Community Partners in Arts Access Evaluation: Final Report

Mark J. Stern, University of Pennsylvania
Susan C. Seifert, University of Pennsylvania

Document Type
Research Report

Date
6-2009

Abstract
This research report evaluates the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation Community Partners in Arts Access (CPAA) initiative to expand cultural participation among residents of North Philadelphia and Camden, NJ. The initiative had two phases. From September 2003 to December 2004, Knight invited 35 cultural organizations to participate in a planning process with a focus on organizational capacity, audience development, and action plans to broaden, deepen, and diversify participation. In December 2004, Knight awarded grants to 19 organizations to carry out their action plans over the next three years. The final evaluation report concluded that CPAA met its goals. Both regional and benchmark participation rates had increased from the beginning to the end of the initiative. By 2008 the gap between levels of cultural participation in North Philadelphia and Camden and the rest of the metropolitan area had been reduced significantly.

This conclusion, however, belies the complexity that attended the initiative as it unfolded. Knight began CPAA in 2003 with an orthodox theory of organizational capacity building but by 2006 had shifted its focus to community transformation, and grantees had to rethink their projects. SIAP maintained its evaluation design: waves of grantee and regional participant data-gathering; a survey of artists living or working in North Philadelphia and Camden; and ongoing interviews and participant-observation with CPAA grantees. The qualitative record allowed SIAP not only to document what actually happened but also to make sense of changing theories of action during the course of the initiative.

Comments
SIAP’s evaluation of the Community Partners in Arts Access (CPAA) initiative in North Philadelphia and Camden, NJ was undertaken with support by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation. The Philadelphia and Camden Cultural Participation Benchmark Project, in collaboration with Alan S. Brown & Associates and Research for Action, provided baseline data and concepts. Regional cultural participation estimates were made possible by access to the Philadelphia Cultural List Cooperative database provided by the Greater Philadelphia Cultural Alliance.

Date Posted: 09 May 2017
Learning in Action MENU. Center for Learning in Action. About.