



Iowa Cultural Leadership Partners
2013 Interview Highlights

Prepared September 2013

IOWA DEPARTMENT
of **CULTURAL AFFAIRS**

The Interviews

The Cultural Leadership Partners Program of the Iowa Arts Council and Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs (IAC/DCA) engages leaders in Iowa’s arts and cultural community that have demonstrated an exemplary record of programing and managerial excellence, as well as exceptional community service to the citizens of Iowa on a year-round basis. After a rigorous application process, organizations selected to become Cultural Leadership Partners (CLPs) receive annual operating support from IAC/DCA.

In the summer of 2013, IAC/DCA sought to evaluate the program through interviews with each of the 56 CLPs. These conversations served as an introduction for new DCA staff to connect with current CLPs and to learn how the current participants perceive the program. Over the course of one month, IAC/DCA was able to conduct interviews with 100% of participants through a mix of face-to-face meetings and phone conversations.

All questions in the interview were open-ended. This document seeks to extrapolate and organize themes emerging from the comments, ideas and opinions shared by CLPs. A single response from a CLP may satisfy several elements of a particular theme, and as such a single CLP may be represented more than once in any given graph.

It is our hope that this document will not only serve to communicate to CLPs what the IAC/DCA has learned from these conversations, but that it will act as a catalyst for further development of the program and inform how IAC/DCA can support, challenge, connect, and partner with Iowa’s leading arts and cultural institutions.

In This Document

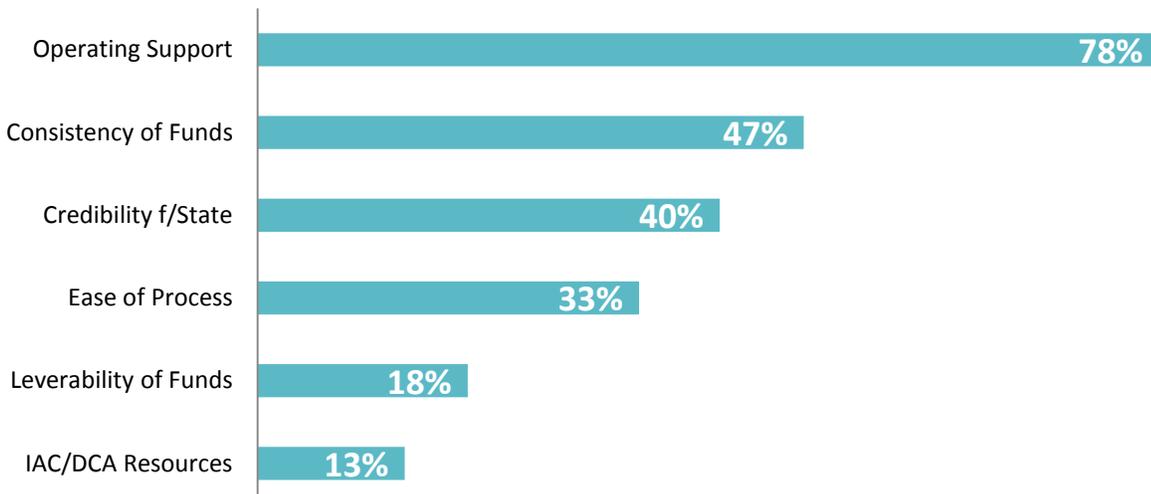
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Perceived Value: What Works Best in the CLP Program?

The CLP Program currently supports 56 arts and cultural organizations in Iowa. While the primary mechanism of support in the CLP Program is the distribution of annual operating support, many addition, “value-added” benefits are also offered by the program due to the nature of the network and connection to the IAC/DCA. When asked what they viewed as the most valuable aspects of the program for organizations, CLPs reported that the program brings value above and beyond the monetary value of grant dollars.

“What are the most valuable aspects of the CLP Program for your organization?”



Operating Support: As expected, operating support funds were found to be the most valued benefit of the Program.

Consistency of Funds: CLPs indicated one of the most valuable aspects of the program was the ability to plan ahead due to the consistency and dependability of CLP funding.

Credibility from the State: Many CLPs shared that simply receiving funding from the state lends a sense of credibility and validity to their work.

Ease of Process: The simplicity of the process was highlighted as a component of the program that currently functions at a high level.

Leveraging Funds: Several CLPs reported they were able to leverage CLP operating support to secure additional funds from other sources.

IAC/DCA Resources: The Iowa Arts Council acts as a resource for CLPs, providing technical support and connections within Iowa’s arts and cultural community. Only 13% highlighted access to resources, IAC/DCA staff, and the program network as a top benefits, suggesting there is potential to grow this aspect of the program.

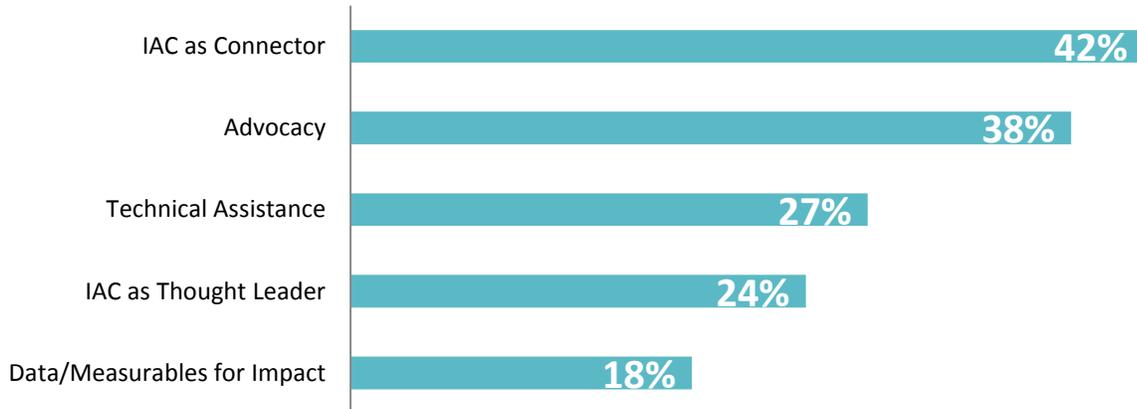
What We Learned

While Operating support is key, CLPs find significant value in others aspects. Only 13% highlighted IAC/DCA Resources, suggesting room for growth.

Room for Growth: Desired Areas of Additional Support

CLPs were asked how the Iowa Arts Council could deepen connections within the arts community and provide greater support to beyond grant dollars. Five specific topics areas emerged.

“What other ways can the IAC/DCA support your work?”



IAC as Connector: CLPs felt the IAC/DCA is uniquely positioned to lend a statewide perspective to their work and act as a connector for Iowa’s arts and cultural community.

Advocacy: Additional guidance and organization from the IAC/DCA around advocacy was a major recurring theme. Leadership from the IAC/DCA was discussed along a wide spectrum of possibilities, from very basic tools and support to more sophisticated, organized strategies for statewide advocacy conversations through the CLP Program.

Technical Assistance: On-going training and professional development from the IAC/DCA was suggested for various topics. This request came most frequently from CLPs with smaller staff sizes.

IAC/DCA as Thought Leader: Several CLPs indicated they would like to see additional guidance from the IAC/DCA on new trends, ideas, and strategies to enhance Iowa’s arts and cultural community.

Data/Measurables for Impact: Multiple CLPs have requested that the IAC/DCA provide relevant data regarding Iowa’s arts and cultural community to guide advocacy conversations and leverage funding opportunities, as well as insight into how the impact of arts and culture can be measured more accurately.

Leadership

CLPs have an expectation that IAC/DCA act as a conduit to connect the arts and culture community in Iowa and to scale national ideas from the field for local use.

Advocacy

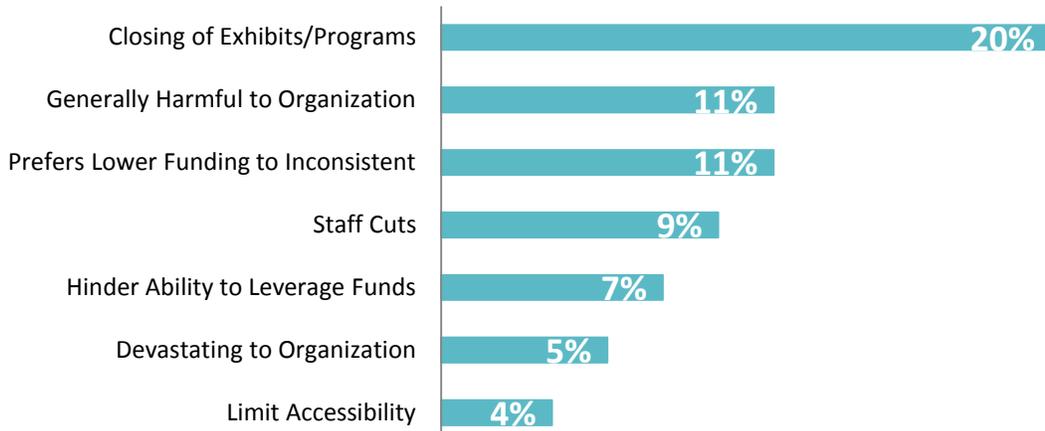
CLPs are proud of the IAC/DCA funding they receive and are eager to explore how they can more effectively communicate this to legislators.

Data

CLPs seek data and measurement tools to help demonstrate the scope and impact of arts and culture both locally and across the state.

We know the general operating support provided to CLPs is perceived as valuable, but how deep is the impact? One component to understanding the how the support is used by CLPs involves examining the effects of removing the funding.

“What adverse effects would result from an absence of CLP funding?”



Closing of Exhibits/Programs: The most prevalent area to be affected by a lack of CLP funding includes programming and exhibits, as 20% of CLPs reported that specific programs or exhibits would close without CLP operating support.

Generally Harmful to Organization: At least 11% of CLPs felt that while their organizations would survive, losing CLP funding would be “very harmful” to their organization overall.

Prefers Lower Funding to Inconsistent: A common theme running through our CLP conversations was the importance of consistency. In fact, 11% of CLPs commented they would prefer to receive a lower, consistent amount of funds rather than face highly fluctuating levels of funding each year.

Staff Cuts: Some Partners reported facing a reduction in staff without the annual operating support from the CLP program. 9% would be forced to remove staff, most of which were reported to be part-time staff essential to coordinating programming.

Hinder Ability to Leverage Funds: The loss of CLP funding could have adverse effects on the ability for CLPs to leverage additional funds, in some cases many times beyond the monetary value of the operating support dollars.

Devastating to Organization: Several CLPs reported the loss of CLP funding would be “devastating” and could put the entire organization into jeopardy.

Limit Accessibility: Several CLPs shared that support from IAC/DCA helps make events and programs more accessible to the public, an area that would be deeply limited without these funds.

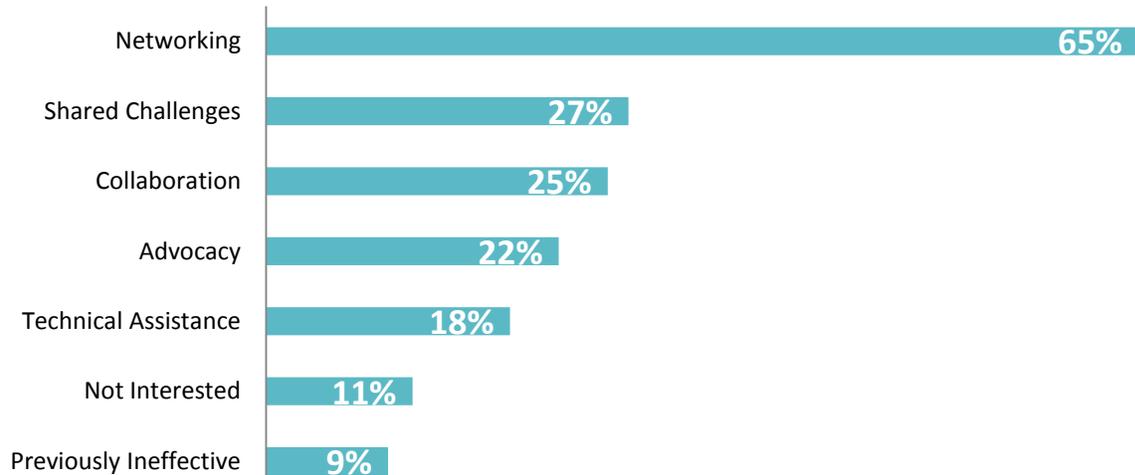
What We Learned

Consistency is key. Many CLPs would prefer to receive a lower, predictable annual disbursement than a higher, more variable annual award.

Building the Network: Convening and Connecting CLPs

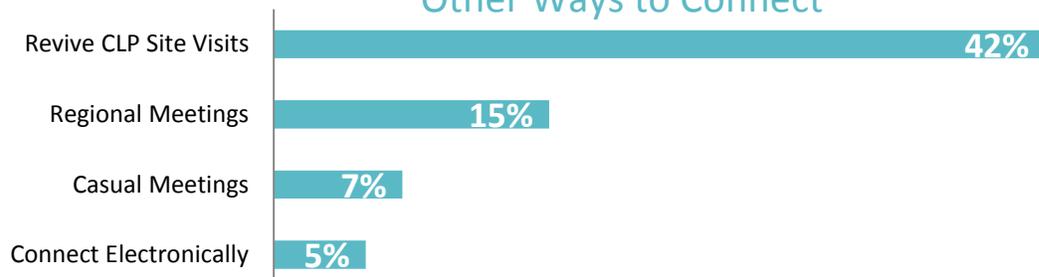
Since the inception of the program, the IAC/DCA has convened CLPs for purposes of professional development, statewide connectivity in the arts and culture field, and to discuss the mechanics of the program itself.

“What would you like to see as the focus for future CLP Gatherings?”



Networking was the most highly discussed topic regarding CLPs meetings, however 11% of CLPs were not interested in attending CLP gatherings and 9% voiced concerns that they did not feel these efforts were effective in the past. Other avenues for peer-learning and networking arose through these conversations as well.

Other Ways to Connect



One of the most popular ideas was to revive the non-evaluative, peer-to-peer CLP site visits to help foster a more robust network among CLPs. These visits were reported to be a key factor in creating relationships among CLPs in the past, and with 42% of CLPs requesting the revival of these visits, the continuation of these visits seem to be widely supported.

What We Learned

42% of CLPs requested the revival of non-evaluative, peer-to-peer site visits, which were consistently named as the most valuable CLP networking strategy to date.

CLPs encouraged considering the use of other alternative strategies for building the CLP network, such as the use of webinars, smaller regional meetings, and holding more casual, social gatherings for CLPs. Across the board, CLPs voiced concerns about the challenges of gathering all CLPs due to geography, staff time, and the necessity of such meetings. CLPs suggested face-to-face convenings should be limited to annual or bi-annual events.

The IAC/DCA has learned a great deal from the insights offered from our Cultural Leadership Partners. Their candor, creativity, and wisdom have informed the IAC/DCA in taking the first steps to elevating the CLP Program to an even more dynamic, streamlined, and impactful program. Over the next year, the IAC/DCA plans to enact an aggressive outreach plan to connect further with CLPs to address the needs and ideas brought forth from Iowa’s leading cultural institutions.

Please note that several valuable ideas were brought forth from this initial round of interviews that were not included in this document, which is highlighting widespread ideas and trends. Many of these specific ideas are already being put in place and explored by the IAC/DCA.

The number one priority of the Cultural Leader Partners Program continues to be supporting Iowa’s arts and cultural leaders through operating support, and these conversations are invaluable to informing how IAC/DCA can more comprehensively inform and support this network of leaders.

What We Learned	What’s Next
While operating support is key, CLPs find significant value in others aspects. Only 13% highlighted IAC/DCA Resources, suggesting room for growth.	IAC/DCA will continue to concentrate on providing general operating support at the highest, most efficient level possible. Staff will continue to work with CLPs to determine additional resources and support that the IAC/DCA is uniquely positioned to provide.
CLPs have an expectation that IAC/DCA act as a conduit to connect the arts and culture community in Iowa and to scale national ideas from the field for local use.	The IAC/DCA will communicate regularly with CLPs to deliver timely, relevant ideas, trends, and updates from national and local conversations to CLPs via convenient, easily accessible channels.
CLPs are proud of the IAC/DCA funding they receive and are eager to explore how they can more effectively communicate this to legislators.	The IAC/DCA will provide CLPs with tools to help facilitate these interactions as part of a thoughtful, long-term strategy for greater advocacy in Iowa’s arts & culture community.
CLPs seek data and measurement tools to help demonstrate the scope and impact of arts and culture both locally and across the state.	IAC/DCA is currently compiling several sets of data for constituent use, such as Iowa’s Cultural Vitality Index report, and exploring the most effective data streams for telling Iowa’s arts and cultural story.
Consistency is key. Many CLPs would prefer to receive a lower, predictable annual disbursement than a higher, more variable annual award.	As IAC/DCA adjusts to adapt to any unknowns in future budgeting allocations, the consistency of the CLP funding will focus on long-term strategies to ensure stability of the program in future years.
42% of CLPs requested the revival of non-evaluative, peer-to-peer site visits, which were consistently named as the most valuable CLP networking strategy to date.	IAC/DCA will work to re-envision the voluntary peer-to-peer site visit program to meet the needs and requests of the CLP network.