



## CULTURAL DATA PROJECT

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### **CULTURAL DATA PROJECT ISSUES NEW REPORT: ARTS & CULTURAL PRACTITIONERS CALL FOR SOLUTIONS TO DATA CHALLENGES**

Philadelphia – The Cultural Data Project (CDP) today released [\*Bridging the Capacity Gap: Cultural Practitioners' Perspectives on Data\*](#), expanding the conversation about how data can be used to improve the health and effectiveness of the arts and cultural sector. The report shares insights from five town hall meetings that brought together arts practitioners, artists, service organizations, and funding agencies to discuss the principal challenges they face in collecting, interpreting and applying data to strengthen their decision-making. It offers suggestions from arts leaders about what they need in order to build organizational capacities and cultures that support the use of data in management practice.

“At a time of profound change in the cultural sector, practitioners are hungry for information that helps them connect with their audiences, build more sustainable organizations, and communicate their activities and impact on people and communities,” said CDP President and CEO Beth Tuttle. “This report sheds valuable light on how arts and cultural practitioners on the front lines are challenging themselves to put data to use.”

The highlights from the town hall meetings, described in *Bridging the Capacity Gap*, include:

- Arts practitioners face three primary challenges around data: an underdeveloped capacity for data collection and interpretation, culture dynamics that undermine the effective use of data, and the lack a strong organizational vision for how to use data in planning and decision-making.
- Challenges collecting and using data are symptoms of deeper organizational issues. These include: organizational silos and tensions between the artistic and business sides of cultural

organizations; weak knowledge management and information sharing within organizations; chronic resource constraints; and the lack of a clear vision for how to balance multiple, and sometimes conflicting, missions.

- Arts practitioners see four types of solutions to their data challenges: building internal expertise on data collection, research, and evaluation; imagining specific solutions (i.e., new tools, processes, approaches) to data collection challenges; fostering a culture that values data; and improving the effectiveness of CDP technology and tools.

*Bridging the Capacity Gap* is part of an ongoing effort by the CDP to engage the field in a dialogue about the opportunities and challenges that cultural practitioners face in making productive use of data in their daily work. In 2013, the CDP commissioned Chicago-based [Slover Linett Audience Research](#) to convene a group of leading researchers for a virtual conversation about the progress the sector has made putting data to productive use over the past decade. The resulting white paper, [New Data Directions for the Cultural Landscape: Toward a Better-Informed, Stronger Sector](#), described the key issues that appear to be inhibiting the field from more strategically and effectively engaging in data-informed decision-making.

To expand this conversation to the front lines of the sector, the CDP hosted five town hall meetings across the country in 2014. Approximately 185 cultural leaders in Chicago, San Francisco, Boston, Dallas and Philadelphia explored the challenges identified in *New Data Directions* and proposed specific solutions for addressing them. Their perspectives and ideas are summarized in *Bridging the Capacity Gap*. Sarah Lee of Slover Linett is the author of both reports.

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*The mission of the Cultural Data Project is to empower the nonprofit arts and cultural sector with high-quality data and resources in order to strengthen its vitality, performance, and public impact.*

*The CDP serves as an important catalyst for data-driven decision-making, resulting in stronger management for arts and cultural organizations, better-informed funding policy for grantmakers, and a rich information resource for advocates and researchers.*