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| Grantee Name |
| Lookingglass Theatre Company |
| Project Title |
| Support to establish a Civic Practice Lab to transform how Lookingglass engages constituencies and develops stakeholders, placing assets of creativity and collaboration in service to, and in relationship with, non-arts partners. |
| Project Progress and Successes |
| <p>Project Progress and Successes</p> <p>As we enter our third and final year of the Civic Practice Lab, all 5 projects are in full operation. Here is a description of each:</p> <p>Chicago Parks District, the Culture, Arts and Nature Unit (CAN) Lookingglass teaching artists have been working on this collaboration for two years, and the CPL is fully integrated into CAN's ongoing work with Chicago's 15 Cultural Centers. We help staff conceptualize strategies, co-lead community sessions, and help them articulate goals for Grants and for reports to Chicago Parks upper level administrators. We also work with them around engaging local Park supervisors, staff, neighborhood partners and community residents in locations around the City.</p> <p>Working Women's History Project (WWHP) Lookingglass Ensemble member Tracy Walsh has been using research collected by WWHP to create a touring play about the necessity for childcare as a core social action strategy to improve the economic mobility prospects of working poor mothers.</p> <p>This project represented a real success for CPL. Lookingglass' Education and Community Programs (E&C) was able to partner with the CPL via Tracy's longstanding work with the Lookingglass Young Ensemble. The Lookingglass Young Ensemble is comprised of 32 students aged 8-18 who receive scholarship-based instruction in all elements of creating new work. In the Spring of 2015, Tracy shared her research with Young Ensemble members, and they developed and presented a play. The public performances gave Tracy the chance to share a developmental version of the piece with WWPH staff, board and constituents, deepening the CPL-WWHP relationship, fostering a mutually-beneficial, potentially repeatable partnership with the Young Ensemble, and advanced the script's development.</p> <p>Roosevelt University Lookingglass Ensemble member David Kersnar continues to work with students across the campus investigating what a social justice pedagogy looks like in classrooms across disciplines. In addition to a video webisode series he scripted for the school, he is currently taking that research and working with a theatre class to create a performance/workshop event that will be a public opportunity for faculty/student dialogue on this subject matter.</p> <p>Communities in Schools of Chicago (CISC) Lookingglass Ensemble member and Artistic Director Andy White and Chicago Theatre Artist Dionna Griffin Irons have been working with the CISC in a theatre-based practice of generating local, neighborhood-specific, mental health peer-to-peer counseling/facilitation sessions to Crown Academy. A coalition of partners that includes Dominican University, Mental Health Alliance of Illinois, Crown Academy and Chicago Public Schools are bringing together mental health experts, graduate students and Crown Academy 7th and 8th graders to build a workshop on Social-Emotional Learning capacities, led by Dionna Griffin</p> |

Irons. The workshop will be experienced by every student in this school, and if the workshops go well, has the potential to be replicated in Chicago Public Schools.

Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine's Cognitive Neurology and Alzheimer's Disease Center (CNADC)

Lookingglass Ensemble member Christine Dunford and CNADC doctor/researcher Darby Morhardt developed The Memory Ensemble (ME), through which improvisation and other techniques employed in the development and creation of new theatrical work are utilized to increase the quality of life and potentially the cognitive abilities of those with Alzheimer's Disease. The project existed as a satellite of Lookingglass's activities, and had never been able to be integrated into the company's programming or organizational structure. This collaboration is enabling the Memory Ensemble to bring Alzheimer's prevention and intervention services communities of color across Chicago's South and West sides in a mutually-beneficial partnership which enables the CPL to support and learn from the ME as new partnerships get developed, new teaching artists get trained, and new programs get initiated.

Program Evaluators

Chicago based evaluators Nick Rabkin and Kristin Patton have been engaged to document and help assess the work of CPL over the next year. They have already begun with interviews of artists and partners, and with numerous conceptual planning and evaluation design meetings with CPL leader Michael Rohd and Lookingglass artistic director Andy White.

Indications of success at this point include:

Deeper integration with community partners through the duration of the relationships and a clearer sense of shared goals and possibilities;

The successful collaboration between CPL and Lookingglass' E&C department on the WWHP partnership;

Requests from theatres and artists around the country to talk about/observe our work at CPL;

Other local community agencies expressing interest in projects that we cannot support now, but for which we can potentially seek future funding;

A number of community partners came to the theatre to experience dress rehearsals for mainstage productions, with the potential to build demand for the work of the theatre.

Challenges / Obstacles / Failures Encountered in the Project

Challenges and obstacles include:

Because of the duration of these projects, transitions at partner organizations continue to be challenges as we have to introduce and integrate new individuals who replace people who were our key allies/collaborators at partner sites/organizations.

Expanding the ensemble's family of affiliate and teaching artists to include more artists of color, a necessity given some of the partners and projects CPL has taken on.

Keeping the Lookingglass Ensemble up to date and engaged in the activity of CPL amidst the busyness of the company's production slate remains a place we focus on improving.

What was learned from these that might be of benefit to others?

In addition to previously-shared learnings, that commission-based relationships with artists yields better results and that an "insider/outsider consultant" is a major asset to systems integration, the CPL anticipates being able to share learnings around navigating staff transitions, organizational hierarchies and site-specific system nuances within the institutions with which the CPL partners. These issues are anticipated to be featured points the CPL's work with evaluators.

Links to relevant website(s) and/or project publications, reports, etc.

<http://www.chicagoartistsmonth.org/re-center-cultural-organizing-parks>

If someone wishes to speak with your organization further about your project, would there be a willing contact? Y/N

If yes, please provide contact name and information for preferred method of contact (email, phone, etc).

Yes!

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