

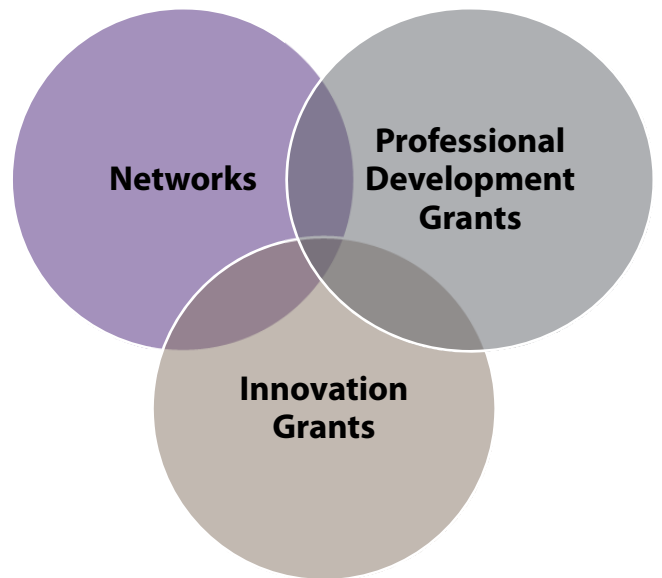
The Faces of the Future

An Assessment of California's Next Generation Arts Leadership Initiative

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The **Next Gen Arts Leadership Initiative** was established by the James Irvine Foundation and the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, working in partnership with the Center for Cultural Innovation, to promote the leadership development of younger professionals (age 18 to 35) in California's arts community. Planned in 2009 and launched in 2010, the initiative has three major components:

- + **Networks:** The Next Gen Initiative provides funds directly to intermediary organizations to administer Emerging Leaders Networks in Los Angeles, San Diego, San Francisco, and Silicon Valley. The funds are used for activities such as networking events, professional development programs, and strategic planning.
- + **Professional Development Grants:** The Center for Cultural Innovation administers grants of up to \$1,000 (funded by the foundations) for individual emerging arts leaders to enhance their skills, participate in professional activities, and develop relationships with peers.
- + **Innovation Grants:** The Center for Cultural Innovation administers grants of up to \$10,000 (provided by the foundations) to California arts organizations in order to experiment with approaches to strengthening the connection of younger arts leaders to the sector. These approaches focus on the organization's role in supporting Next Gen professionals and include education and intergenerational mentoring.



This brief offers highlights from a 2012 assessment conducted by Harder+Company Community Research (in partnership with independent consultant Diane Espaldon) for the Irvine and Hewlett Foundations to document the process of building the initiative and to identify early lessons that could inform ongoing discussions about the initiative and future of the arts field. It summarizes key findings, expert insights, lessons learned, and implications for the future. The data in this report was collected in late 2011 and early 2012, and as such are reflective of the early stages of the initiative's development.

Key Findings: The Networks

How Are Networks Structured?

Four Networks are supported by this initiative: Emerging Arts Leaders/Los Angeles; San Diego Rising Arts Leaders; Emerging Arts Professionals San Francisco/Bay Area; and genARTS Silicon Valley. While the Networks were still evolving at the time of data collection, the assessment revealed some insights into their emerging structure. They were beginning to formalize organizational frameworks, decision-making, and working processes. Several of the Networks had completed strategic plans that not only laid out programming goals, but also addressed leadership structure, including committees and working groups. In addition, the assessment revealed the following about Network structures:

- + **Staffing:** At the time of data collection, all of the Networks were largely coordinated by volunteers, though Initiative funding supported at least one paid part-time staff person at each location. With host organizations ranging from a community foundation to a civic arts organization, the leaders of each Network brought a wide-ranging set of perspectives, skills, and program strategies to their work. Such variability was reflective of, and beneficial to, the Networks' responsiveness to their local arts communities. But it also presented a challenge to describing the cross-cutting themes of these efforts and their early overall impact.
- + **Leadership:** The Networks experienced high turnover in leadership in its early stages, but leveraged that to increase opportunities for participation. The turnover may have been driven by the largely volunteer nature of the Networks, which affects how leaders prioritize this work in their own lives. Moreover, because most Network leaders have been early career professionals, they may also have left the Networks as they attained promotions and increased work responsibilities, pursued new job opportunities, went to graduate school, or started families. Network leaders accepted this challenge as part of the process of serving their professional community. In fact, all the Networks stated an explicit strategy to turn the potential disadvantage of turnover into an opportunity for greater engagement: with frequent vacancies in leadership positions, new volunteers are provided with opportunities to take on leadership roles in the Networks themselves.
- + **Programming:** The Networks continued to refine and create new programming at the time of the assessment. Members were largely "networked"—keeping connected with their local Next Gen Network through a range of interactions and communication platforms (e.g., Facebook, email, website)—regardless of attendance at specific events.

Who Is Participating in the Networks?

While the Networks were still forming their membership base, an initial picture of the "average" participant could be drawn from the survey findings.¹ The typical survey respondent was female, 30-35, white, and working at an arts nonprofit. However, because social media was used to disseminate the survey, a proper response rate cannot be calculated, and this representation of the "average" member may be limited.

Typical Participants Across the Networks ...

- ✓ **Gender:** All networks had 80% or more female representation
- ✓ **Age:** About 35% of respondents were 30-35; the 26-29 and 36+ age groups each comprised 27%
- ✓ **Race/Ethnicity:** People of color made up 38% of respondents
- ✓ **Experience:** A third of respondents had 3-5 years' experience in the arts, and nearly two-thirds worked at an arts nonprofit

¹ A total of 252 individuals across the four Networks responded to a brief online survey. The survey had more respondents from Los Angeles (n=76) and San Francisco (n=104) than from San Diego (n=42) and Silicon Valley (n=30).

Network leaders noted that they were wrestling with how to engage the right mix of artists and arts administrators (many of whom are also artists), as this affects various aspects of programming, marketing, and organizational capacity. Most sought the participation of all the disciplines represented in the arts community. According to one network leader:

“[We’ve] conscientiously made an effort to go beyond arts managers. This is for people who are interested. We want to be inclusive. We are looking for the next generation of creative leaders. This is purposeful.”

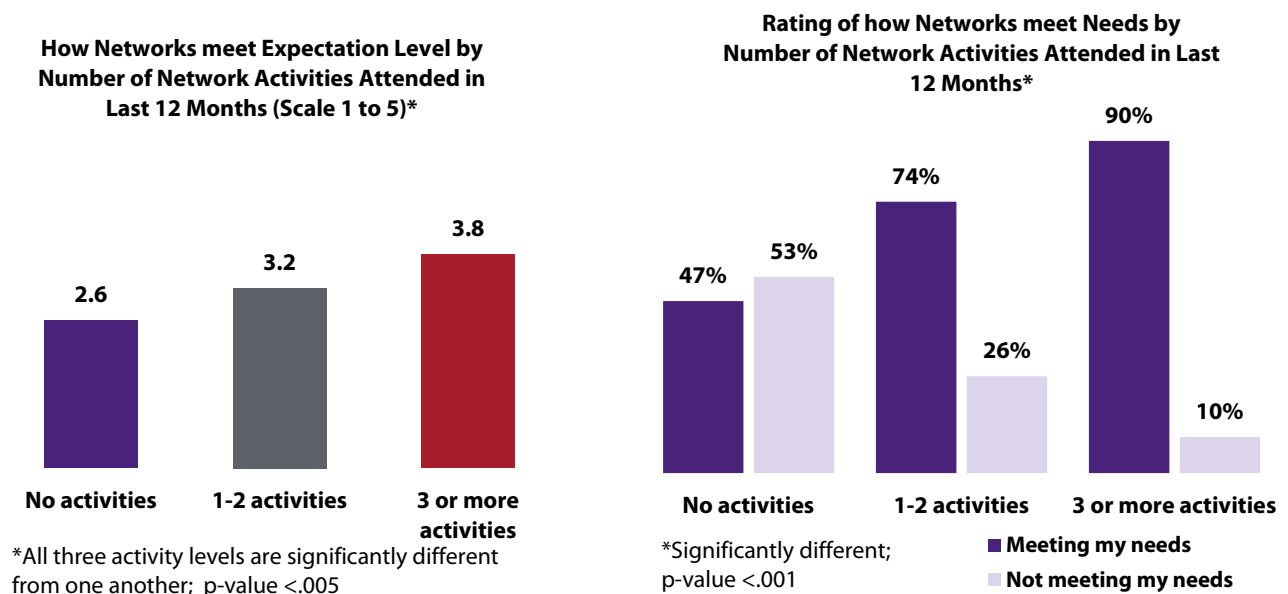
Network leaders also recognized the current limitations of their membership and indicated a strong commitment to bringing greater diversity to the Networks. When asked about “who is missing” from the Networks at present, Network leaders identified a very wide range of people that cut across race/ethnicity, age, profession, and relationship to the arts world. To some extent, the way the respondents engaged with this issue showed an understanding of diversity as occurring along multiple dimensions.

Network Members’ Program Participation

On average, more than half of respondents (59%) across the Networks had been involved for a year or less. In some cases, this may have been due to the relatively early developmental stage of several of the Networks at the time of the assessment—and/or may be the positive result of the recent efforts to increase participation that the Networks had undertaken. In terms of activity level, just under half of all respondents (46%) across the four Networks had attended 1-2 activities in the previous 12 months. Another 32% attended zero events in that time frame, while the remaining 22% attended three or more events. Network members described a wide range of reasons for their participation. About 80% indicated networking for professional reasons as a motivation to participate/be affiliated with their Network, while 65% noted participating because they were concerned about the arts and culture sector in their region.²

Network Members’ Experience and Satisfaction

More than half of respondents in each age group noted that their Network met their needs. For the 26-29 and 30-35 age groups, these were very large majorities (89% and 77%, respectively). In addition, survey responses appeared to indicate that the greater a person’s level of participation in the Networks, the more likely she or he was to indicate that the Networks met their expectations, needs, and satisfaction.



² Respondents could select multiple reasons for engaging with the Networks.

Many Network leaders felt that better leadership development took place in activities that entailed more hands-on commitment, especially the Network's formal mentorship and fellowship programs, as well as the steering committee and working groups of the Network's leadership structure itself. One Network leader, who had previously participated in the intensive fellowship program of his Network, said:

"The most valuable thing about [my Network] is that it creates the platform for leadership. The more involved you are, the more you participate, and the greater the leadership development. What changed me was to steer a program and project, learn from my mistakes. There is a difference between sitting in a professional development workshop or doing a mentorship versus building leadership capacity through experience."

Key Findings: Professional Development Grants

Who Received Professional Development Grants?

The Center for Cultural Innovation (CCI) administered approximately 180 professional development grants (of up to \$1,000) to Next Gen professionals who were employed by, or connected to, a nonprofit arts organization. These grants addressed the organizational aspects of promoting next generation leadership and helped identify how organizations can create opportunities for emerging leaders. Grant recipients were demographically similar to Network members. In addition, half the grantees participated in a local Network, indicating substantial overlap between the two strategies.

Typical Professional Development Grantees...

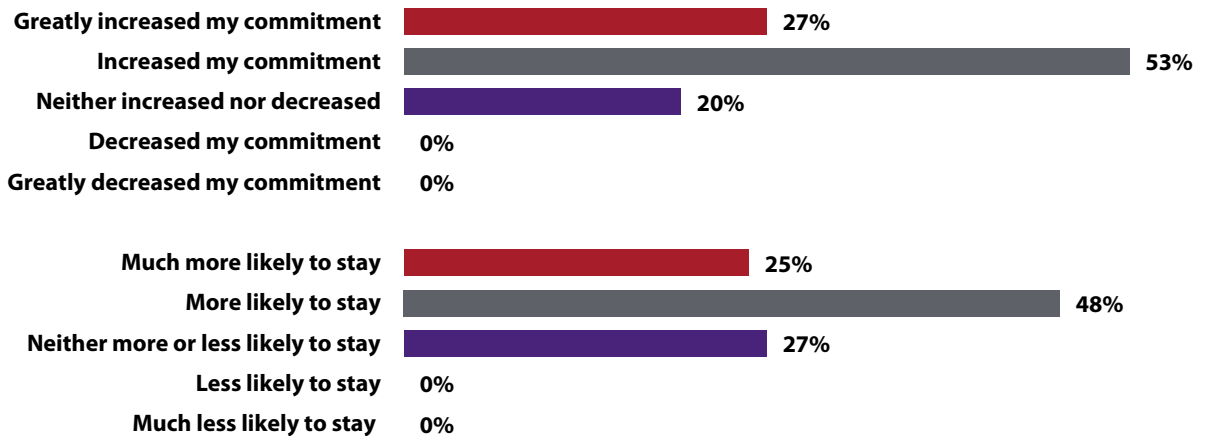
- ✓ **Gender:** About 76% of grantees were female
- ✓ **Age:** More than half (56%) of grantees were 30-35
- ✓ **Race/Ethnicity:** People of color made up 29% of grantees
- ✓ **Number of Activities:** A total of 77% of grantees used their funding to attend one activity; another 18% attended two activities via the grant

How Were Professional Development Grants Used?

Grantees engaged in a range of professional development activities, but by far the most common use of the professional development funding was attendance of a conference, convention, or retreat (75%). Other activities included attending a workshop, seminar, or training; working with a career coach; attending a class or series of classes; attending a performance or festival; and becoming a member of a professional group. The funds enabled recipients to choose one or more activities that suited their individual needs.

A large majority (83%) of Next Gen grantees reported that their professional development activity or activities exceeded or greatly exceeded their expectations. Only two individuals (3%) indicated that the activity or activities fell below their expectations. All grantees (100%) noted that their participation would be useful in their career development in the arts and culture profession; 82.3 percent indicated that it will be very useful. The grants' impact on participants' feelings of commitment to, and decision to stay in, the arts and culture field is displayed in the following exhibit.

How Activities Impacted Feelings of Commitment to and Decision to Stay in the Arts and Culture Field (n=79)



Key Findings: Innovation Grants

Which Organizations Received Innovation Grants?

The Center for Cultural Innovation also administered Innovation Grants to seven arts and culture organizations around the state: Balboa Park Cultural Partnership; California Presenters; Cornerstone Theater Company; Ink People Center for the Arts; Headlands Center for the Arts; Khmer Arts Academy; and Yerba Buena Center for the Arts. The grantees were diverse in geography, mission, constituency, and organizational size and structure, in addition to taking different approaches and activities to advancing Next Gen arts leadership through short-term projects.

Innovation Grantee Organizations...

- ✓ **Applicants:** 50 organizations applied, 7 were selected
- ✓ **Amount:** Almost all received \$10,000 for one year
- ✓ **Focus:** Explore new organizational models and practices that advance Next Gen arts leadership
 - Advancing Next Gen leadership within organization
 - Advancing Next Gen leadership in larger field

What Did Innovation Grant Activities Address?

The purpose of this pilot grant program was to encourage arts nonprofits to explore new organizational models and practices that advance Next Gen arts leadership and improve the productivity, career advancement, and retention of emerging arts leaders. The Innovation Grants were different from the other two components of the initiative—the Networks and the Professional Development Grants—in that these funds focused on the organization’s role, responsibility, and ability to innovate new strategies for long-term stability and systems change in the nonprofit arts field. That said, because of the overall purpose of the grants, participants/beneficiaries needed to be Next Gen arts leaders, defined as a staff person, board member, or artist between the ages of 18-35 who has worked in the arts field less than ten years consecutively. The activities most often pursued by the grantees were relationship-building, convenings about intergenerational leadership issues, and developing mentorships

with experienced arts leaders. Several of the grants allowed younger staff to work with other organizations or learn more about their art and the cultural context on which it is based.

What Were the Experiences of Innovation Grantees?

At the time of the assessment, most grantee organizations were still completing their activities. Nonetheless, the research produced five major themes about the experiences of Innovation Grant recipients. They were as follows:

- + **Multi-Generational Interaction.** A multi-generational approach to leadership development was seen as beneficial to the arts and culture field. Specifically, assessment participants felt that working closely with current leaders from older generation(s) was beneficial to Next Gen leaders. Innovation Grantees experienced this effect through one-on-one mentorships, job shadowing, and being part of cross-generational task forces and committees. A respondent noted:

"[The activities] were great because we had Next Gen plus current leaders who've been here for a long time... upcoming leaders were able to voice their opinions, and people in leadership positions were able to realize their value. Next Gen leaders felt their voices were heard."

- + **Practical and Tailored Leadership Development Opportunities.** Next Gen participants spoke most highly about experiences that were tailored to their interests and relevant to their specific jobs, such as mentorships or job shadowing, through which they could discuss the challenges and opportunities of their own jobs one-on-one with more seasoned leaders inside or outside of their organizations.

- + **Making and Maintaining Connections.** In interviews, several Next Gen participants said they greatly cared that their work in the arts contributed to the broader community and issues important to them. This helped them see how the arts fit and why it should be a priority, despite competing forces in their lives. Building such connections also helped some interviewees imagine themselves in the field long-term. According to one respondent:

"I met a lot of colleagues I wouldn't have had exposure to otherwise... I was exposed to city planners and got a sense of the broader vision for the city. It built my self-confidence and makes me feel more integrated into the process."

- + **Organizational Commitment.** Organizational commitment was important to ensuring continuity of Next Gen leadership development and any necessary changes that must occur to support it. Most of the interviewees described changes underway at their organizations to continue the work started by the Innovation Grant, such as the following:

"It opened our organizational leadership's eyes and minds to the strengths of our Next Gen leadership. [And] this is where we have to be appropriate stewards... Not only do we think they can do more, but they think they can do more too."

- + **Multi-year Leadership Development Efforts and Funding.** A number of interviewees said that a multi-year grant would have allowed them to deepen or build upon the work they started with the Innovation Grant, reasoning that the development of younger leaders is by definition a long-term effort.

Expert Insights

The assessment incorporated the perspectives of nine individuals with deep experience in Next Gen arts leadership issues in order to put findings in a broader context. According to the interviews, some of the major considerations related to increasing and retaining new arts leaders include the need for a more multi-generational approach, especially for communities of color; the importance of practical opportunities to develop leadership skills; the urgency of addressing diversity directly; and the need for organizational commitment to change.

Multi-/Inter-Generational Leadership Development

The expert interview respondents described the importance of a multi-generational approach to Next Gen leadership development. Programs that rely exclusively on peer interaction to support and direct the careers of emerging arts leaders are less likely to have impact than programs that involve more senior leaders. Intergenerational interaction can take the form of mentorships, job shadowing, or coaching. Direct experience with professionals that have successfully navigated their way through career choices, work/life balance challenges, and other trade-offs can inspire emerging leaders and help them make decisions. As one expert interview participant noted:

“Six or seven years ago we offered [separate] generation-specific trainings [to either] ‘experienced/senior’ leaders [or] to ‘emerging’ leaders. We’ve mixed it up since then because we saw the value in the exchange that occurs for long-time leaders [when they] hear how younger leaders come into the work, and of course vice versa. Since then we haven’t done the separate training.”

Value of Practical Leadership Opportunities

Many of the expert interviewees talked about the value of practical experience in leadership. While theory and observation are helpful, they are no substitute for the real-world experience of having to make difficult decisions and being held accountable for them. Next Gen programs that offer emerging leaders an opportunity to make real-life decisions in work settings can play an important role in sharpening their skills and preparing them to assume more responsibility over time. According to one expert interviewee:

“Building networks only goes so far. After that, people need a chance to take what they’ve learned from each other and really apply it. I hear from people who have been in leadership development training programs for years without ever having a chance to really lead. If we believe these people are our future, we need to let them learn what it’s really like. Otherwise, how can they develop their skills?”

Addressing Racial and Ethnic Diversity

Despite some efforts by funders to create programs that encourage the participation of all emerging leaders, many Next Gen professionals from communities of color have not been involved as hoped. Some expert interview participants felt that existing programs were not reaching communities of color sufficiently; they noted that the few current programs tailored for more

diverse participants are small and not widely known. The expert interviewees see this as a challenge to all efforts to promote Next Gen leadership in communities of color, not just in this initiative. Several expert interviewees commented on this issue, including one who noted:

"[Some programs] are really good to have but they don't have the depth that the multi-cultural community needs in order to engage. Arts leaders of color tend to work more in isolation, have less resources, and may think 'those programs are not for me.'"

Importance of Organizational Commitment

The expert interviewees identified the importance of having Next Gen programs that include support for organizational change. An ambitious cohort of skilled, motivated, and well-connected emerging arts leaders can only take on leadership roles if meaningful opportunities exist for them in the arts sector. As one expert noted:

"The organization's role is key. I think organizations are also limited in and of themselves, but you have to start somewhere. Organizations can institute policies, cultural norms that affect the way professionals develop on the job or outside of the job, structures. Organizations have responsibilities ... where formal leaders see developing their staff as a part of their role, in addition to the bottom line or buying new art or instituting innovative programming. Staff as resources should be elevated. Unfortunately in the field, it's not."

These themes do not directly address the Initiative or the results of this assessment, but they indicate how others in the field have engaged with similar issues and the lessons learned from that experience. Moreover, they help frame assessment findings by providing context for how the Next Gen Arts Leadership Initiative fits in the larger arts nonprofit field.

Lessons Learned

Several lessons have emerged across the Initiative's three components that demonstrate key elements of success and opportunities for the Initiative. These include the following:

- + **Connectedness.** The Initiative has demonstrated the value of connectedness for Next Gen arts leaders. Participants reported networking as the area in which they felt the highest impact from their involvement. In fact, they indicated that developing formal professional skills and other potential benefits were much less important to them.
- + **Practical Learning Opportunities.** Many of the grantees noted that involvement in real organizational decision-making through job shadowing, mentoring relationships, or new and challenging assignments was a tremendous learning opportunity that would otherwise not have been available to them. It added meaning to what for many had been a mostly theoretical understanding of leadership. This approach also helped the current leaders who had a chance to reflect on their work as they helped their younger colleagues understand it. The experience of the participants is consistent with the intentions of the Network leaders who describe the goals of the Networks as connection and developing leadership skills through Network participation.

- + **Tailoring.** Across the three components of the Next Gen Initiative, participants found considerable benefit in the opportunity to tailor activities to their particular interests and professional development needs. Such opportunities generally increased their commitment to their work and the field and improved the likelihood that they would continue doing similar work for the long term.
- + **Organizational Development.** The Initiative as a whole, and most notably the four regional Networks, is still taking shape and needs continued support for organizational development. The Initiative has established an effective infrastructure and an array of promising programs. If the Initiative is to be successful in reaching a broader audience, it will have to identify explicit strategies to address their needs and interests.
- + **Funding.** All the Networks also recognize the importance of seeking funds to maintain themselves in addition to their Next Gen grants. Sustainability is a goal for all the Networks and they are actively developing plans to obtain additional funds. While the Networks do not require substantial grant support, the local competition for support is daunting. Network leaders understand the importance of creating business models that combine grants, fees, and other funding streams over the next few years.


Implications for the Future

Building on the findings of this assessment, the assessment team offers several recommendations for consideration in future programming:

- + **Maintain flexible definitions, program designs and strategies across the Networks.** This assessment found wide variation across the four Networks in the definitions of “leadership,” “Next Generation,” “arts professional,” and “membership.” Each organization has cast a wide net in defining its members/participants and its strategies. Similarly, the Center for Cultural Innovation has been very flexible, within the funding guidelines, in its Professional Development and Innovation Grant decisions. Next Gen in this context is not about age or generation but about new leadership roles in an organization or the field. Mid-career workers over age 36, artists, workers in the for-profit arts sector, and arts critics all have a stake in the vitality of California’s arts and culture sector. They also have their roles in the development of the next generation of arts leaders. There can be opportunities for more specific interest groups within the broader Initiative, but there is also great value in an inclusive approach.
- + **Define and track Network goals for audience, activities, and impact.** The Networks benefit from staying flexible, particularly in regard to finding specific strategies that meet the needs of their members and the regions in which they live. But once those strategies are identified, the Networks should establish appropriate goals. They would then be able to use foundation and other resources to pursue the goals they have established, e.g., membership targets, activity types, and levels and impact expectations.
- + **Increase the use of intergenerational strategies in all aspects of the Initiative.** Our research showed the success of intergenerational approaches such as mentorships, shadowing, and other types of relationships with more experienced and seasoned leaders. An intergenerational approach should include engaging a broad generational spectrum – including college-age groups and mid-career professionals – to share information on jobs in the nonprofit

arts field and are responsive to different career stages. This also has some implications for arts leadership development in communities and organizations of color. (See next recommendation.)

- + **Create targeted, dedicated funding strategies for communities and organizations of color.** Representation of these communities in the networks and other Initiative activities should be increased. This assessment found both that people of color were underrepresented in Next Gen activities, and that current Network leaders and participants explicitly sought to increase diversity. Developing the leadership of arts professionals of color will require new programming specifically designed for them and their career paths. More effective marketing or outreach to these groups will not, on its own, produce better results because of the complexity of each of California’s ethnic, cultural, and language groups and differences across various communities of color. The issue of representativeness is not specific to the Next Gen Initiative. It is a challenge and opportunity facing the arts and nonprofit field in general.
- + **Emphasize complementary strategies that support both individual growth and organizational change.** Arts organizations play a critical role in arts leadership development. The Center for Cultural Innovation has recognized this need since its founding in 2001, and has been a leader in training artists and arts professionals on the business side of their work. Preparing new leaders to take on greater responsibility also requires support from *within* organizations and the involvement of current executive directors, artistic directors, and board members. More focus is needed on organizational change strategies and succession planning so the new cohort can see itself in the organization’s future. Nonprofit arts organizations should have a range of change strategies and models to consider. (See next recommendation.)
- + **Provide practical leadership opportunities to Next Gen arts leaders.** Next Gen leaders need to engage in opportunities in which their efforts are directly related to meaningful outcomes that affect their organization, their arts community, and the field. Such opportunities should go beyond discussion of issues and skills, building to meaningful action—and the opportunities should be supported by senior management. Innovation Grants are well suited to enable organizations to develop such leadership options.
- + **Support the capacity needs of the Networks themselves.** All four Networks need assistance in building member databases, assessing the needs and progress of their members, identifying effective strategies for outreach and recruitment and maintaining long-term relationships with members. Given that volunteer leadership turns over on a regular basis, external technical support will likely need to evolve as the Networks change and grow.



“This really made me feel like I could do something big one day, that what I’m doing now is important and that I am not alone in this field.”

Professional Development Grantee

About the Assessment

Harder+Company Community Research and independent consultant Diane Espaldon led this assessment to **document the process** of building the initiative and **identify early lessons** that can inform the future of the arts field. Assessment methods included surveys of Network participants and Professional Development Grant recipients, as well as interviews with Network leaders, Innovation grantees, and outside experts in this field. The assessment aimed to answer the following key questions:

- + How can Next Gen arts programs address the needs of California's diverse communities and arts sector?
- + Are there opportunities to combine the separate strategies to produce greater impact and achieve greater reach into communities?
- + How can the current grantees learn from the results of this study and create more innovative and effective programs?

A full report was completed in August 2012 for internal use by the Hewlett and Irvine Foundations (which commissioned the assessment), as well as the Center for Cultural Innovation, to reflect on progress to date and shape future programming.