performance measurement, including self-assessment. Several are listed below.

[Quality Framework](#), Scottish Arts Council

[Assessing excellence: a guide to using self-assessment to achieve performance improvement in the public sector](#), Cabinet Office UK.

[A Little Book of Evaluation](#), UK.

[Measuring impact: a guide to resources](#), National Council for Voluntary Organisations, UK.

[Quality and impact tools](#), Proving and Improving.

[Self-assessment Workbook](#), National Council for Voluntary Organisations, UK.

8. Background to this paper

The Major Performing Arts Board (MPAB) of the Australia Council for the Arts monitors the artistic vibrancy, financial sustainability and audience access. The Board requested the Australia Council to conduct research to better understand what artistic vibrancy means, how arts companies currently measure their own artistic vibrancy, and models of best practice in assessing artistic vibrancy.

Meaningful Measurement forms part of this research. In addition, the Australia Council has prepared:

- an artistic vibrancy discussion paper, which establishes a working definition of artistic vibrancy for discussion with the major performing arts sector
- a “tool for self-reflection,” which is intended as a tool for arts organisations to assist in the process of artistic self-assessment (forthcoming)
- “*Tell me honestly: case studies of artistic self-assessment in performing arts organisations*” is a paper which present good practice case studies of arts organisations’ artistic self-assessment processes

The above resources are available on the Australia Council Research Hub <http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au>

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