Community-engaged research led by sector *leadership* for sector leadership / governance implications Roundtable
(Written by Robin Nelson, Host and Notetaker)

Before the roundtables, Shawn Newman's presentation considered the idea of research and data within the sector broadly. He asked:
- What is research?
- Who "does" research?
- Who is research for?
- What is data?
- Who collects (and "owns") data?
- Who interprets data?
- What is leadership?
- Who "is" leadership?
- Who does leadership report to?

The roundtable he led continued to reflect on these questions and the role funders like municipal arts councils have in shaping research conducted due to reporting requirements. Three major themes emerged in the two roundtables he led. Importantly, these themes share a lack of finality and conclusion.

As such, during the roundtable: We had no clear answers. Only questions.

What needs to happen structurally for change to occur?

The question - What needs to happen structurally for change to occur? – emerged in multiple ways across the conversations. While no answer emerged, a number of provocative questions spoke to a response:
- What would it mean to have people co-create / co-determine the research agenda?
- How do we respect progress that has been made while also continuing to evolve?
- How do equity and inclusion efforts themselves create new barriers?
- How can we challenge artificial categories created through existing systems?
- How can we innovate research when the funding and/or impetus for the research often comes from those who define art according to the colonial nation-state?
- Can we create lasting change when we are working within systems?
- Are there things about the structures that are keeping people in "holding tanks"? Are these things we can change?
- Can we shift the conversations instead of simply responding?

What is the purpose of research and final reporting to funders?

As organizations engage in work to do their own research and meet reporting requirements, the question emerges – What is the goal? Are we simply working to improve existing organizations?

Reporting tends to emphasize positives. As a result, more challenging moments that may demonstrate impact do not get reported. Moreover, the research related to reporting misses part of the story.

While those working for funders may be excited to learn about learning, there can be a lack of trust to provide this information. Further, existing reporting mechanisms tend to emphasize concrete measures rather than learning or actual impact. For example, from a government perspective, bums in seats are often presented as a more valuable metric than long-term impact.

As a result, stories arts organizations tell and the data they collect to support these stories tend to be about what they think funders what to hear. The question then emerges: How can we get funders to ask questions that help us tell better stories?

Interconnectivity

The arts are not created in a vacuum. Creation is influenced by a number of things such as transit and housing. However, current structures do not always recognize this interconnectivity.

As such, does the mandate of so-called "leaders" like arts councils need to change? A change could enable connections with areas seen as distinct areas of activity. Moreover, what needs to change within existing funding structures to reflect the interconnectivity? For example, at what point should something stop being funded as art because it is actually a cultural or religious practice?