What Artists Say

A Study of
The McKnight Foundation
Supported Artists

Center for the Study of Art & Community

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Part One: *Introduction*

In 2011 and 2012, The McKnight Foundation asked the Center for the Study of Art & Community to help them in their efforts to learn more about the structure and dynamics of Minnesota's artist ecosystem. As a part of this initiative, the Foundation and the Center jointly developed a six-question narrative survey designed to give artists an opportunity to reflect on the environment, conditions, and motivations that affect their work. The research coincided with preparations for the 30th anniversary of the Foundation's Artist Fellowship Program. Established in 1982, this program has provided over 1,500 fellowship awards in 13 arts discipline categories[1]. These fellowship recipients and artists receiving McKnight funds regranted by the state's 11 Regional Arts Councils (RACs) in 2011 comprised the population for the study.

The research design was informed by two core assumptions related to community cultural development. The first, the concept of the "ecology of culture," regards artists, arts organizations, audiences, funders, etc., as parts of a system whose interdependent mechanisms are best understood when considered as a whole. Our second foundational premise is that cultural ecosystems are highly dependent on the health of the artists working within them. In our 2009 evaluation of the McKnight Arts Program, we noted that the Foundation's Artist Fellowship Program was critical to the health and retention of Minnesota's artists.[2] At that time, we also found unanimity within the state's arts community; this talent pool was a driving force for the high quality, variety, and increasing availability of the arts in the state.

[1] The Foundation's Interdisciplinary Arts Fellowship Program operated from 1986 to 2001.

[2] In 2007 a study called *Artists Count*, conducted by Minnesota Citizens for the Arts, identified 19,676 artists in the state. The NEA's "Artist Employment Projections through 2018" estimated that there were 1,977,800 arts professionals nationwide in 2008. Using these numbers, Minnesota, which is home to 1.7% of the U.S. population, only has 1% of the country's artists. Suffice it to say, data on the state's artists is in need of updating, a project that was started in early 2012 by the Minnesota State Arts Board.

Survey Process: The two surveys were conducted during the months of October and November of 2011 for the Fellows and during the spring of 2012 for Regional Arts Council (RAC) artists. The invitation to participate went to approximately 500 former Fellowship recipients and to a database of RAC artists provided by the Regional Arts Councils. The research focused on areas that have been identified as key components of artist-support systems, which included:

- Validation and critical response for artists' work
- Professional development and training
- The market and audience for artists' work
- Artists' networks, partnerships, and communities of practice
- Material support for artists
- Access to information relevant to artists' work
- Access to support services and technical assistance

The six questions that we posed were:

1. *What are you most excited about in your work as an artist?*
2. *What conditions support your best work?*
3. *How do you earn a living? If not purely from art, does your other work help or hinder your art making?*
4. *Many artists rely on a network of key professional and personal connections and relationships (collaborators, friends/family, vendors/venues, advisers, etc.). If this is true for you, describe your support system.*
5. *Who are your audiences, and how do you connect with them?*
6. *What advice would you give to an artist just starting out?*

During the study's first phase we also solicited résumés from 120 Fellows to learn more about how their professional histories unfolded over time. The Foundation, working with data visualization[3] consultants at Pitch Interactive created a beautiful and informative interactive project called McKnight Artist Fellows: Visualizing Artists' Careers that graphically explores these artists' work lives.

Response: The invitations to participate made it clear that the surveys were being conducted anonymously and would be vetted by a third party (the Center). Nevertheless, considering that the invitation to the Fellows to respond to these six questions came from the Foundation, it would be prudent to factor in a halo effect. In all, the Fellows responded with 226 fully completed surveys that contained nearly 76,000 words, averaging 330 words per respondent. Similarly, the RAC artists responded with 131 fully completed surveys. For narrative surveys of this type, this is a very high level of response. It is clear that the vast majority of respondents put considerable time and thought into their answers. Many comments are heartfelt and revealing.

The Study Cohort: The demographic distribution of our research cohort provides an interesting portrait of the community of artists in Minnesota. The Fellows cohort was somewhat skewed toward more recent Fellows, as up-to-date contact information for earlier awardees was less available. Responses were received from artists from all 11 RACs. We are unable to judge if these are proportional to the statewide distribution of artists.

[3] Data visualization or "dataviz" is a field that seeks to communicate information clearly and effectively through graphical means.

Specifically:

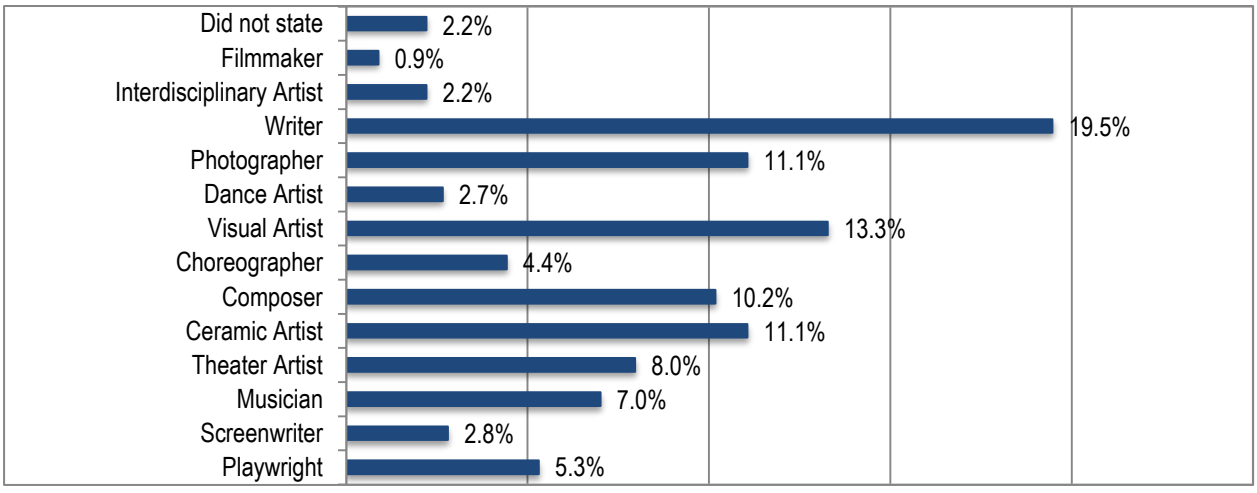
- 88% of the Fellows who shared racial/ethnic data were Caucasian, as were 92.4% of the RAC artists. This compares to 86% for Minnesota's general population.
- The median age of all respondents was 54.3 years.
- Most Fellows (66%) were from the Twin Cities region and, more specifically, the core cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul, while 9% live in greater Minnesota. (The Twin Cities area is home to 60% of the state's population.) As expected, most RAC artists reside outside the metropolitan area, with 90.4% reporting affiliation with one of the non-metro Regional Arts Councils.
- 25% of the Fellows no longer lived in Minnesota (see map below). This is reflective of an average transiency rate among this portion of the sample.
- The distribution of arts disciplines within the two groups is quite different. This is due to the fact that the Fellowship awards are discipline-specific and the Regional Arts Council grants are driven by demand. The RAC data aligns well with similar data from other studies.[4]

Table 1: Survey Demographics

	Fellows*	RAC Artists			Fellows	RAC Artists
Caucasian	88%	92.4%		MN Metro	66	9.6
African American/African	5%	0%		MN Non-Metro	9	90.4
Asian/Pacific Islander	3%	.8%		Non-Minnesota	25	0
Latino/Hispanic	1%	.8%		Median Age	54.3	
Native American	1%	2.4%		Female	52	66
				Male	48	34

**9% of Fellows did not share racial/ethnic information*

Table 2: Distribution of Disciplines among Fellows



[4] *Artists Count: A census of artists living and working in the St. Louis Region*, St. Louis Regional Arts Council, 2012. *Artists Count*, Minnesota Citizens for the Arts, 2007.

Table 3: Distribution of Disciplines among RAC Artists

Discipline		Discipline	
Visual Arts	61.8%	Literary Arts	16.4%
Architecture	1.3%	Media	7.2%
Dance	2.6%	Music	21.1%
Design	2.0%	Theater	10.5%
Interdisciplinary	4.6%		

Review and Analysis: After the data on the Fellows was collected, the Center assembled a review team composed of six Minnesota artists/cultural leaders with the background and experience needed to discern patterns and trends in the kind of qualitative material we had collected.

The members of the review team were:

- DeAnna Cummings, Executive Director, Juxtaposition Arts, Minneapolis
- Julie Dalgleish, Arts Development Associates
- Nancy Fushan, Arts Consultant
- Wendy Morris, Artist; Director, Creative Leadership Studio
- Erik Takeshita, Senior Program Officer, Twin Cities Local Initiatives Support Corporation
- Harry Waters Jr., Theater Artist; Professor of Theater, Macalester College

We asked each of the six reviewers to assist us by examining specific questions in-depth. Their job was to identify and summarize prominent patterns and themes as well as interesting issues, ideas, and opportunities that emerged. The review process also included an examination of each question and the full data set by consultant and Center co-researcher Dr. Patricia Shifferd. A meeting of reviewers to share and discuss results was held after each segment of the research process was completed.

The Report: This report shares **the findings** for each of the six questions in **Part Two**. Then **Part Three** provides **recommendations and observations** on the data. The findings include analysis and reporting generated by all of the study reviewers.

Part Two:
Findings

1 What are you most excited about in your work as an artist?

Prominent Themes and Patterns

1.1 C**reating** and **refining** artwork
1.2 **Mastering** and **developing** artistry
1.3 **Discovering** new ideas and solutions
1.4 **Working** with and **teaching** others

Findings

1.1 Creating and refining artwork

- **The creative process is the driving force of artists' work:** Nearly 90% of the Fellows and over 80% of the RAC artists said that involvement with the creative process itself was the prime motivation for their continuing commitment to art making. While descriptions and definitions of the "creative process" varied widely, most contained aspects of the following:

  1. *Exploration:* discovery through experimentation and invention
  2. *Innovation:* developing something new from existing materials or patterns
  3. *Synthesis:* putting unique ideas/concepts/sounds together
  4. *Translating:* crafting creative ideas into something meaningful to others

  This was consistent across all disciplines, ages, genders, and racial/ethnic groups and for both the Fellows and RAC artists. Some respondents went to great length describing the "essential," "compelling," even "obsessive" nature of their involvement in the process of art making.

  > *What excites me most in my work as an artist is my ability to maintain both my curiosity and my energy over a lifetime, regarding the use of a consistent studio practice to examine the nature of the self.*
  >
  > —Visual Artist
  > Madison, WI

- **Audiences as stimulus:** The importance of audiences as part of the creative process was mentioned far more often by the RAC artists than by the Fellows, reflecting what we infer to be the greater integration of the former into the fabric of their communities. For example, over 50% of this group said that sharing work with the audience and/or collaborating with community members was particularly important to them.

  Among the Fellows, some performing artists described audiences as a part of their creative process. Although a few mentioned the satisfaction of positive feedback from receptive audiences or critics, the absence of this element in most of the respondents' answers here is noteworthy. When audience was mentioned, the encounter was often described more in terms of relationship building rather than reward (i.e., "engaging," "making connection with," "transforming").

1.2 Mastering and developing artistry

- **Honing one's craft:** Along with the centrality of the creative process, many artists from both cohorts also shared their enthusiasm for development of new skills and techniques. Improving, deepening, even redefining one's craft was described as a potent and inevitable element of the creative journey. One actress from the Fellows group talked about the joy she felt at becoming a "mature artist" and having "confidence in my art form." Another Fellow described "having the skills to both do what I intend and discover new territory" as "deeply satisfying." One RAC artist said that "exploring my medium, developing and improving new techniques [is] part of the creative process." Another said, "I'm excited to try new things, to always be growing and changing as an artist."

- **The thrill of completion:** Finishing an artistic product or performance was also mentioned as an inspiring aspect of art making, both for the joy of completion and the prospect of beginning anew. A number of artists alluded to the cyclic nature of the creative process as being particularly stimulating. One RAC composer said, "There is no greater joy than finishing a work, having that music experienced by people, and then starting again."

1.3 Discovering new ideas and solutions

- **Exploring new worlds:** Many artists cited the thrill of studying and learning about new areas of knowledge relevant to their work. Whether it was history, science, or community issues, being in a position to follow an often indirect or even nonspecific path of inquiry was described variously as a kind of "privilege," a "guilty pleasure," or engendering a sense of freedom. Some artists particularly valued the travel opportunities their work provided. Tangentially, freedom was also mentioned as a treasured state of mind associated with unfettered learning and the creative process.

> *In looking for and finding beauty, the world becomes very alive.*
>
> —Ceramic Artist, NY

- **Exploring deep and profound questions:** A small number of artists wrote that their art making has provided them with a way to engage transcendent questions (death, life, God, what it means to be human, etc.). One artist described his work as a kind of "bridge" for connecting "day-to-day experiences with more profound questions about life." Some alluded to this as another way of exploring the creative process. A prominent subtheme among RAC artists was the importance of nature, both as a source of artistic inspiration and as a metaphor for other complex issues.

> *I'm excited about being in the studio and making the work, having the work create dialogue, and bringing the excitement of creating art and creative opportunities to youth within the community.*
>
> —Photographer, Duluth

- **Addressing contemporary issues (psychological, social, economic, political):** About 3% of the Fellows mentioned the opportunities they had to contribute to their communities as particularly gratifying. Some indicated that this was a primary motivator for their creative activities. Working to address community issues was not prevalent among artists supported by the RACs, but the general importance of community connections was clearly a major theme.

1.4 Working with and teaching others

- **Collaboration with other artists:** Nearly 10% of the artists mentioned their work with colleagues in response to this question. Predictably, this appears to be truer for performing artists than for those involved in the visual arts and writing. For these performers, both creating and presenting partnerships were described as rewarding and, not surprisingly, essential.

- **Collaboration across disciplines and sectors:** Many of those who cited collaboration as "exciting" mentioned interdisciplinary work as an important facet of their careers. This was an area where some of the writers and visual artists specifically mentioned the pleasure of partnerships. They found themselves particularly stimulated or provoked by processes used by other artists who used different creative approaches, ideas, or mediums. A smaller number of artists said that working with colleagues from non-arts disciplines (e.g., scientists, social workers, educators) had also sparked new creative thinking.

- **Teaching and assisting others:** A small number of artists (4% of the Fellows and 6% of the RAC artists) described teaching as an important part of their creative life. For these artists, their work imparting artistic skills and concepts was seen as intrinsic to their creative development. One musician with a medical condition that prevented her from playing for long periods described her teaching as a vital extension of her creative process. Among RAC artist respondents, furthering local art traditions was seen as strengthening community bonds.

- **Financial rewards are not particularly exciting:** Very few (less than 1% of the Fellows, for example) mentioned being excited about the financial rewards of their careers. This is not surprising given the fact that in their responses to our income question (#3: *How do you earn a living? If not purely from art, does your other work help or hinder your art making?*), very few indicated that they supported themselves solely by making art. Although reputation, particularly among peers, was mentioned, fame per se, was not.

> *It's only recently that I've come to realize that my greatest strength as a writer is my genuine pleasure in trying something new! I've written a monthly neighborhood newspaper column for the* New York Times*, two novels, two dozen pretty horrible poems, half a memoir, a column for an online magazine, a blog, a dissertation, and now I've been commissioned to write a play and am editing an anthology on reproductive rights. So the many possibilities for finding readers (thanks, Internet and Al Gore) and for creating different types of art are all equally exciting.*
>
> —Writer, St. Paul

2 What conditions support your best work?

Prominent Themes and Patterns

2.1 Extended **time** to focus on making work

2.2 Adequate **financial support**

2.3 Appropriate **space** in which to make work

2.4 Opportunities to be **inspired** by and receive **feedback from peers/mentors**

2.5 Access to enthusiastic, open-minded **audiences**

2.6 **External supports** and motivators

2.7 Supportive family and **balanced home life**

> *The usual suspects — time and money — offer conditions that support my writing: having time to read, write, walk, wander, daydream, talk with friends and colleagues, and work, work, work.*
>
> —Writer, St. Paul

Findings

2.1 Extended time to focus on making work

- **"Time, time, time":** Given the strong focus on the creative process that emerged in response to the previous question, it is not surprising that having the time to work figures so prominently in these answers. Fully 70% of Fellows and over half of the RAC artists mentioned time as an important part in their "best work" equation with many indicating that it was *the* most critical factor. This response was consistent across all disciplines.

- **All time is not equal:** Beyond having enough hours in the day to devote to art making, many artists from both cohorts talked about the kind of time that proved most valuable to their endeavors. Some of those mentioning time as key preferred long periods that were peaceful, quiet, and free from distractions; others described more complicated patterns, ones filled not only with intense stimulation by other artists, art (of all disciplines), and community life but also solo time for work and reflection.

  Some performing artists distinguished between the time they need alone to create or practice and the time devoted to translating and interpreting their work with others. Understandably, this collaborative aspect was characterized as much more complicated than solo work. Writers of all stripes and visual artists described time apart or in isolation as essential, or in the words of one playwright, "the lifeblood."

- **Stolen time:** Another issue that arose provides an interesting insight into the lives of artists. Many artists with outside jobs and family commitments extend their days by working very early or late in the day. Not surprisingly, lack of sleep is a prominent side effect of this practice. Others admitted that they sometimes found themselves taking "family time" to complete their work.

2.2 Adequate financial support

- **Money equals time:** Over 50% of the responding artists mentioned money as critical to their ability to maintain their artistic practice and produce quality work. The vast majority of these artists characterized money as "buying the time" they need to work — in all shapes and sizes. A number also correlated the amount and continuity of the time acquired with the quality of the work produced. Conversely, when money is tight, artists said that they had to take on more "outside jobs" and, thus, have less time for making art.

- **Money also buys peace of mind and arts essentials:** Some shared that financial stability provides a sense of security that is nurturing and allows for the work to proceed. The stress of not having money to cover the basics (shelter and health insurance were most often mentioned) makes it difficult to focus on creative work. For performing and visual artists, money is also needed for securing necessary studio space, supplies, equipment, and technical expertise. Interestingly, few performers remembered to include pay for themselves to the list of essentials that money can buy.

- **Some jobs are better than others:** The majority of artists indicated that they needed an "outside job" to survive (see also question #3). While some bemoaned this fact, a minority embraced their ancillary employment as a healthy and vital stimulant for their creative work. In almost all of these cases, the parallel jobs involved teaching of some kind.

2.3 Appropriate space in which to make work

- **Place matters:** A quarter of the respondents described adequate work space as essential to the quality of their practice, a response that was consistent across all disciplines.

  Performers were likely to focus on venue size, safety, and availability of technical elements and support, with differing requirements for rehearsal and presenting venues. (Affordability, availability, and size for the former; audience quality and technical support for the latter.) Availability was a particularly prominent concern with rural artists.

  Visual artists described the need for studios large enough to accommodate both equipment and the storage of inventory and supplies. Writers and composers talked more about environmental qualities, emphasizing privacy and freedom from distraction. It should be noted that, like artists in other disciplines, many writers and visual artists indicated that they needed a balance of private time and interaction with people. A number of artists described the stimulating effect of a work space that "just feels right" or "supports my way of working." This meant familiarity for some; for others, it translated as being separate, isolated, or close to nature.

> *Give me small theaters run by the young and unafraid.*
>
> —Theater Artist
> Brooklyn, NY

- **Presenting facilities:** In addition to the physical and technical qualities described above, many artists identified their relationships with presenting/exhibiting facilities as critical to both fulfilling their creative vision and connecting to a supportive audience. The desirable qualities articulated included:
  - "Getting" the work
  - Knowing their audience
  - Marketing savvy
  - Willingness to take risks
  - Commitment to the artist's career over time

- **Presenting relationships:** Venues operating with the kind of sensibility described above will feature the work of artists (often local) that reflects local stories. This, in turn, will reflect the issues that people care about. Some performing artists indicated that they felt these were the conditions that help audiences understand and support the intrinsic connection between the art they like and the artist(s) who made it.

2.4 Opportunities for inspiration, feedback, and collaboration

- **Collaboration is both a necessity and a privilege:** The response to this question reinforces the importance of collaboration that we saw in question #1 (*What are you excited about in your work?*). One in three artists identified creative partnerships as critical to their ability to make and present their work. While the majority was performing artists, a number of writers and visual artists also articulated this sentiment, emphasizing the powerful, stimulating effect of working with other artists in both their own and other disciplines. Many artists' responses showed a deep appreciation for the unique richness of Minnesota's arts community.

> *Sustained funding, good meals, artistic directors, and organizations that get it (and when they don't, they take the time to get it), collaborators who do not work with a scarcity model—only abundance.*
>
> —Dancer
> Minneapolis

- **Learning never stops:** Access to other artists was seen as an essential component of the lifelong learning that fuels artistic development. Learning from masters and having critical input from colleagues were both mentioned. Some artists described their need for periods of intense interaction with peers followed by equally deep isolation. Artist residencies were mentioned numerous times as a valuable resource that gives artists access to, and control over, both of these conditions. The state's numerous universities were also cited as a valuable forum for artists to interact with and learn from each other.

- **Peers as friends:** Some artists talked about the importance of interacting with other creators who understand the often unique circumstances and challenges of an artist's life. A number of respondents described the need for moral and emotional support from other artists as equal to the need for critical feedback.

- **Peers as infrastructure:** On a more practical level, the informal networks of friends and associates that develop within the various disciplines were regarded as a critical marketplace for everything from technical advice and barter to provocative ideas. This area is explored in greater depth through question #4, which deals with artist-support systems.

2.5 Access to enthusiastic, open-minded audiences

- **The audience partnership:** Close to 20% of the artists (mostly performers) described the need for a "dynamic," "respectful," even "collaborative" relationship with audiences. Some referenced the audience's role in the completion of the creative process or the fulfillment of the work. Others addressed their need for the cultivation of a core audience that sustained an evolving relationship with their work.

- **Audiences and venues:** Access to audiences was also linked by many artists to their relationships with the venues that act as intermediaries between their audiences and their art. They recognized that these creative spaces serve as the bridge between their creative products and local audiences who are looking for arts experiences that speak to their own lives. As was indicated above in *2.3 Appropriate space in which to make work*, this three-way collaboration was described by some artists as central to their ability to fully develop their work, receive critical response, and generate earned income. A few described frustration with this dependency, but most were thankful that they have had the opportunity to cultivate these complex relationships.

> *It's important for audiences to support the nonprofit groups with whom I perform.*
>
> —Musician
> Plymouth, MN

- **Community factors:** Some artists recognized that their connection to appreciative audiences was also tied to a number of external factors, which included:
  - Experienced, well-educated audiences
  - A community that values the arts
  - Generally high artistic standards in their discipline and across the community
  - A tradition of robust and responsive cultural philanthropy

2.6 External supports and motivators

A number of artists identified external structures, program elements, and conditions that they felt stimulated their work. Artists from both cohorts identified the following factors to some degree or other:

- The importance of awards and positive reviews that boost confidence and bolster risk taking
- The validation and financial support of grants and fellowships. The McKnight Arts Program was mentioned several times as a critical support
- No-strings-attached fellowships and awards—to support risk taking and dedicated practice
- Project-based grants and commissions that provide a concrete structure to work from, a starting place, and a deadline
- External accountability to others that pushes and disciplines the creative process to be more productive
- Support for high-stakes projects that force the artists beyond their comfort zones
- Residencies/retreats of weeks or months that are away from the day-to-day responsibilities

> *A deadline leaves me no choice but to scale the mountain.*
>
> —Composer
> St. Paul

- Extended travel to facilitate both inspirational, immersive learning and fellowship with colleagues and mentors
- Having another regular-paying job in the arts. Teaching was specifically mentioned as inspiring for artists' personal work (e.g., art teacher, university professor, etc.)
- Having someone to handle the promotion and business side of things (venue, curator, arts organization) so that they can focus on making art
- Access to out-of-town artists, curators, reading, research

2.7 Supportive family and balanced home life

- It is not surprising that many artists described an artistic practice that was built on a solid foundation provided by a supportive home life. While few went into great detail on this subject, it is clear that the emotional and financial support provided by both nuclear and extended family members is a profoundly important part of the artist's ecosystem. This area is also explored in our analysis of the question dealing with artists' support systems (#4).

3 How do you earn a living? If not purely from art, does your other work help or hinder your art making?

Prominent Themes and Patterns:

3.1 Overarching **issues** related to **income**
3.2 **Patterns** and themes related to **income streams**

Findings

Answers to this question provided us with an opportunity to do both quantitative and qualitative analysis of the information shared. The findings describe the various sources of artist income and explore the often complicated strategies that artists employ in their efforts to create stable and predictable economies. To help with the analysis, artists' income streams were classified as follows:

- Art making
- Art teaching
- Arts administration
- Non-arts jobs
- Retirement
- Family support

3.1 Overarching issues related to income

- **Art making does not sustain most artists:** Despite Minnesota's reputation as a strong "arts community," a minority of our respondents reported that they make their living primarily through their art. Not surprisingly, the two cohorts differ in this regard. While just over 77% of the Fellows reported that they do *not* earn their living primarily through their art, fully 92% of the RAC artists face this challenge. Based on the data presented, it is unclear if this is unique to this region or more endemic of the broader artist ecosystem in the United States. But given the comparatively robust nature of Minnesota's artist-support system, it is likely that the state's artists fare better than other jurisdictions.

  Of the 23% of Fellows who said that they did earn their living principally from their art making, many expressed deep gratitude and satisfaction with their circumstances. Quite a few of these stated that they understood they were in a comparatively unique position. Despite their good fortune, however, some said that their full-time focus came with a price, principally with regard to money and time. A few said that their artistic autonomy was only possible because of shared family income.

  > *I earn my living as a writer. It astonishes me to write that sentence.*
  >
  > —Writer
  > Twin Cities

- **Some disciplines appear more economically sustainable than others:** The disciplines with the highest percentage of Fellows working solely on their art were playwright/screenwriters, musicians,

and theater artists with 43% indicating that they had no other jobs. These disciplines seemed to offer greater access to economies (e.g., commercial viability, union representation) that enabled some to sustain themselves through art making. Specifically:

- Playwrights and screenwriters who write for television
- Musicians with regular union engagements
- Theater professionals who work regularly in an equity theater

Among theater artists, RAC artists working full-time appear less likely than Fellows to sustain themselves solely through their art. This means that they are either working another job or relying on others to make ends meet. On the other hand, musicians in both cohorts seem equally able to make their living through their art.

The remaining disciplines have a less-than-proportional share of full-time artists. For example, among the Fellows just 7% of the 69 photographers and writers identified themselves as self-sufficient. Similarly, one-third of the 25 ceramic artists and one-quarter of the 23 composers said that their work was exclusively artistic. For the 40 choreographers and visual artists responding, about 18% reported art-only careers. Among those identifying themselves as interdisciplinary artists and filmmakers, none said that they were artistically self-sufficient, but the sample was too small (seven total) to be significant. (See also *Appendix A: The Complex Mix of Artists' Livelihoods by Discipline*.) A number of those earning a living through their art noted that they make a "meager" living. For the RAC artists, the results were similar.

- **The patchwork nature of the artist's economy:** The large majority of the respondents indicated that they derive income from multiple sources—art making, teaching, other employment, family support, etc. As one said, "I've put together many things to make things work." This finding echoes those of other studies[5] that have documented the uniquely eclectic nature of artists' economies in other U.S. communities. The majority of artists (approx. 75%) put together their economic puzzle pieces from arts-related work (i.e., art making, teaching, and arts administration).

> *Now I know how to recognize the red flags before I agree to take on the kind of job that will steal my soul.*
>
> —Composer
> St. Paul

This diversity of income sources also points to another theme that emerged through multiple questions in this survey. A number of artists indicated that the "stitched-together" nature of their livelihoods made both their art making and everyday lives fairly unpredictable. Understandably, this condition has been exacerbated further by the economic downturn.

For the Fellows, non-arts-related income sources reported were income from other sources (12%), retirement (7%), and family support (2%). The number of Fellows over the age of 65 (12%) is consistent with that age distribution in the general population.[6] Of these, approximately half were living primarily on retirement income, while the other half continues to work. This, too, is roughly in

[5] Seifert and Stern, *From Creative Economy to Creative Society* (SIAP, University of Pennsylvania: 2007); Rosario-Jackson, Maria et al., *Investing in Creativity: A Study of the Support Structure for U.S. Artists* (Urban Institute: 2003); "Report on Healthcare Needs of Washington State Artists" (Artist Trust, Seattle: 2008).
[6] Meyer, Julie. Census 2000 Brief, C2KBR/01-12 (U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, DC, 2001).

line with statistics for the general population.[7] RAC artists at a somewhat higher percentage (17%) report that they are retired.

3.2 Patterns and themes related to income streams

- **Teaching is the major source of support for artists:** Fully 45% of the Fellows and 25% of the RAC artists indicated that they earn a significant portion of their living through teaching. In both groups, the proportions were fairly evenly divided among postsecondary teaching jobs and those working with K–12 students in schools and/or community settings. This finding suggests that the market for teaching artists in both formal and informal educational settings is more robust in urban settings. Although some expressed a desire for a career centered on making art alone, most described their teaching as reasonably compatible with their creative efforts.

- **Not all artists resent their diverse work lives:** Feedback about whether other work helped or hindered the artistic practice was mixed. Many of those who teach noted that preparation for the classroom takes a lot of time and energy. Others, however, stressed the benefits of teaching: working with students, having facilities to do their work, and a steady income with affordable health care.

  From those working outside the arts, feedback was also mixed. About half of these artists felt their other work "hindered" their art making — taking time, energy, or inspiration. A smaller number were thankful that their outside jobs were completely divorced from the art world. The sentiment here was that undemanding part-time work or employment in a different field helped to pay the bills but didn't sap creative energy as much as arts-related work.

- **Grants and fellowships are highly valued:** As noted earlier, grants and fellowships are an important part of the money side of the time-money equation. For example, several Fellows mentioned the importance of grants as helping to "launch" them into being full-time artists. Not surprisingly, a number of respondents specifically identified McKnight's support as critical to the development of their careers. Some artists also reflected on the "unique" and "generous" nature of Minnesota's artist-support system.

  > *My first McKnight grant became my springboard.*
  > —Writer, St. Paul

- **Artists as administrators reflect the changing nature of the artist's ecosystem:** It's a given that professional artists need to devote a portion of their time managing their careers. Several artists emphasized that independent artists are, in fact, running small businesses that require planning, marketing, fund-raising, and the like. Artists who make things reported spending more time managing their business affairs. Most of those who identified as sole proprietors or small-business owners recognized that the self-contained nature of their work provides a significant level of autonomy. Others saw these activities as a necessary but somewhat onerous aspect of their artist life.

  A number of artists in both groups said that they worked in arts administration positions that were not directly connected to their own art making. Most often, these jobs were in their own disciplines, a fact that many were thankful for. A minority of artists said that they resented the time away from the studio.

[7] For 40.6% of senior beneficiaries, Social Security contributed more than 90% of their income in 2008. Among seniors, 47% of men and 32% of women were employed in 2008. Source: Congressional Research Service (CRS) tabulations of data from the March 2008 Current Population Survey (CPS).

- **The "temporal" nature of artist employment:** Like many in the workforce, artists with outside employment are concerned about the uncertain nature of the U.S. economy. Given the fact that many artists use part-time employment as part of their support strategy, increased competitiveness in the part-time job market increases stress on the already unstable nature of the artists' economy.

- **Health care is a major factor for this cohort:** Given that the median age of our respondents was well over 50 years, it is not surprising that health issues were mentioned numerous times by the Fellows. Quite surprisingly, few of the RAC artists mentioned this issue. A number of artists said that access to health care was a major impetus for securing and remaining in outside jobs. This suggests that finding ways to increase access to health care continues to be an important issue for artists. Other research indicates that a majority of working artists cannot afford to pay for their own health insurance and depend on spouses or outside jobs for coverage.[8]

> *It's sort of a patched-together living—uneven—and it varies from year to year. But sometimes I find I actually do need the traditional workday because I have kids and I try to not be the mom who suddenly trails off and then gets lost in her computer.*
>
> —Playwright
> Minneapolis

[8] Ibid, Artist Trust.

4 Many artists rely on a network of key professional and personal connections and relationships (collaborators, friends/family, vendors/venues, advisers, etc.). If this is true for you, describe your support system.

Prominent Themes and Patterns

4.1 Most artists function within a complex and **multifaceted support system**

4.2 Artists need **encouragement** of all sorts

4.3 **Fellow artists** are a critical part of the artist ecosystem

4.4 Some **arts organizations are essential** creative and career development partners

4.5 **Families** are a crucial foundation for many artists

Over the years I have been able to create work around a constellation of culturally and ethnically diverse artists dedicated to the development and performance of my work. With shared values, histories, and aesthetics, they are my collaborators, my family, my mentors, and my friends. With them, anything is possible.

—Playwright, St. Paul

Findings

4.1 Most artists function within a complex and multifaceted support system

- **The diverse and interdependent nature of artists' support networks:** Not surprisingly, few artists rely on only one form of support. This echoes the responses to our question about how artists earn a living. Most often, this mix of support comes from different people and organizations with whom artists interact on a regular basis. (These include family/friends, artist peers and colleagues, service organizations, vendors/presenters/curators, and their venues.) Most of the artists described these elements as both interconnected and interdependent. The patterns that emerged in the network descriptions were, predictably, reflective of the kinds of relationships that are particular to specific artistic disciplines. Theater artists, for example, described the mix of roles (actors, directors, costume and lighting designers, dramaturges, etc.) that they rely on to produce a play. Writers mentioned editors, agents, and publishers.

- **Artists rely most on their peers for support:** The majority (64%) described their fellow artists as an indispensable part of their support system. For many, moral support and critical feedback were at the top of their list of needs fulfilled by their creative colleagues. For performers, the collaborative nature of their work clearly transcended their functional dependencies. Many described the sense of "community" or "family" that defined these creative relationships, both during production and within their local artist community. Some older artists shared the deep sense of loss and isolation that they felt as their collegial connections diminished.

- **Some artists have organized support groups to advance their work:** About 9% of the responding Fellows indicated that they were part of a group of artists who met regularly to share ideas, offer critiques, and provide general encouragement. For many of these artists, these gatherings were described as critical to their ability to grow as artists. Some shared that their group had helped them through particularly rough patches during their careers. Writers, likely because of the solitary nature of their work, mentioned these groups most often.

- **Universities play multiple roles in artist-support systems:** In response to both question #3 (*How do you earn a living?*) and this question (#4), artists who are employed at colleges and universities described their place of employment as an important part of their support network. First, and foremost in this regard, was interaction with other arts faculty and students. Other attributes mentioned included access to production and presenting facilities, marketing and technical support for their work, and the opportunity for sabbatical time devoted to art making.

  A number of artists described how the colleagues they worked with during their college years had grown to become a considerable asset throughout their careers. Many in this group referred to their fellow alumni specifically as a "support" or "resource" network that had provided everything from critical response and encouragement to grants, commissions, and jobs.

- **Arts service organizations are more than fellowship providers:** Given the important role that artist service organizations play in the fellowship process, it would be surprising if they were not mentioned in this inquiry. But very few artists mentioned fellowships when they discussed artist service providers. Aside from funding, some of the supports that were described were similar to those provided by the university alumni networks. These included job referrals, links to collaborators and technical support, critical feedback, administrative assistance, and facilities.

- **"Alternative" support systems were not discussed:** There was very little mention of artists pursuing alternative ways of garnering support (e.g., crowd-sourced fund-raising, bartering, trading, co-ops, collectives, phantom galleries, flash performance, etc.). This could be due to a reluctance to share information about aspects of the underground economy that many artists depend on to survive.

4.2 Artists need encouragement of all sorts

Many of the artists responding to this question (54%) described encouragement or appreciation by others as an important aspect of their support system. This contrasts with the minimal mention of audience approval or celebrity in artists' descriptions of what they are "excited about in their work." In these responses, many make a distinction between material manifestations of popularity and what was often referred to as "emotional" or "moral support." In their examples, they talked most about people who were close enough to them and their work to comprehend the context and meaning of their art making.

These included:

- Mentors who have contributed to their development and advocated for them in their careers
- Colleagues who appreciate the nuance of craft and technical challenges of their artistic practice
- Fellow artists, directors, curators, etc., who are loyal collaborators and/or employers
- Students who have become mentees or protégées
- Knowledgeable peers, critics, and aficionados in their discipline, with whom they share mutual respect
- Loved ones who both understand and accommodate their passion, and have an unstinting and nonjudgmental belief in the value of their work

- Friends and audience members who have followed and supported their development as artists over time
- Support professionals (vendors, technicians, expert advisers, etc.) with whom they have developed a practice of learning and mutual support
- Agents, gallery owners, lawyers, even accountants who have become partners in the development of the artist's career
- Digital friends and fans who transcend the limitations of the medium to establish supportive relationships with the artist. (This was mentioned infrequently, which was not surprising given the median age of 53.)

4.3 Fellow artists are a critical part of the artist ecosystem

As was stated in 4.1 above, interaction with other artists was the most often mentioned aspect of the support systems described by artists in this study. The modes and purposes ascribed to these crucial interactions varied widely. Those most often mentioned include:

- **Collegial respect and accountability:** Some art forms, most notably in the performing arts, are inherently interdependent. These collaborative practices provide a formal structure of mutual responsibility that serves to discipline the art-making process. This level of accountability is not a natural part of the lives of artists whose work processes are mostly solitary. As was mentioned earlier, a number of artists, mostly writers (33%), shared that they had formed or joined groups that convene regularly to share work, garner feedback and critiques, and for general encouragement. A number of those involved in these groups also mentioned how important regular contact with peers was to the continued evolution and development of their work.

> *My support network is so integrated into my life. . . . It is almost impossible to point out all the connections.*
>
> —Composer, Minneapolis

- **Building and sustaining a collaborative team:** Performing artists — particularly theater artists, and to some extent, playwrights — mentioned the collaborative nature of their work. Like the writers, they described a "built-in" group of creative peers, whose support extends beyond the realm of art making. Ensemble interaction is also described in terms of opportunities for learning and honing technique and craft, and for receiving valuable feedback and career advice.

- **Artists appreciate an informed and supportive audience of peers:** Artists also actively support each other by attending events and offering feedback, critique, and general encouragement. Most of the respondents talk about the importance of the support they receive from other artists, usually within their discipline.

- **Learning and stimulation from other disciplines:** A few artists specifically mentioned the support they receive from other artists outside their disciplines. It is difficult to know whether or not those referring to "other artists" in general are speaking only about artists within their own discipline, but if they are, it brings up the question about the lack of cross-disciplinary support.

4.4 Some arts organizations are essential creative and career development partners

- **Artist service organizations are a key element of the artist ecosystem:** As was mentioned above in 4.1, Minnesota has a strong network of artist service organizations. Based on the responses to all of our questions, the artists are actively using these institutions for support of all kinds: opportunities to teach, to receive other forms of financial support, to create artwork, and to find moral support and encouragement. The strength and importance of these service organizations is evident in their regular reference to them.

- **Some presenting/producing venues are crucial creative partners and incubators:** Many of our respondents recognized that a healthy cultural ecology has both a continuum of artists at various stages of development and a diversity of venues that offer opportunities for production and presentation in support of that development. Performing artists discussed how these venues also facilitate the transition of artwork from originating artist (e.g., composers, playwrights, choreographers, etc.) to interpreting artists (e.g., musicians, actors, dancers, etc.).

  There was also an understanding that these creative spaces also serve as the bridge between creative products and local audiences looking for arts experiences. It is striking that large cultural organizations were rarely referenced as being a part of an artist's support system. For these artists, it is clear that most creative incubation and development takes place on the stages and in the galleries of the state's many small and mid-sized arts organizations.

> *I rely on my spouse, who encourages and chides me. I rely on my children, who find their father weird, entertaining, and strangely appreciated by a broad spectrum of people.*
>
> —Visual Artist, St. Paul

- **Many McKnight Foundation–supported organizations work with McKnight Fellows**: The Visualizing Artists' Careers database is a rich collection of information about exhibitions, performances, awards, education, etc., culled from the résumés of 120 McKnight Artist Fellows. Given the nature of résumés, the data reflects what the artists decided to share. It also offers an interesting way to learn what these artists see as important influences in their careers over time. The Visualizing website includes search and filtering functions that can be used to identify common characteristics among the artists. We decided to use this tool to find instances where McKnight-supported arts organizations (228 recipients from 2004–2012) and these 120 fellows intersect. (See also *Appendix D.*) Here is some of what emerged:
  - 102 (44%) of the organizations were mentioned in the résumés
  - 10 organizations received 42% of the mentions
  - 25 received 69% of the mentions
  - Of these 25, 9 were McKnight fellowship sponsors
  - 50 organizations received 85% of the mentions
  - Of these, 44 are small/mid-sized organizations and 4 are located in greater Minnesota

4.5 Families are a crucial foundation for many artists

The importance of families represented in these artists' responses cannot be understated here. It is clear that families are a primary source of creative, financial, and moral support for many of the artists represented in this survey. References to parents, spouses, partners, children, in-laws, brothers, and sisters are peppered throughout. For many of these artists, it is clear that the constancy of commitment, belief,

and even sacrifice they have received from family members has provided a crucial foundation for their work as artists. This support has come in many forms:

- Family members, most notably spouses or partners, were often identified as creative collaborators who function as everything from co-creators and provocateurs to editors and critics.
- Others mention the income brought into the home by a spouse or the assistance received from in-laws who help with childcare or other home-based needs.
- The family as a safe space, sanctuary, or nurturing environment was a recurring theme.
- The ability to have and raise a family is described as a blessing and inspiration as well as a heavy responsibility.
- Some describe the impetus of their creative life as emanating from an artistic family life with the enthusiastic encouragement of their parents or grandparents.
- Some mentioned the importance of family support at difficult times in their careers.

5 Who are your audiences, and how do you connect with them?

Prominent Themes and Patterns

5.1 **Attitudes about audience** and connections with audiences are wide-ranging.

5.2 Intermediaries/distributors and venues are only one piece of a larger universe for most of the respondents, who are **looking for alternatives to connect directly with audiences**.

5.3 Artists without venues feel their ability to connect deeply with audiences is compromised by **limited access to available and affordable venues**.

5.4 Profound **changes in the publishing, film, and music industries** have challenged artists to rethink how to reach and cultivate their audience.

5.5 **Technological change** has created both opportunity and challenge for artists seeking audiences.

Findings

5.1 Attitudes about audience and connections with audiences are wide-ranging.

The responses revealed a continuum of attitudes about how artists defined audience and their level of interest in connecting to them. Moreover, there are interesting differences between the Fellows and RAC artists in their approaches to audience; specifically, RAC artists appear much more cognizant of and integrated within broader community structures. In the following table, which summarizes these attitudes, the Fellows' and RAC artists' ideas about connections to audience are compared:

Attitudes about Audience	Attitudes about Engaging Audience	
	McKnight Fellows	RAC Artists
1. The originating artist is the only audience that counts.	• If the work is good enough, the audience will find the artist and support the work. • The power of the work will attract the resources needed to generate audience or sponsors. • Direct connection is not the artist's job.	NA
2. The artist is the primary audience; the people who experience the work are important.	• The artist or subject provides a natural connection, but connection is largely one-way. • There is hesitation about focusing on audience at the	←These attitudes, but with minimal representation within the cohort

	expense of the artist's work. • There is some "distaste" for marketing or social media.	
3. The audience cannot or should not be defined. • *"The audience is limitless."* • *"The audience is ever-evolving."* • *"The audience is anonymous."* • *"Whoever happens to be watching or looking."*	• Preference for intermediaries who will find the audience • Reliance on opportunistic connections provided by specific venue or specific work • The use of specific methods/tools (e-mails, personal networks) that are largely one-way	• Specific audiences should not be defined, but the general audience is specifically local or regional. • Preference for traditional arts intermediaries, plus local business, art fairs, and community events
4. The artist does not know his or her audience and is concerned. • *"My audience has shifted, and I think I have turned off my previous audience and turned on others."* • *"Our audience is an eclectic and diverse group that even the experts have been unable to pin down."*	• Minimal descriptions of how they connect • Some reference to tools/resources depending on projects, economics, time • Some interest in two-way communication opportunities as they arise, mostly in-person through performances, residencies, talkbacks, etc.	←These attitudes plus: • Living in a rural area makes it generally harder to connect to one's audience.
5. The audience is *broadly* defined by: • *Discipline:* "readers," "theatergoers" • *Demographic:* "women," "students," "families" • *Venue/distribution platform:* "collectors," "theaters," "publishers," "online audiences" • *Geography:* "local," "international" • *Other:* "conventional," "nontraditional," "blue collar," "downtown not uptown"	• Artist is somewhat intentional in creating connections and responding to audience. • Use of diverse tools/resources to engage with a general audience • Some interest in taking advantage of and creating their own opportunities for conversation and dialogue with audiences, including in-person and online/website	←These attitudes, but with minimal representation in the cohort

6. The audience is defined *specifically* by the local geography in which they live: • "Powwows all over Turtle Island" • "local galleries in the St. Cloud area" • "Bemidji—a hub town drawing an audience from a 50-mile radius"		• Artist is intentional in creating connections and responding to audience • Use of in-person, personal connections, and "word of mouth" as primary strategies for developing audience • Performance/exhibition venues are non-arts specific (e.g., cafés, gift shops, Shooting Star Casino) • Connection to and use of nontraditional spaces for performances and exhibitions
7. The audience is *specifically* defined by: • *Discipline:* including genre/idiom/style, "jazz lovers," "poetry enthusiasts," "ceramic collectors," "multiple audiences" • *Demographics*: in more depth, "GLBT community, women without partners and men," "white and aged 25–50, more female than male," "baby boomers, aged 50–75" • *Specific or multiple venues/distribution platforms:* "Penumbra Theatre," "National Writers Union LISTSERV," "art consultants," "bookstores," "YouTube and Vimeo," "MPR"	• Artist is intentional in creating connections and responding to audience. • Use of diverse tools/resources based on defined audience or differentiated tools for multiple defined audiences • Proactively developing and cultivating opportunities for two-way communication in-person and via traditional media, active website, and/or social media	←These attitudes plus: • Artist is intentional in creating connections to "those who appreciate nature." • American Indian artists spoke of connections within their cultural milieu. • Geographic barriers heighten understanding of the need for technological mechanisms for connecting (Facebook, websites, social media, MNArtists.org).
8. The audience is specifically defined, *and* there are *indications of some strategic thinking* about: ▪ New audiences ▪ Expanding intermediary/distributor audiences by adding their own ▪ "Collaborating" with community/audience for feedback or co-creation of work	• Artist is intentional in creating and sustaining connections for more than promotion. • Differentiates tools/resources for delivering and promoting art to audiences in traditional venues, new media platforms • Differentiates tools/resources to move audience or community from spectator to more active engagement	←These attitudes plus: • Artists are well connected beyond the cultural sector in their communities.

These attitudes were representative of artists across disciplines, age, gender, ethnicity, and geography. However, the artists who saw themselves as the sole or primary audience tended to create their artwork on their own or in isolation (writers, visual artists, composers) more often than those whose work requires collaboration or interaction with other artists (dancers, choreographers, musicians, theater artists). The majority of respondents fell into categories 4–6 in the chart above. Many of these respondents expressed an interest in learning more about audience identification and engagement.

Beyond discipline, geography, population demographics, and venue/distributor, the artists also described their audience by various socioeconomic or cultural demographics, by issues or communities of interest ("environmental," "liberal") or by sector ("health-care professionals"). Some also included family, friends, personal contacts (more often these responses were from the artists who did not list venue/distributor or online audiences); artists/peers (this seemed particularly prevalent among the dancers/choreographers and visual artists), students/faculty, or as being "specific to the work produced." Some respondents overtly described the audience as "a collaborator."

5.2 Many artists are looking for alternatives for connecting directly with audiences.

> *Unfortunately, that is one aspect I have yet to discover. As I sell most of my work through galleries, I really don't know who appreciates it and buys it, as the galleries make those connections. I rarely get to know who they are.*
>
> —Ceramicist, Scandia, MN

A small number of artists (less than 5%) named intermediaries/distributors or venues as their sole connection with their audiences. Most of those artists were involved in the visual arts, ceramics, or filmmaking. Community art centers were cited as particularly helpful. For example, a children's illustrator credited the Bloomington Art Center as the venue where she first exhibited new work outside her standard genre. Artist service organizations received positive mentions for connecting artists with audiences. A few artists, however, specifically noted the limitations of nonprofit or university-related galleries in generating a broad audience.

Several artists across disciplines described moves away from intermediaries and toward development of their own audiences and connections. Some said that new technology had increased their ability to distribute or exhibit their own work. They said this gave them greater control of their audience relationships. This was particularly noticeable in responses from musicians, composers, and photographers.

5.3 Some artists feel their ability to connect to audiences is compromised by limited access to affordable venues. For both cohorts, interdisciplinary, visual, and ceramic artists were most concerned about this issue. A few expressed hope that they would be able to move into their own studios in the near future. Those who do have their own studios prized the space as a precious asset for connecting with audiences and peers. RAC artists often described using their personal connections to secure venues in nontraditional sites such as bars, coffeehouses, VFW halls, and schools. Only a small number expressed dissatisfaction with these types of presenting spaces. In fact, a few noted the benefits of having reached larger and more diverse audiences using these venues.

5.4 Profound changes in the publishing, film, and music industries have challenged artists to rethink how to reach and cultivate their audiences.

For authors, musicians, and filmmakers, the distribution process is as important as the act of creating the art. Changes in these industries have significantly altered artists' relationships with their audiences. As one writer observes, "the massive changes . . . in the past decade have left me in charge of much more than ever before: marketing, developing outlets, building fan bases, creating support materials and activities." While the process has become longer and more expensive for the artists, they have more autonomy and control. Many of the Fellows described using traditional media and websites. Somewhat fewer appear to have begun exploring social media. A majority of the literary artists noted the continued importance of live readings (at intermediaries or bookstores) as a primary way of connecting to their audiences.

> *Friends, art photo enthusiasts, conceptual art lovers. I connect with people via all the usual computer-based channels—my website, Facebook, Twitter, Google+, YouTube, e-mail. Did I leave anything out?*
>
> —Photographer
> Minneapolis

5.5 Technological change has created both opportunity and challenge for artists seeking audiences.

Most of the respondents indicated that they rely on in-person contacts with the audience as their primary means of connection. This includes performance and being on-site at exhibitions and art crawls, readings, studio tours, and pre-concert discussions or post-play talkbacks. Some artists are blending performance with social gatherings or linking issue-based artworks with community meetings or mounting "flash events" through social media. It is not clear whether events mix artists and community members in performances.

Intermediaries and distributors were the second most frequently mentioned means of connection. When the Web and social media categories were combined, they ranked third. It appears that Web use crossed disciplines, gender, and geography. While there were users in all age demographics, the heaviest concentrations were among those in their 40s and 50s. It was surprising that many respondents in their 30s did not mention Web/online/social media specifically. However, many of their answers focused on defining audiences in more philosophical terms. It is likely that Web/online/social media are so integrated into the lives of younger respondents that they may not think it necessary to explicitly mention them.

6 What advice would you give to an artist just starting out?

Prominent Themes and Patterns

1.1 The first provides a catalog of **strategies and lessons for surviving and thriving as an artist**.

1.2 The second is what these recommendations tell us about **the structure, dynamics, and condition of that ecosystem**.

Findings

Responses to this question provided a complex interplay of perspectives and opinions. This was evident not just in what respondents said collectively but also in how they shared their advice individually. For example, many respondents offered multiple forms of advice—pragmatic, inspirational, and cautionary. The depth of answers was also quite striking. Despite the fact that this was the final survey question, the average response was longer than any of the previous five. In our analysis, we found that these artist-to-artist recommendations offer two unique windows into Minnesota's creative ecosystem.

6.1 Strategies and lessons for surviving and thriving as an artist in Minnesota

- **The central importance of making work:** This resounding motif reiterates the point made regularly in responses to our first question about "what is most exciting" to artists in their work. Numerous responses describe the importance of "continuing work," "working hard," "maintaining practice," and "devoting oneself to art making." These kinds of references appeared in 67% of the responses. Also represented in the word cloud that begins this section are the three largest (most often repeated) words: (1) work, (2) art, and (3) make. Artists across all disciplines placed a high priority on making work.

  Another aspect of this area of advice was the insistence that making work cannot be dependent on moments of artistic insight or inspiration. Many artists said that without their dogged perseverance, whatever creative talent and training they possess would be meaningless. One artist described their practice as "not just about making brilliant work, but making work with steadfast regularity, regardless of whether the muses were broadcasting." This is certainly not

A Few Dire Warnings

Don't do it. If you can be talked out of it, you should be.

It sounds cruel, but . . . they should only pursue a professional career if they can't possibly avoid it. It takes that kind of devotion and drive to succeed.

Only commit to being an artist if this is what you feel you absolutely have to do.

If you have any doubt, do something else because it may be decades before you have something resembling a secure financial structure.

You must love the process, the struggle, all of it . . . without one's whole heart in it, it's too easy to succumb to bitterness.

surprising, given that most of our respondents were older artists who have maintained their careers for multiple decades.

- **These artists want their new colleagues to succeed:** All or parts of many comments were motivational in both substance and tone. A number of the longer entries were peppered with what could only be characterized as collegial cheerleading. Shout-outs like "Don't discourage yourself," "Stay with it," "Stick with it," "Don't quit," "Never give up," "Hang in there, it takes time!" resembled a coach's exhortation on the eve of a big game. Others took a different, more contrarian tact with severe and cautionary warnings about the lack of material rewards and the often unpredictable and unforgiving nature of an artist's life.

  What comes across throughout all of these commentaries is a sense of responsibility to be hopeful and welcoming and, at the same time, not avoid the unvarnished truth about the challenges of being an artist in the United States in the 21st century.

- **Much of the advice provided was practical in nature:** Many of the responses to this question were both instructional and down-to-earth in their focus. These "tips of the trade" fell into the following broad themes:
  - The nature of artistic practice
  - Intentionality, vision, and planning
  - Learning
  - Community
  - Livelihood and finances
  - Career development
  - Health, well-being, and work-life balance
  - Attitudes, values, and practices that support artists

  Below are themes and key messages on advice for artists that emerged:

  The nature of artistic practice
  - Beyond form and style, cultivate and protect the deeper motivations driving your work
  - Be an expert in the technical aspects of your medium
  - Know and respect the history of your art form
  - Set high standards in all areas (materials, execution, marketing)
  - Make lots and lots of artwork
  - Experience lots of artwork in every discipline
  - Maintain a rigorous, disciplined work ethic
  - Be persistent and regular in your art making
  - Take the long view: it's a marathon

  Intentionality, vision, and planning
  - Successful artists are professionals who are both running a business and building a career
  - Plan continuously as you develop your work and build your career
  - Take learning and using business skills as seriously as your art making
  - ID your strengths, and use them to your advantage
  - Know your weaknesses and, if you can, find collaborators who are strong in those areas

Learning
- If you can, build on a foundation of formal learning
- Practice ad nauseam, and never stop
- Take advantage of every opportunity for semiformal and informal learning
- Cultivate and learn from mentors you respect at every turn
- Read, read, read
- Learn valuable skills from non-artists and other small businesses
- Embrace learning from failure — grow a thick skin
- Cultivate a network among peers and mentors for reciprocal learning

Community
- Develop and sustain communities of practice
- Link to experience and knowledge outside the art world
- Don't hide or lose yourself in an arts ghetto
- Be a citizen artist: contribute to your community

Livelihood and finances
- The financial rewards of your work will likely be modest at best
- Don't embrace poverty but, rather, redefine wealth
- Learn at least one other easily marketable skill
- You will probably teach: teaching is a skill that needs to be learned and practiced
- Temp jobs, part-time jobs, and/or day jobs will likely figure in your future
- Share, recycle, barter, trade, and collaborate like crazy
- Avoid debt at all costs
- Get health insurance
- Innovate new professional models

Career development

Be entrepreneurial or perish
- Take advantage of opportunities for practice, learning, and collaborating early and often
- Nurture the relationships that advance your career
- Be assertive: create your own professional opportunities
- Use university relationships and resources to advance your work
- Learn about and utilize Internet marketing
- Develop a professional creative resource network; it's critical to your survival as an artist

Health, well-being, and work-life balance
- Being healthy and thriving as an artist are intrinsically connected
- Having a family can make it much harder
- Your family can be a vital support system
- Achieving work-life balance is a long-term goal that takes lots of practice

Attitudes, values, and practices that support artistic life
- Generosity is an essential and powerful part of creative ecosystems
- Reciprocity is necessary and expected
- Collaboration is a skill that is both necessary and needs to be learned and practiced
- Passion is not a cliché; it is the lifeblood of art making
- Play and fun feed an active, fertile imagination

- Stay open-minded and curious
- Be patient and persevere — day after day, after day . . . after day
- Making art is both thrilling and scary; it takes courage
- Always self-identify as an artist
- Value both the thrilling and mundane aspects of the work
- Define success for yourself, and celebrate it with a vengeance

6.2 Reflections on the structure, dynamics, and condition of Minnesota's artist ecosystem

- **These artists know what they are doing:** Despite the obvious challenges articulated in the previous sections of this report, the artists in this group have succeeded in maintaining artistic careers over multiple decades. Given this fact and their status as McKnight Fellows, this cohort could be described as representative of some of the most successful artists in the state. Their collective experience could also be characterized as a kind of laboratory for learning how artists survive, working over time, under a broad range of conditions. From reading these answers, it is clear that many of our respondents are students not only of their respective art forms but also of the nuanced strategies and practices that comprise their artistic lives. The manner and detail of the advice also tell us how acutely aware they are of the strategies, systems, networks, and relationships they rely on to maintain their practice. Through them, we also come to know that many of these artists feel an obligation and a willingness to share what they have learned with others who are early in their careers.

- **Minnesota artists are intensely interactive:** So much of what is shared in this and the other sections of this report gives lie to the stereotype that many artists are isolated and disconnected from the world around them. By definition, performers are, of course, engaged in a collaborative enterprise. But, according to our respondents, so are writers, craft and visual artists, and composers who depend on a broad spectrum of relationships to successfully negotiate the complex demands of their creative lives. In their answers to this question, over 60% of our respondents across all disciplines referenced building and nurturing connections and relationships as an important survival strategy. This finding is reinforced by research conducted by the University of Pennsylvania's Social Impact of the Arts program. Their decades-long studies of artists and arts organizations in Philadelphia neighborhoods showed that cultural workers produce remarkably dense networks of social and professional

One MN Visual Artist's List of Priorities

1. Define yourself as a "professional artist" to your family and friends regardless of sales, exhibits, publishing, etc. Take yourself seriously, and be proud of being an artist.

2. Learn your craft/medium, and practice it in every way possible. Experiment and play; every sketch, sentence, brushstroke, or movement contributes to your growth as an artist.

3. Set goals with deadlines. Have "art making" first on your to-do list. Set your priorities with art making first.

4. Once you have a "body of work," be brave about getting it out there. Enter contests, apply for grants, and learn the Internet for publicizing.

5. Be part of a community—find other artists who support you and your work. Don't do this alone.

6. Have the courage to stay with your own voice and vision; don't follow trends you hear about unless they somehow resonate with your artistic endeavors.

7. Enjoy your artist life. Reward your successes, and find self-compassion when things don't go right.

relationships. They have found that these relationships not only support artists' work but also generate a critical mass of social capital that demonstrably benefits their communities.

- **These essential skills and strategies are not taught in school:** Many of the most basic and commonsense lessons shared in this section are not typically found in academic curricula used to train artists. Some artists spoke directly to this issue, saying that they learned most of the skills they needed to function effectively in the art world after graduation. Some even went so far as to say that some of the things they learned in art schools made it harder to make it in the real world — and that these things needed to be unlearned. This reinforces the need for artists to have access to ongoing career-development training offered by some artist service organizations.

- **For many artists, creative decisions are life decisions:** Some professions allow workers a reasonable degree of separation between the professional and personal aspects of their lives. This is certainly not true for a good number of the artists responding to this survey. From their feedback, we get a vivid portrait of the highly integrated and interdependent nature of artists' personal and work lives. For many, everyday artistic choices are intrinsically tied to personal finances or family circumstances, and personal decisions — such as whether to marry or have children, or where to live — are all intertwined with their art-making lives.

- **Some advice provides a unique window into the often contradictory aspects of artists' lives:** Some of our respondents shared advice that suggested how a creatively committed individual's needs evolve over time — that what is appropriate for one season of life doesn't suit a later time. For some artists, this means that living as an artist inherently involves navigating paradox. Not surprisingly, a few of our respondents even provided advice that pushes in two directions at once. Here are a few examples:
  - *"Never forget the audience, but make work for yourself first."*
  - *"You need to be incredibly humble and incredibly arrogant."*
  - *"The cards are stacked against you; do it anyway."*

- **Some artists framed their comments in a larger philosophical context by addressing the purpose of art and the role of artist in society.** Here are two striking examples:

  > *I would tell them that the role of the artist is to infiltrate every aspect of society and to use their distinct problem-solving skills to make the world a better place. If they persevere at this alone, they should have a satisfying art career.*
  >
  > *I would encourage new artists to consider how they wish to live their life "at large." Consider the larger interdisciplinary world so that they can fulfill a broader range of interests and possibly have a greater impact on the role of aesthetics within our culture. Unfortunately, a utilitarian approach to the world causes our own destruction, whereas the arts can make such a tremendous difference to our well-being. I believe new artists can play a vital role in turning this around.*

Part Three: *Recommendations*

The following recommendations serve multiple purposes. First and foremost, they suggest ways for the Foundation and others to improve the health of the state's artist community. We are hopeful that some of these ideas and observations will respectfully challenge some assumptions and provoke further inquiry into how the artist ecosystem works and McKnight's place in it. With this in mind, some of our recommendations suggest direct action by the Foundation. In other cases, we encourage joint action and/or advocacy with appropriate partners.

1. The artist economy reconsidered: We think that Minnesota's cultural economy needs to be better understood, particularly with regard to the artist ecosystem that essentially fuels it. The stark truth is that despite the fact that the state is a national leader in its support for artists, very few of its best artists make a living wage through their art making. This may be the unfortunate and immutable condition of the 21st-century cultural economy of the United States, but before we accept this "reality," we feel strongly that the sector needs to take a hard look at its implications for the health of both the arts community and larger society.

> *It is significantly easier to make a living as an arts administrator in MN than it is to make a living as an artist.*
>
> —Theater Artist
> Minneapolis

When we compare artists' descriptions of "what they need to do their best work" to actual circumstances, it is clear that most of the artists participating in this study produce art under conditions that fall short of their own minimum standards. The most persistent symptoms are a shortage of both time and money. By their own admission, many of the artists in this study make art on what could be considered "borrowed time." They have also made it clear that this time deficit and low levels of compensation are intrinsically linked. As such, the quality of their work, the growth and sustainability of their practice, and in some cases, their physical health, all correlate directly with their earning power. Taking this into account, one might conclude that demand for the arts is not sufficient to support the art makers who fuel the rest of the system — its lifeblood. If this is true, then by conventional measures, the state's indigenous cultural sector is seriously out of balance. Given this, and the essential provoking, inspiring, creating, and interpreting roles artists play in the state's cultural ecosystem, we suggest that additional research into the place of artists in 21st-century creative economies needs to be undertaken.

Additional questions to explore include:

- How does the state's significant public and private investment in the cultural sector affect artists?
- Are there other ways of working for artists that could be more sustainable?
- What non-arts skills do artists need to thrive in the creative economy?
- Does the changing nature of local and global economies present new opportunities for the development of a sustainable cultural economy?
- How can technological innovation best serve artists?
- What can we learn from artists who do have sustainable work lives?
- What other professions and/or industries offer models or ideas that can be adapted by the cultural sector?
- How can the investment of legacy funds advance the systemic health of the state's cultural ecosystem?
- What emerging business models might have beneficial application to art making and presenting?

- Are there more diverse and nuanced ways of considering artists' roles (e.g., artists as creative provocateurs, problem solvers, service providers, small-business owners, consultants, or economic and social stimulants)?
- Are there predictable aspects of artists' careers that determine their economic viability?

2. Work with others to minimize the system's vulnerability: The direct support available to artists in Minnesota is essential to the health of Minnesota's strong cultural sector. But the state's artist ecosystem is vulnerable because the cost of this unique infrastructure is borne by a few prominent funders. Given this, we see a need for a statewide strategy on behalf of the state's artists. We encourage the Foundation to approach its public and private sector colleagues to explore the creation of a Minnesota partnership to strengthen support and advance research to strengthen the state's artist ecosystem.

3. Incentivize exemplary, innovative contributions to the artist ecosystem: The questions used in this study were informed by a set of vitality indicators for artists that came from research[9] on artists' needs (see *Appendix C*). In late 2011 we shared another set of indicators — also derived from this research — that identified the characteristics of artist-nurturing organizations (see *Appendix D*). We recommend that the Foundation review these criteria and consider incorporating some of them into its process for funding arts organizations. We also encourage the Foundation to consider creating a recognition program (likely through an arts service organization) for organizations that show leadership in support of artist development.

4. Linking, consolidating, and aggregating organic artist-support networks: Many artists make a lot with very little by leveraging indigenous networks that connect them to the people, places, and materials they need to fulfill their artistic aims. It is not surprising that almost every artist in this study acknowledged his or her participation in one of these small self-organized support systems. The size and scope of these informal networks are determined by the needs and time available to the artists who depend on them. Given how important they are to the healthy functioning of the artist ecosystem, it would be interesting to explore how digital aggregation of these resources might increase their versatility, efficiency, and usefulness.

> *I have a small network of older artists who provide advice and support to me personally. We meet for lunch or dinner and discuss opportunities and travails as both artists and parents. These mentors have been invaluable to me. They have helped me to keep a good perspective on balancing work and life, have helped to promote my work to local venues, and even have written articles about my work for publication.*
>
> —Ceramicist
> Davidson, NC

Aggregation, consolidation, and compilation are all common business practices in the digital marketplace. Exemplars include dozens of travel consolidators like Kayak, Priceline, and Hotwire; purveyors of goods and services like Amazon.com and Overstock.com; and, of course, the ubiquitous online want-ad bulletin board/marketplace provided by craigslist. On the nonprofit side, we are starting to see organizations such as Data Without Borders, whose aggregated volunteer data scientists help NGOs interpret their databases, and Fractured Atlas's new cloud-based Spaces, which provides a comprehensive online database of a wide variety of artist facility and space listings. These systems all provide user-friendly online tools to link everything from the scarce and esoteric to abandoned or surplus resources to people who need them.

[9] Research conducted by the Urban Institute, Artist Trust, LINC, and the Center for the Study of Art & Community.

The development of a "MN Creators List" could provide the state's artists with easier access to the diverse stream of creative nutrients (materials, spaces, expertise, ideas, audiences, funding, partners, initiatives, gigs, patrons, surplus, questions, etc.) they need to feed their art making, presenting, and audience development. Such a system could not only stimulate the health and proliferation of these indigenous systems but also exponentially increase their usefulness. The result would be a self-organized creative marketplace whose applications and utility would be determined by its users.

5. Other areas that could benefit from the development of opportunity and information exchanges for artists:

- *Artist employment service:* Create a solicitation and aggregation service that provides arts and non-arts job listings that are particularly suited for artists. The list would emphasize employers who are both interested in creative types and offer flexible, adaptable employment situations that accommodate the ebb and flow of artists' lives. While this would be easier to manage in the metropolitan area, artists in greater Minnesota could also benefit, especially from work that might be done digitally.

- *Support for self-organizing peer groups:* What can artists learn from one another? We know from our survey that self-organized peer groups are proliferating, particularly among writers. However, the lack of affordable and suitably structured physical space for such interaction outside the Twin Cities was seen as a problem. Would other artists, especially those who tend to work in isolation — like visual artists — find value in being a part of these kinds of groups? If there were more opportunities for artists across disciplines to interact in both informal and formal ways, would there be a change in the support network and/or in the work itself? Where might existing intermediaries, service organizations, Regional Arts Councils, and the Minnesota State Arts Board fit in the puzzle? Could an online artists' meet-up service be a useful tool for "artists seeking artists"?

- *Extending the value of university and college resources for artists:* How can colleges and universities contribute to the support system for all artists beyond those they employ as faculty? How can the larger cultural institutions contribute to the network of support beyond providing opportunities for work? How do you broaden access to the human networks that develop within the university environment? More practically, how do you increase access to the diverse web of material and technical arts resources contained within university and college cultural departments? It would be interesting to explore how both the artist community and postsecondary institutions could benefit from these kinds of extended relationships.

I depend on colleagues at the college where I teach, friends from graduate school, colleagues at area schools, the gallery director of the gallery where I show my work, friends, and family, and current and former students.

—Photographer
Dundas, MN

6. Convening can also strengthen the artist ecosystem: Artists are either absent or have a token presence in the strategic conversations that affect their work conditions and markets. In addition to digital networking, there is a need for face-to-face interactions among artists and organizations that support artists in order to:

- Allow artists to connect and learn from each other
- Identify and act on cross-community and cross-discipline issues
- Provide a basis for conversations and program/policy development across disciplines

- Promote innovation and self-organizing among artists and artist-serving organizations
- Give small and mid-sized arts organizations working to nurture artists' development a coherent and discernible voice in both the cultural community and the broader community

Ideally, the provision of this important function should not fall to McKnight. It would be prudent for the Foundation to join with other leaders in the cultural community to find an appropriate sponsor for regular arts-related and cross-sector meetings. Such a partnership should also advocate for the increased presence of artists in community policy development and planning deliberations.

Although few and far between, my residency stays have been pivotal touchstones for my career: unencumbered time and colleagues who take you, and themselves, seriously are amazingly stimulative creative elixirs.

—Choreographer
St. Paul

7. Reconsider residencies: Most of the artists in the study who were fortunate enough to have participated in a residency program felt that it was "extremely beneficial," even "pivotal," to their development as artists. Currently, there are between 90 and 100 residency slots open each year to Minnesota artists at sites throughout the state. Eligibility criteria for these programs are varied, with most defined by discipline and career status (e.g., emerging artist, mid-career, etc.). Most offer space and time (range: one week to one year) for selected artists to work in any way they choose, with some incorporating a service component (e.g., teaching, community exhibit, etc.). Almost universally, these residencies are defined as a time away for artists to reflect and make their art.

Given their value to artists who, based on the feedback from this study, have minimal access to unencumbered work conditions, we encourage the Foundation to explore ways to expand these opportunities. We would also suggest that the Foundation explore new ways to expand the availability of residency-like conditions for artists who are not necessarily dependent on the current capital/real estate–intensive model. Newer models of artist-in-residence programs include:

- Long-term or permanent residency spaces created through cooperation between local government and affordable-housing developers
- Short-term opportunities linked to community-based arts organizations designed to stimulate collaboration or support new work
- Sponsorship by individual patrons (often working with museums and universities) who open their houses or studios to create residencies and exchange programs
- Residencies created by neighborhood associations or public housing groups
- Residencies sponsored by companies and public agencies for artists to create work in interaction with their employees and work environments
- Artist sponsorships created by civic groups, collectives, or giving circles who provide the resources necessary to establish artists as residents in their own studios

The McKnight Fellowship was also an important first for me, for it was an independent confirmation by a respected committee that my work was worthwhile. I've been fortunate to have this opinion seconded by getting a few awards and nominations for awards. I really value them, and I always have them in mind as I work.

—Writer
Winona, MN

8. Build on the success of the fellowship programs: The expansion of the informal cultural sector offers opportunities to expand the scope and effect of fellowships. As this sector has grown, so has the need to recognize and support the traditional and folk arts masters whose expertise defines and leads their field. Such a fellowship program would need to pay particular attention to accessibility for members of the community who are not well acquainted with granting processes.

Given the increasingly cross-sector and multidisciplinary nature of contemporary art making, it might also be worthwhile to reconsider the redevelopment of an interdisciplinary fellowship. It would be useful to broaden the definition of interdisciplinary work to include collaborations between artists and colleagues from other sectors such as science, community development, or even politics. Another option might be to provide a fellowship-like award for creative leadership in arts management.

We think that the best way to grow and improve fellowship practice in the state would be to provide more opportunities for those in charge of these programs at all levels to learn from each other and from exemplars from other places. Both the administrators and the artists involved in these programs might benefit from cross-program exchanges.

9. Investigate new ways to respond to artists' initiatives developed outside of the traditional nonprofit framework: It is clear that an increasing number of artists are concerned about how the nonprofit organizational model influences, and even limits, the depth and range of their art making. Often, nonprofit status is used to qualify for funding, but this does not fit the actual requirements of the work. As such, there is a growing interest in exploring new models for supporting projects that require material resources and staffing but not the sustained structural support of an organization.

In response to artists and arts organizations that find themselves increasingly constrained by the 501(c)(3) structure, we suggest that the Foundation explore fiscal sponsorships that both support short-term artistic projects and also satisfy the Foundation's requirements for stability and accountability. We also encourage the exploration of artist development partnerships with other arts funders and collaborations with other Foundation programs.

> *It's the administration side that takes the work to the theaters by promoting, engaging audiences, arranging contracts (marketing, resources), etc.*
>
> —Dancer
> Minneapolis

10. Support artists as small-businesspersons and entrepreneurs: Many of the artists in this study identified themselves as self-managed. We would stipulate that, over the course of their careers, most artists need to be administratively adept to sustain their practice. As such, we believe that the career-development workshops and counseling provided by Springboard for the Arts and some of the other discipline-based arts service organizations are a valuable and needed service for Minnesota artists. It is apparent though, that some older, more advanced artists would benefit from an even more rigorous brand of career development. Although quite expensive, Creative Capital's success in helping top artists strengthen their creative and earning capacities is a case in point. We believe that there is a need for this kind of continuous professional development in Minnesota for artists at all levels.

11. The need for further study of artist-audience relationships: Many of the findings that emerged from this study pertaining to artists and their audiences (question #5) could be explored in more depth or more precisely framed by a follow-up quantitative study. This is especially germane given the differences in the ways artists from the two study cohorts connect with their audiences. The findings include the following:

- *Interdisciplinary audiences:* A few artists talked about their audiences shifting because the nature of their work had changed. In some cases, this meant a change in artistic disciplines. In other instances, the work had been "more political" or more tied to specific issues. But there were very few references to how borders between the disciplines themselves are breaking down. It would be interesting to explore how the move toward more cross-disciplinary and cross-sector work may encourage artists to reconsider how they define and reach their audiences.

- *Technology and audience engagement:* In the technology area, some artists made it clear that they have little interest in acquiring resources or developing capacity for their own audience building. However, for those who do care, there may be a gap not only in funding for technology but also in training for effective use of the Web, Internet, and social media. There appears to be a group of "super users." Could those artists become peer-mentors for other artists in their disciplines?

- *Funders as audience:* Only a handful of artists mentioned funders as an audience, and only in the context of audiences who are associated with particular venues or donors. What does that reveal about the current ecosystem or, more to the point, the nature of the relationship between funders and artists?

- *Why do artists engage audiences?* The framing of question #5 (*Who are your audiences, and how do you connect with them?*) may have precluded the artists' thoughts about two central elements of audience engagement: *Why* do they want to engage audiences? And *how* do they know they have succeeded? Without this information, it is difficult to see if their efforts to define and reach audiences have any effect for the artists and, just as important, for the audience. Absent this information, it is also difficult to understand fully how those aspirations, efforts, and results fit into the artist ecosystem or the larger cultural ecosystem.

> *I have to admit it was easier to spend many hours writing before the days of the Internet. When I sat down to my typewriter in the 1970s, the only thing I could do with it was write. The computer is helpful for doing research and connecting to my readers, but a time-eater.*
>
> —Writer
> Fall Church, VA

- *A comprehensive approach to building audiences:* Judging from the number of responses that referred to changes in work, in audiences, and in the marketplace and technology, artists are facing the same audience challenges as cultural organizations. Yet there was little mention of artists and organizations working together on these issues. Given this, we believe that there is a need for coordination of all parts of the cultural sector to develop a comprehensive and achievable "vision" for audience engagement in Minnesota that (1) embraces individual artists as active partners, (2) includes input from audiences themselves, (3) provides resources for provocative new ideas for audience connection, and (4) develops a diverse group of sector leaders who will champion the effort.

12. Consider if there are ways to increase teaching opportunities for artists statewide. While we recognize that the arts education system is not part of the Foundation's mission, the data from this study shows how significant teaching opportunities are to artists as they piece together their livings. The teaching opportunities that do exist extend throughout the entire arts education system, from K–12 schools to colleges and universities. Expanding and strengthening of this aspect of the arts ecosystem would not only increase artists' income but would also contribute to the development of new artists.

13. Work to make affordable health care available to the state's artists: The lack of access to affordable health care undermines individual artists' careers and the stability of many of the arts

organizations that support their work. Helping artists obtain affordable health care could be one of the most significant things the Foundation could do to strengthen Minnesota's cultural sector. The Affordable Care Act will come into effect gradually over the next few years. It is still not clear how its implementation will affect individual artists operating as contractors or sole proprietors. We encourage the Foundation to monitor the unfolding situation and advocate state policies to advance artists' health-care interests.

14. Consider ways to share these findings with colleagues: We think the information contained in both the raw survey data and this summary report could be useful to the artist service organizations, RACs, and others involved in the development of the state's artist-support system. After the evaluation's final report is complete, we encourage the Foundation to explore this option.

I am most excited sitting in a dark room with strangers, speaking the truth as I see it, watching my words come alive — leaving a piece of history and understanding with it.

—Playwright, New York

Part Four:
Appendixes

Appendix A. The Complex Mix of Artists' Livelihoods by Discipline
Reported by McKnight Fellowship Recipients, 1982–2011

Discipline	Art Making Only	Teaching + Art	Arts Admin. + Art	Non-arts + Art	Pension + Art	Family + Art	Totals
Playwright	44%	33%	11%	6%	6%	0%	11
Screenwriter	47%	31%	9%	8%	5%	0%	7
Musician	47%	40%	7%	0%	7%	0%	15
Theater Artist	39%	50%	11%	0%	0%	0%	18
Ceramic Artist	32%	56%	0%	8%	0%	4%	25
Composer	26%	35%	17%	17%	4%	0%	23
Choreographer	20%	40%	10%	20%	10%	0%	10
Visual Artist	17%	40%	10%	23%	7%	3%	30
Dance Artist	17%	50%	17%	0%	0%	17%	6
Photographer	8%	48%	8%	24%	8%	4%	25
Writer	7%	50%	11%	11%	18%	2%	44
Interdisciplinary Artist	0%	60%	20%	20%	0%	0%	5
Filmmaker	0%	50%	50%	0%	0%	0%	2
Did not state	40%	20%	40%	0%	0%	0%	5
TOTALS	**23%**	**45%**	**11%**	**12%**	**7%**	**2%**	**226**

Appendix B. Documenting the Support Structure for Artists[10]

Core Elements	Indicators for Artists
Validation • Societal • Peer	*Societal validation* • Community leaders aware of and demonstrate support for local/area artists • # of events and attendees at venues featuring local/area artists • Increase in number of artist residencies in schools, churches, senior citizen centers, etc. • Inclusion of artists in civic decision making • Informed media reviews • Community-wide awards program recognizing top artists *Peer validation* • Participation in and value ascribed by artists to discipline-specific critical circles • Opportunities for reviews and critical response by peers • Peer panel process for grants
Demand/markets • Arts-specific • Cross-sector	*Arts-specific (sales, performances, residencies, etc.)* • # of opportunities in the nonprofit sector • # of opportunities in the commercial sector • # of opportunities in the public sector • Availability of venues *Cross-sector* • Forum/support for cross-sector collaboration • # of opportunities in social service programs • # of opportunities in natural resource/environmental programs • # of opportunities in community development/civic engagement/renewal programs
Material supports • Employment • Benefits • Awards/grants • Space • Materials/equipment	*Employment* • % of artists who earn 25% or more of their income from their work • # and % of artists who find supplementary employment in the cultural sector • % of artists who say they have sufficient time to produce their work • % of artists who work full-time in a non-arts job *Benefits* • % of artists who have health/disability insurance • % of artists who have pension plan *Awards/grants* • Presence of organizations to provide cash awards • Degree to which award structure is perceived to be biased against certain kinds of art • Ratio of available awards to applicants

[10] Based on *Investing in Creativity: A Study of the Support Structure for U.S. Artists* by Maria Rosario-Jackson et al., Urban Institute, 2003.

	• Active publication of award opportunities • Diversity of funding opportunities (quick turnaround fellowships for emerging/mid-career/mature, fiscal sponsorship, microfinance, low-interest loans) • Prevalence of technical assistance for applicants *Space* • % of artists who say they have sufficient space to do their work • Availability of affordable housing • Availability of affordable studio/rehearsal space • Existence of artists' cooperatives *Materials/equipment* • Availability of loans or discounts for equipment • Cooperative equipment purchase/use • % of artists who say they have adequate supplies of materials/equipment
Training/professional development • Sources • Needs	*Sources* • Grants for professional development/travel/study available • Information regarding training opportunities widely available • Workshops/seminars in important non-arts skills available • Discipline-specific arts service organizations provide training and learning networks *Documentation* • Regular documentation of perceived professional and non-arts training needs of artists
Communities and networks • Inside the cultural sector • Outside this sector • Personal	*Arts-based* • Recurring opportunities/venues for artists to gather • Formal or informal artist organizations • Technological access to interaction with other artists and information about opportunities *Outside the arts* • Membership/participation of artists in non-art civic organizations • Artist participation in informal community structures and networks *Personal* • Perception by artists of their "connectivity" vs. isolation
Information, sources of and gaps • About artists and their work	• Agencies and foundations carry out research on the economic and professional status of artists • Theory and research documenting the overall ecology of the cultural sector to include references to individual artists and organizations that provide direct support to artists
Management • Development of and/or access to expertise in:	• Finance • Business management • Marketing • Social networking • Technology

Appendix C. Organizational Indicators for Evaluating the Impact of the McKnight Arts Program

McKnight Art Program Outcomes	Indicators for Arts Organizations (Internal)	Indicators for Arts Organizations (External)
	Presenting • # of presentations w/ MN artists • # of presentations exploring MN and local stories and issues • Promotion of local artists *Employment* • # of artists employed as artists (full-/part-time) • # of artists employed as arts administrators (full-/part-time) • Average length of employment for artists *Training/professional development* • Professional development provided to artists • Information regarding grants and training opportunities widely available to staff • Communities of practice developed with other organizations *Other* • Concern and involvement w/ the provision of adequate health care for artists • Concern and involvement w/ the provision of affordable housing for staff and artistic personnel	• # of artist-run arts organizations • % of artists working full-time in a non-arts capacity (negative) • # and quality of artist fellowship opportunities • Opportunities for artistic programming outside of traditional cultural milieu
Stronger and more capable arts organizations	*Management* • Well managed and adequately capitalized • Low staff turnover/transition • Strong governance with artist representation • Strategic, flexible, and adaptive planning culture and practice	*Support* • Predictable and regular support for arts organizations • Dedicated public revenue stream for arts and culture • Private sector support for cultural sector that is robust and coordinated among funders • High percentage of cultural investments is for general operating support

	Personnel • Quality of artists; org. leadership and support staff • Stability of leadership and critical personnel • Availability of needed outside technical and administrative support • Participation in communities of practice groups	*Arts community* • High degree of public/private arts sector cooperation • Significant cooperation between large and small arts organizations • Availability and control of venues by artists and arts organizations • Coordinated community-wide and/or discipline-based arts marketing • Access to affordable capacity-building expertise for arts organizations in such areas as finance, planning, business management, marketing, social networking, technology, personnel management, legal issues, arts-based community development *Training/professional development* • Professional development opportunities are relevant and accessible • Information regarding training opportunities is widely available • Workshops/seminars in important non-arts skills are available • Discipline-specific arts service organizations provide training and learning networks • Peer training, online courses available • Recurring opportunities/venues for organizations to learn, share, and exchange *Materials/equipment* • Availability of loans or discounts for equipment • Cooperative equipment purchase/use • % of organizations that report adequate supplies of materials/equipment
Increased opportunities for artists to develop and share their work	*Demand/markets* *Arts activity (sales, performances, exhibits, etc.)* • # of presentations w/ local artists • Promotion of local artists and their work	*Support* • Presence and strength of organizations providing fellowship awards for artists • Degree to which award structure is perceived to

	• # of presentations featuring local stories and issues • Level of cooperation with other local arts organizations • Availability and control of venues • Coordinated community-wide and/or discipline-based arts marketing *Material supports* *Employment* • # of local artists employed by this org. (full-/part-time) • Average length of employment *Awards/grants* • Active dissemination of information about artist employment and grant opportunities • Sponsorship of individual artist initiatives by organization *Space* • Organization has appropriate space to do work • Organization owns or is working toward owning facilities • Affordable studio/rehearsal space available to affiliated artists and/or others *Networks* • Recurring opportunities for artists to learn, share, and exchange	be biased against certain kinds of art • Ratio of available awards to applicants • Diversity of funding opportunities (quick, multi-year, low-/no interest loans, etc.) • Public revenue stream devoted to individual artist support (transient occupancy tax, sales tax) • Prevalence of technical assistance for artist applicants • Fiscal sponsorships widely available for artist-led creative initiatives *Space* • # of arts organizations that own their facilities • % of organizations that have appropriate space to do their work • Availability and proximity of affordable housing for artists • Availability of affordable studio/rehearsal space • Successful arts-based real estate development in community
More art of high quality is developed and shared in more places in the state	• Artistic collaborations in and outside of principal discipline • Stable artistic leadership • Active in arts education • Programming is portable and adaptive to accommodate a variety of venues • Online presence	• Funding for individual artists provides unencumbered support for artistic development and growth *Training/professional development* • High-level arts training and education widely available to children, youth, and adults • Discipline-specific arts service organizations

	Training/professional development *Sources* • Professional development available to artists and administrative staff • Information regarding training opportunities widely available • Workshops/seminars in important non-arts skills available • Peer training, online courses available	provide training and learning networks, communities of practice • Regular documentation of professional and non-arts training needs of artists • Grants for professional development/travel/study available
More MN citizens and communities participate in the arts	*Access* • Presenting in community venues and other nontraditional spaces • Proximity to other cultural amenities • Understanding and cultivation of local culture and audiences • Sustained partnerships with community institutions (i.e., parks, schools, etc.) *Communities and networks* • # of formal and informal partnerships with community groups or associations • Technological access to interaction with arts community members • Organization's participation in community planning/development activities	• Presence of local arts council, association or guild or other community-wide cultural coordination • Perception by artists of their "connectivity" vs. isolation • Membership/participation of cultural sector representatives in non-art civic organizations
Increased appreciation of MN's cultural ecosystem and artists' centrality to it	• Level of awareness and understanding of community cultural ecosystem • Active participation in efforts to strengthen the community cultural ecosystem	*Information and research about artists and their work* • Agencies and foundations carry out research on the structure and dynamics of relevant cultural ecosystems • Prevalence of coherent and comprehensive cultural data collection • Theory and research documenting the overall ecology of the cultural sector (includes reference to individual artists and orgs. that provide direct support to artists) and linking community and leadership development to cultural development

Increased support for MN artists and arts organizations	• Involvement in arts education • Active participation in cultural advocacy efforts • Collaboration with local community organizations and networks	*Validation* *Societal validation* • Community leaders are aware of and demonstrate support for local/area arts orgs. • # of events and attendees at venues featuring local/area artists • Cultural sector participation in civic decision making • Informed media coverage and reviews • Community-wide awards program recognizing top arts events, productions, etc. (e.g., local Tony awards) *Peer validation* • Opportunities for informed reviews and critical response by peers for artists' work • Mutual support network for arts organizations • Peer panel process for artists' grants • Training/professional development
The arts are more integrated into MN community life	• Active community partner • Active with local business community • Board includes leaders from other community sectors • Participation in community leadership development	• Forums and support for cross-sector collaboration • Cross-sector partnership for audience development (e.g., Chamber of Commerce, tourism link) • # of opportunities for collaboration w/ other sectors (e.g., social service, community development/environmental civic engagement programs) • Prevalence of cross-sector leadership on arts boards • Availability of board leadership training • Artists and arts admin. involved in governance in other sectors • Access to grants/fellowships for community leadership development

Appendix D: McKnight Arts Organization Grantees (2004–2012) Mentioned in Artists/Fellows' Résumés

Organization Name	# of Listings	Organization Name	# of Listings
Walker Art Center	30	Prairie Lakes Regional Arts Council	2
The Loft	24	Public Art St. Paul	2
Minneapolis College of Art & Design	16	Ragamala Dance	2
Northern Clay Center	16	Rain Taxi	2
American Composers Forum	15	Soo Visual Arts Center	2
Minnesota Center for Photography	13	The Children's Theater Company	2
The Playwrights' Center	12	The Schubert Club	2
Soap Factory	12	Theatre Communications Group	2
Southern Theater Foundation	11	Theatre de la Jeune Lune	2
Intermedia Arts	11	TU Dance	2
Park Square Theatre Company	10	Young Audiences of the Upper Midwest	2
COMPAS	9	Zenon Dance Company	2
Guthrie Theatre	9	Great Neighborhoods! Development Corp.	1
Milkweed Editions	8	Lanesboro Arts Center	1
Minnesota Orchestra	8	Southeastern Minnesota Arts Council	1
The Anderson Center	8	Alchemy Theater	1
Arts Midwest	7	American Swedish Institute	1
Bloomington Theatre and Art Center	6	Ananya Dance Theatre	1
MN State Univ.—New Rivers Press	6	ARENA Dances	1
Red Eye Collaboration	6	Bedlam Theatre	1
Forecast Public Artworks	5	Commonweal Theatre Company	1
Plains Art Museum	5	Dance USA	1
Arrowhead Regional Arts Council	4	East Central Regional Arts Council	1
MacPhail Center for Music	4	Friends of the Minnesota Sinfonia	1
Mixed Blood Theatre Company	4	Givens Foundation for African American Literature	1
SASE The Write Place	4	Great River Shakespeare Festival	1
The Dale Warland Singers	4	Highpoint Center for Printmaking	1
Zeitgeist	4	In the Heart of the Beast	1
Ballet Works (James Sewell)	3	Jazzdance—Danny Buraczeski	1
Coffee House Press	3	Juxtaposition	1
Duluth Art Institute	3	Katha Dance Theatre	1
IFP Minnesota	3	Kulture Club Collaborative	1
Minneapolis Society of Fine Arts	3	Link Vostok	1
Minnesota Center for Book Arts	3	Lyra	1
Pillsbury United Communities	3	Metropolitan Regional Arts Council	1
Ritz Theater	3	Minnesota Theater Alliance	1
The Minnesota Opera	3	Mizna	1
Arcata Press	2	Music in the Park Series	1
East Side Arts Council	2	Neighborhood House	1
Frank Theatre	2	New England Foundation for the Arts	1
Grand Marais Arts	2	Northfield Arts Guild	1
Graywolf Press	2	Springboard for the Arts	1
Minnesota Dance Theatre	2	SteppingStone Theatre	1
Minnesota Fringe Festival	2	Studio 206	1

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Minnetonka Center for the Arts	2	Ten Thousand Things	1
Northern Lights	2	The History Theatre	1
Patrick's Cabaret	2	Twin Cities Public Television	1
		VocalEssence	1