Tremaine Foundation

Assessment Report
MEA Ongoing Improvement Project

August 2013

Created by

cpg The Cultural Planning Group

The Idea in Brief

In 2011, the Emily Hall Tremaine Foundation commissioned the development of an "ongoing improvement" process for the Marketplace Empowerment for Artists (MEA) program. This report presents the results of a 2013 assessment intended to answer the question, "How can we strengthen the effectiveness of professional practices training for visual artists?" Our yardstick is a logic model developed at the start of the assessment, which identifies the desired outcomes of professional practices training and the Foundation's investment in MEA.

The purpose of MEA is, "To empower visual artists with tools to help them succeed in artistic endeavors without being strictly reliant on patrons, grants or federal funding." The results of this assessment strongly suggest that MEA is effectively fulfilling this purpose. That is, after eleven years:

- There are approximately 18,000 artists who have received career trainings funded by the Foundation.

- Grantees and their training sites have proliferated throughout the US and are now broadly distributed.

- Artists/alumni are found in virtually all states and internationally.

- Among the success factors for artists participating in the survey are that they are almost all continuing to make art **and their careers have benefitted from their professional practices training**.

While the sustainability of training absent Tremaine support remains an issue, the Foundation's investment has not only created greater access to training but appears to be making changes in the mindset supporting such training. Also, artists are actively sharing their career skills with other artists.

There are several potential changes suggested by the conclusions of the assessment that might improve MEA's effectiveness, moving forward.

1. **Promote a continuum of learning for professional practices training:** this includes ongoing training that builds on their initial engagement with workshops, seminars and the various formats of training, and assistance in a greater variety of forms to help artists apply what they learn and to have better access to training and information.

2. **Promote more diverse participation in professional practices training:** reflecting overarching conditions in the art world served by MEA, there is limited diversity among artists in professional practices training. Fostering increased diversity is not only a current policy of MEA but also a way to increase the effectiveness of the program.

3. **Support professional practices training that acknowledges and encourages "portfolio careers" and emphasizes varied ways to earn a living in the arts:** training still focuses most frequently on more traditional roles of artists in the marketplace. MEA can serve its artists more effectively by training for a broader range of career activities and ways of making money.

4. **Reevaluate the geographic strategy for MEA grantees:** Since 2007, MEA program has pursued and largely succeeded in its strategy of expansion, with the goal of making professional practices training available in communities throughout the US. Now it may be more effective to consider pursuing this goal in other ways, such as focusing on the strongest grantees, grantees with greater geographic reach, and the potential for fee-based distance learning.

5. **Revisit the long-term sustainability of professional practices training:** several assessment findings suggest new opportunities to address the ongoing challenge of sustainability. Also, there is apparent consensus among grantees that current models of professional practices training will always require subsidy. Exploring more completely fee-based learning as an alternative approach to professional practices training, and "seeding" a commercial business may be a productive approach.

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Overview

Background and Purpose

In 2011, the Emily Hall Tremaine Foundation commissioned the development of an "ongoing improvement" process for the Marketplace Empowerment for Artists (MEA) program. The purpose of the process is to be able to better answer the question, "How can we strengthen the effectiveness of professional practices training for visual artists?" Now in its eleventh year, the MEA program has had remarkable success in expanding and enhancing professional practices training. To further leverage its investment in MEA, the Foundation now seeks to learn more from its collective experiences, including those of its grantees, artists and staff. This is intended to enable continued enhancement of the program as well as documentation of its effectiveness. It will also contribute to the effectiveness of its grantees and the field of professional practices training.

The "ongoing improvement" process was designed and tested with grantees and artists in 2012, and documented in a comprehensive assessment manual. This reports presents the results of the assessment, conducted between January and August 2013.

Goals of the "Ongoing Improvement" Project

The goals of integrating ongoing assessment into the MEA program are to:

- Provide ongoing feedback from artists who have participated in MEA-funded professional practices training as to *current factors and environmental conditions* affecting their creative practice.

- Provide tracking and assessment *of the value* of professional practices training for artists participating in MEA-funded programs.

- Provide a *geographic profile* of those participating in professional practices training.

- Provide ongoing *tracking of grantee curricula*.

- Identify *potential improvements* or refinements to the MEA program.

- Develop a system for *integrating lessons learned* from assessment into MEA program improvements on a regular basis.

Project Methodology

The overall approach to the assessment is to see how artists who have taken MEA-funded training are doing in their careers in relation to MEA's definition of a healthy artistic career (the definition was established as part of the design process for this assessment, using a logic model, page 40). Because artists are influenced by many factors in their careers, most beyond the scope of MEA, it is not possible to define MEA as the cause of their success (or lack thereof). However, the assessment can describe the characteristics of MEA alumni's careers and their opinions about the impact of MEA training. Moreover, the opinions of artists, grantees, trainers and staff will be very useful in identifying potential improvements to MEA.

The assessment will potentially be repeated every three years. Staff will conduct a partial assessment in the intervening years. The full triennial methodology includes the following elements:

- Assess outcomes for artists who are MEA alumni.
- Assess content of MEA curricula.
- Identify key changes in the field and the environment that might have implications for MEA improvement.
- Identify issues and suggestions for improvement in MEA.
- Engage grantees and Foundation staff in discussions to promote learning and decision-making related to program improvement.

The assessment was conducted through two national surveys (one of artists who are alumni of the MEA program and a second of MEA grantees). After survey results were analyzed, specific issues were identified for further study, and artists participated in five focus groups to learn more about their experiences and suggestions. Results of the assessment are being shared with Foundation staff, the Art Committee and Board of Directors. A report will also be shared with grantees at their annual convening and each grantee will receive the results of "their" artists in comparison with the national figures. Foundation staff has also compiled a contact list of artists who are alumni of the MEA program to enable direct communications with them.

The methodology is fully documented in an Assessment Manual prepared in 2012.

Conclusions

Success of the MEA Program

This assessment is a process evaluation of the MEA Program, intended to answer the question, "How are we doing as we are doing it?" Our yardstick is the logic model developed at the start of the assessment, which identifies the desired outcomes of professional practices training and the Foundation's investment in MEA. The purpose of MEA is, "To empower visual artists with tools to help them succeed in artistic endeavors without being strictly reliant on patrons, grants or federal funding." The results of this assessment strongly suggest that MEA is effectively fulfilling this purpose. That is, after eleven years, there are approximately 18,000 artists who have received career trainings funded by the Foundation. Grantees and their training sites have proliferated throughout the US and are now broadly distributed. Artists/alumni are found in virtually all states and internationally. Among the success factors for artists participating in the survey are that they are almost all continuing to make art and their careers have benefitted from their professional practices training. While the sustainability of training absent Tremaine support remains an issue, the Foundation's investment has not only created greater access to training but appears to be making changes in the mindset supporting such training. Also, artists are actively sharing their career skills with other artists.

How Artists Are Doing

The artists' survey provides a portrait of how artists who have taken professional practices training are faring compared to the desired outcomes of the MEA Program. By nearly all measures, these artists have the characteristics of empowered career navigation that MEA seeks to instill. Among the most important findings is that nearly all artists (97%) are actively making art and pursuing their artistic careers, across ages and lengths of career, and about half (51%) are more active than they were two years ago. Enabling artists to continue to work is a fundamental goal of the MEA Program. Artists are also doing well in measures related to goal setting, handling career change, and sharing their career skills with other artists. They report doing less well in measures of confidence, networking and satisfaction with their careers. This particular finding was probed further in the focus groups. When participating artists were asked about confidence and career satisfaction the responses focused on the challenges of maintaining a focused studio practice while needing to find multiple sources of income. There were no apparent correlations between income and career satisfaction though. Artists in the focus groups discussed artistic and creative process as the most significant factor in career satisfaction. Another important finding is that artists who have taken multiple professional practices training show better outcomes, suggesting that the value of such training is cumulative. This was supported in the focus groups where artists discussed the value of "getting us out of our isolation in the studio and linked directly with others with similar challenges."

MEA Expansion 2003 to 2012

The Foundation has pursued a sustained policy of expanding the MEA program, for the purpose of seeding professional practices training centers throughout the country and promoting the widespread adoption of such training. Findings of this project clearly indicate that this policy has resulted in significant national expansion and reach of the program, in terms of the number of grantees, trainings sites, and artists served. In addition, approximately one-third of artists responding to the survey also teach professional practices training, so it is reasonable to assume that the "seeding" function is taking hold among artists themselves, in addition to the universities and organizations where they teach.

The Professional Practices Curriculum

The past and current MEA grantees that participated in this process were asked to provide information on their professional practices curriculum and to provide qualitative information on what is currently influencing professional practices training and their observations of what is most effective for the artists who have participated in training.

Most-taught topics focus on marketing, networking, legal issues, business and financial planning, career planning, project management and financial literacy. Least-taught topics include ethics, insurance/risk management, research and development, estate planning, and space. The most-taught topics closely align with the training needs most often identified by artists, suggesting that grantees' curricula are highly market-sensitive. In addition, the grantees consistently report several key skills among the artists participating in training that are key to their success. Number one is strengthening skills in marketing and communications, specifically the ability to articulate the focus and purpose of their work. This is supported throughout the artists' survey and was reiterated in the focus groups. In addition, the grantees indicate that focusing on strategic and business planning skills, developing a basic marketing plan, understanding how to manage finances and utilizing technology as the most important ingredients.

The State of the Field of Professional Practices Training

Grantees consistently report several issues influencing their current programming and presenting challenges to their programs, relevant to professional practices training. Many of the grantees, when asked: "What changes in the current environment do you observe that affect artists' ability to have successful careers?" report the two most significant challenges as the level of student debt (particularly for young artists within the first 5 years following graduation) and managing the complexities of technology.

There appears to be a growing demand for professional practices training. The expansion of MEA trainings and alumni suggests this, and grantees note anecdotally that artists' demand is increasing. However, grantees report that professional practices training is not yet universally accepted among educational institutions and funders, which do not yet commonly prioritize or recognize the value professional practices training.

In addition, the grantees were asked: "If you think professional practices training is becoming more available to artists, what role, if any, has MEA and the Tremaine Foundation played in this expansion?" The following quotes encapsulate the nearly unanimous responses to this question:

> *MEA and the Tremaine Foundation set that trend on a grand scale by creating the national cohort and supporting organizations in creating their own programs. This model allowed for a great deal of learning from one another in this new field.*

> *Most of the professional development opportunities I know are either supported by Tremaine directly or modeled off of professional learning that is supported by Tremaine. I know that Tremaine has ignited, as a result of their efforts, thousands of profession development workshops and learning opportunities.*

> *For us without this support we could not have learned so quickly from the community and adopted a best practices approach from the beginning - so given that we are 2.5 years into our work as part of this network and we have far exceeded our original expectations. Also because of the work MEA and Tremaine has done in the field it has helped significantly in our conversations with local foundations about the importance and need of this work.*

Artists Functioning in Their Careers Versus Feeling About Their Careers

Artists report stronger capacities for navigating their careers than they do for their subjective experience of these challenges. They do well in measures related to artistic activity, goal setting, handling career change, and sharing their career skills with other artists. Yet they report doing less well in measures of confidence and satisfaction with their careers. They can 'navigate' but may not enjoy the task. This may reflect the age-old observation that artists prefer to make art than pursue the art business. In the focus group discussions there also appeared to be differences among age groups on this issue. Perhaps not surprisingly younger artists, those early in their careers, showed greater confidence and less frustration with "the system." However, it also suggests that an artistic career fundamentally includes a solo or small group business activity, where until recently artists were not expected or prepared to address their career needs. This essential fact of an artist's career may be inescapable but the MEA Program is clearly aimed at

equipping artists to face this often-unpleasant reality. It is likely that the expansion of professional practices training is improving the experience for artists. Also, as the national economy improves, artists are coping with an ongoing environment of economic change, and the marketplaces in which they operate also continue to change. It is reasonable to think that this economic change is a stressor for artists and that professional practices training is an especially useful tool for handling it.

Ongoing Need for Professional Practices Training

Equipping artists to address their career needs strongly appears to be an ongoing need. Artists generally report that they have the skills they need to navigate their careers and the ability to address their career challenges. Still, they report many ongoing needs for training, including those they presumably have already studied. They also list a plethora of changes that are influencing their careers and alter their career needs. As noted above, artists with more training do better in their career challenges. Taken together, these issues reported by artists point to the need for ongoing access to a diversity of training.

In both the artists' survey and in the focus groups there were strong indications that a key element was activities supporting the concepts the artists learned in training sessions. These activities include follow-up coaching and peer group programs. As one artist stated in a focus group: "I need to be held accountable. While it was clear from the workshop what I need to focus on, I would much rather be in the studio. It is helpful to have someone checking in with me to keep me focused."

College course and workshops for artists in the community are now the most common delivery methods for this training. So, it may be efficient to explore addressing the need for ongoing training through distance learning and other online resources that provide refreshers, niche coursework, reference materials, "help desk" questions, coaching, peer coaching, and enhanced networks. Also, the artists' survey suggests that artists would benefit from better information about available training and resources.

The Human Element of Learning

Artists express a clear preference for, and value from, in-person and individualized elements in training. Apart from the specifics of the curriculum, they benefit from follow-up networking, individualized coaching (from both other artists as well as professionally trained coaches), one-on-one access to mentors, and peer networks. This point was affirmed in greater detail through a series of five focus groups. It was summarized as the challenge of implementing what was learned in a training session. Artists indicated the need for support following training through one of the mechanisms mentioned above – ultimately support for "helping me stay accountable to myself to be successful and using this information." A related conclusion is that artists recognize a distinction between programs that are focused on the fundamentals of business—the "mechanics"—versus the coaching aspect for greater success, or pathways to implementation. This suggests not only the value of in-person learning, as opposed to distance learning, but also the need for supplementary elements to training courses or workshops that creates a continuation of learning. This could include personalized application of learning (coaching, mentoring or peer coaching), in-person networking and communication, and online communications/networks. In the focus groups the artists clarified that the 'human factor' is of particular importance because of the need for direct interaction, that the solitary nature of studio work needs the balance of one-on-one interaction.

While there is strong evidence of the need for and value of one-on-one coaching and mentoring among the artists' responses, this was also consistently reported as an important element by grantees. Grantees indicated that one-on-one business counseling, the establishment of peer networks, and providing tools for on-going access to expertise were all vital elements for artists to implement what was taught in a training session. This "human element" is supported through online activities but remains essential to success for the artists.

The Potential for Distance Learning

While artists prefer in-person and individualized learning for many types of training, cost remains a challenge. Grantees report that artists' ability to afford tuition costs is one of the greatest challenges to sustaining professional practices training. Online resources appear to have a stronger application for niche elements of the curricula, those not currently included in a given training or that are only partially addressed. Also, artists may seek specialized training or information at the time it is needed (on-demand), such as insurance, ethics or retirement planning. Distance learning and/or online reference materials could potentially fill those gaps. Finally, using distance learning for coaching and mentoring could perhaps reduce its cost though there is the risk of diminishing the "human element" that makes one-on-one engagement so valuable.

When is distance learning most effective? According to grantees, distance learning gets high marks as a follow-up to in person learning, such as refreshers. Also, webinars allow a grantee to reach a much larger population, including artists with schedule challenges, rural artists, and artists in other countries. Some grantees use webinars regularly now and have reached many that would not otherwise have access. Distance learning is naturally suited to on demand learning. For example, artists often want to research a specific topic online or be able to call and ask a question, when that need arises in their work. Access is 'on-demand' and fulfills limited and specific needs at a particular time. Sometimes the challenge is simply time and schedule; an artist with two special needs children described the value of late-night online learning sessions, at a time of day when she was able to focus on her own needs.

Recommended Potential Changes for the MEA Program

This assessment strongly suggests the success of the MEA program. Still, the overarching purpose of the assessment is to identify ongoing improvements to the program. There are several potential changes suggested by the conclusions of the assessment that might improve MEA's effectiveness, moving forward.

Five Recommended Potential Changes

1. Promote a continuum of learning for professional practices training.

2. Promote more diverse participation in professional practices training.

3. Support professional practices training that acknowledges and encourages "portfolio careers" and emphasizes varied ways to earn a living in the arts.

4. Reevaluate the geographic strategy for MEA grantees.

5. Revisit the long-term sustainability of professional practices training.

Five Recommended Potential Changes continued….

1. Promote a continuum of learning for professional practices training.

    Over the eleven years of the program, MEA has supported a broad range of training activities and experimentation in developing new approaches. This has led to an effective and diverse spectrum of training, often customized to the community where it is provided but informed by the body of best practices fostered by MEA. This assessment shows that artists not only benefit from this training, but also have ongoing needs for access to a diversity of assistance in addressing evolving career challenges. College courses and workshops for artists in the community are now the most common delivery methods for this training. There is a need for ongoing training and assistance in a greater variety of forms, or what could be called a continuum of learning. It is not only about specific skills but about utilizing the information that has been taught in workshops and integrating it as a regular business practice.

    One such need is helping artists apply what they learn. Both artists and grantees articulate this need. One-on-one business counseling, the establishment of peer networks, coaching, mentoring and providing tools for on-going access to expertise are all effective ways for artists to implement what was taught in a training session. This often means using the "human element" of individualized, in-person assistance. This is more often requested by older artists and for interactions emphasizing more sophisticated communication and trust, such as reviewing and discussing artwork. However, there are many circumstances where artists are comfortable with individualized assistance provided by phone, videoconference or even email. Younger artists are generally more comfortable with technological communication.

    Another need is for ongoing access to training and information, through distance learning and other online resources that provide refreshers, niche coursework, reference materials, "help desk" questions, coaching, peer coaching, and enhanced networks.

    A third need is for better access to information about available training and resources. There appears to be substantial information available online but access is limited, since there are few recognized clearinghouses where artists know to seek it. There is an opportunity to publicize and connect artists (and grantees) with existing resources, so that this information can be more widely disseminated.

2. Promote more diverse participation in professional practices training.

A key finding of the artists' survey is that there is limited diversity among artists served by MEA and by professional practices training generally. Respondents to the artists' survey were primarily White (73%) and female (70%). Black and Hispanic artists were substantially under-represented. While this possibly reflects response bias in the survey, this demographic fact was confirmed in focus groups, interviews and other research. In a focus group that specifically gathered a group of African-American artists, they articulated a lack of outreach to artists in their community, that there were few if any mechanisms to bring training to their attention, and that training was usually in a location that was a significant barrier for their participation because of distance and time.

Despite other forms of diversity—geographic, age, length of career, artistic discipline—the art world served by MEA is largely populated by White women. Artists in focus groups commented that this may not be a problem: some believe that the presence of women in professional practices training reflects the fact that the art world is still largely male-dominated, and that training and self-help on the part of women artists is both a necessity and a healthy trend. Regardless, the MEA program values diversity and already requires grantees to promote diverse participation in their trainings.

This recommendation, however, is based on the idea that fostering diversity is not only a social good but also a way to increase MEA's effectiveness. For one thing, cultural identity is a prominent theme in the contemporary art world. More diverse participation in professional practice training would be a benefit on an artistic, as well as ethical, basis. Also, it is likely that different approaches to career success in diverse communities can be valuable information, when shared in the training classroom.

Fostering diverse participation can be an elusive and moving target. It is best described as a goal to be continuously sought, even if never fully attained. Artists and grantees recommend a practical approach to diversity: better outreach and relationship building outside one's own community. There was an early success in this regard during the assessment: one grantee asked to arrange an artists' focus group reached outside his alumni to a community-based organization serving artists of color. The simple act of convening the focus group yielded a new relationship and commitment to new access to training, as well as an intriguing glimpse of alternative approaches to career navigation.

3. Support professional practices training that acknowledges and encourages "portfolio careers" and emphasizes varied ways to earn a living in the arts.

Regarding artists as entrepreneurs is a trend and a shorthand way of describing the often-freelance careers of artists. In the past decade, research has documented the extent to which artists not only freelance, but often make a living in different sectors: the fine art market, the educational and nonprofit sector, and the commercial world. Increasingly, artists approach career development on a highly individualized basis, assembling "portfolio careers" that might include gallery sales, commissions, a commercial art job, a teaching position, and/or online retailing. While artists served by MEA are living this complex reality, professional practices training still focuses most frequently on more traditional roles of artists in the marketplace: marketing and selling your art work, and other activities related to project and career management.

MEA can serve its artists more effectively by acknowledging and incorporating a broader range of career activities in training. Additionally, artists earning more of their living from their artistic practice report better outcomes. A core objective of MEA has been to assure that artists can "continue making work"; the assessment shows that nearly all are able to do this. As a next step, refining professional practices training to promote better earning, and a broader range of earning, would provide even greater benefit to artists.

4. Reevaluate the geographic strategy for MEA grantees.

The MEA program has pursued a deliberate strategy of expansion since 2007, with the goal of making professional practices training available in communities throughout the US. This "seeding" approach has clearly worked, as the maps and numbers in this assessment illustrate. What's next for MEA, after attaining more complete national presence? The geographic strategy was founded in part on the idea that a national network of providers would serve more artists, in more regions and communities. This objective could potentially be approached in other ways. One of the challenges is maintaining a national network. Focusing on the strongest grantees, as recommended in #5 below, is one way to ensure this. And focusing on grantees with greater geographic reach is another. Examples are grantees that serve multiple communities, provide distance learning, and seeking to expand the reach of their services. Exploring the potential for fee-based distance learning, as described in #5, below, is also an alternative.

5. Revisit the long-term sustainability of professional practices training.

The long-term sustainability of professional practices training has been an ongoing issue for the MEA program. Staff has recognized, investigated and addressed this challenge for many years. The 2007 "Future Directions" assessment report also made recommendations regarding sustainability. The challenge of promoting sustainability—the capacity of grantees to continue to provide training after Foundation funding ends—remains and as a policy matter, it would be advisable to revisit it. This will help ensure the remarkable results of the Foundation's now eleven-year investment in MEA and its impact in the art world.

Currently, MEA addresses sustainability by requiring grantees to provide a plan for sustainability in their application and making most grants multi-year but non-renewable (funding for the same training activity is not eligible). Some grantees have in fact found other funding for professional practices training and "graduated" from MEA. In practice, some grantees continue Foundation support by evolving the purpose of their MEA funding and renew grants for new activities. However, many others indicate that they are dependent on the Foundation's funding and, when it ends, their professional practices training is likely to end as well.

There are several findings of this assessment that are relevant to sustainability. *First, artists' service organizations serve many more artists and provide more geographic reach than university programs*. Artists responding to the survey indicated ASOs as their provider almost three times as often as universities. Of course, it is in the nature of university courses to serve fewer artists/students and including them in the MEA program has been an important strategy to encourage adoption of professional practices training in university visual arts degree programs. Nonetheless, universities appear to have made the least progress in sustainability and serve substantially fewer artists. Grantees and staff both observe that some universities have not only embraced the value of professional practices training but have also undertaken the expense of the course. However, many will apparently provide the course only as along as the Foundation provides the funding.

Second, MEA's grant making has been driven in part by a geographic strategy. The program has nearly accomplished its geographic targets to assure that professional practices training is available nationally. Yet some grantees clearly address sustainability more effectively than others, providing more assurance that the impact of the Foundation's investment will continue. Focusing on the strongest applicants, those with the greatest organizational capacity and the highest likelihood of sustaining their training programs, is example of a change that would promote sustainability. And placing greater emphasis on grantees' efforts to replace Foundation support, during the grant period, could also promote their success.

Finally, there is apparent consensus among grantees that the current models of professional practices training will always require subsidy. Is this really true? They cite the difficulty in consistently obtaining other grants to support their programs, the low fees that artists can (or will) pay, the lingering effects of the economy, and the trend away from funding support services. How can this be addressed? There are models in the university world of large-scale online training that has potential applicability to professional practices training. The challenge for grantees' webinars, for example, is now a marketing challenge: increasing the average number of artists/attendees to pay the cost. Exploring more completely fee-based learning as an alternative approach to professional practices training, and "seeding" a commercial business may be a productive approach.

Artists' Survey Findings

This online survey was distributed between February 20 and April 15, 2013 to artists on the lists of MEA grantees. The survey link was distributed to any participant in professional practices training of current and past MEA grantees. A total of 2,160 artists responded, providing a robust sample of the estimated "universe" of approximately 18,000 MEA alumni. The great majority of survey respondents participated in MEA-funded trainings but some were trained in other workshops provided by grantees.

The over-arching questions of this survey are: what are the current notable characteristics of artists' careers and attitudes, compared to MEA's desired outcomes? What else is noteworthy?

Overall Value of Professional Practices Training

The more the better: professional practices training appears to provide cumulative benefits to artists. Artists who have participated in multiple trainings show they may be incorporating their learning more effectively into their lives and careers than those who have taken fewer trainings.

Artists who participated in multiple professional practices trainings are significantly more likely to:

- Be actively making art or pursuing their creative practice
- Have clear and specific goals
- Be effectively progressing towards accomplishing goals
- Feel more confident and satisfied with their careers
- Be more effective in navigating change in their lives
- Feel they have the necessary level of professional practice skills to manage their careers
- Feel they have sufficient access to resources and expertise to strengthen their professional practice skills

Artists' Success Indicators

Artists were assessed in relation to nine MEA success measures articulated in the MEA Logic Model. These are desirable characteristics that MEA seeks to develop or promote through professional practices training.

Purpose of MEA Program

To empower visual artists with tools to help them succeed in artistic endeavors without being strictly reliant on patrons, grants or federal funding.

Artists Success Indicators: How MEA Defines Success

Artists:

- Continue art-making or creative practice
- Have confidence in navigating their careers
- Can define and progress towards their individual career goals
- Experience satisfaction with their careers
- Have an effective professional network
- Received value from MEA professional practices training
- Teach professional practices and/or participate in field-building activities
- Have awareness and ability to self-direct their careers
- Successfully identify and handle career change

In summary, artists are nearly all actively involved in their art-making, one of the key goals of MEA, across all ages and lengths of career. In addition, artists are doing well in measures related to goal setting, handling career change, and sharing their career skills with other artists. They report doing less well in measures of confidence, networking and satisfaction with their careers.

1. Continue art-making or creative practice

Nearly all artists are currently making art or pursuing their creative practice on an active basis and approximately half are more active than they were two years ago. Almost all anticipate continuing their practice for the next 3 - 5 years. 59% have practiced their art for more than 13 years.

Are you currently making art, or pursuing your creative practice on an active basis?

> *YES – 97%*
> *No – 3%*

Are you more or less active in your artistic practice than two years ago?

> *More active – 51%*
> *Less active – 15%*
> *About the same – 35%*

I anticipate continuing my art practice in the next three to five years.

> *YES – 97%*
> *Not sure – 3%*
> *No – 0%*

2. Have confidence in navigating their careers

Artists report a moderate level of confidence in navigating their careers: about half report feeling confident. Income seems to be a confidence-booster: those with lower total income are less confident and those whose art is their primary source of income are more confident.

I feel confident in building and navigating my artistic career.

Strongly Agree/Agree – 49%
Neutral – 30%
Strongly Disagree/Disagree – 21%

3. Can define and progress towards individual career goals

Almost two-thirds of artists have set career goals and more than half report effectively progressing toward accomplishing them.

I have clear and specific career goals for my artistic career.

Strongly Agree/Agree – 63%
Neutral – 23%
Strongly Disagree/Disagree – 14%

I am effectively progressing towards accomplishing my career goals

Strongly Agree/Agree – 56%
Neutral – 30%
Strongly Disagree/Disagree – 14%

4. Experience satisfaction with their careers

Respondents' satisfaction with their artistic careers is divided approximately into thirds: about one-third is satisfied, one-third report feeling neutral, and one-third dissatisfied.

I feel satisfied with my artistic career.

Strongly Agree/Agree – 36%
Neutral – 30%
Strongly Disagree/Disagree – 34%

5. Have an effective professional network

Networking measures show mixed results for artists. While about half participate actively in professional networks, less than half feel their networks are sufficient or have access to mentors.

There is an accessible, clear network of artists and service providers available to me in support of building my artistic practice and career.

Strongly Agree/Agree – 39%
Neutral – 30%
Strongly Disagree/Disagree – 31%

I actively participate in professional networks.

> *Strongly Agree/Agree – 52%*
> *Neutral – 26%*
> *Strongly Disagree/Disagree – 22%*

I have access to mentors.

> *Strongly Agree/Agree – 41%*
> *Neutral – 24%*
> *Strongly Disagree/Disagree – 35%*

6. Received value from MEA professional practices training

This survey was not intended to provide a "scorecard" on the effectiveness of each grantee's training programs; such evaluation is done by grantees. Rather, the survey assessed the overall value of training for artists, as reflected in artists' overall positive outcomes from training. Perhaps the most important finding is the overall one: that more professional practices training is associated with better outcomes for artists.

7. Teach professional practices and/or participate in field-building activities

Artists show a marked tendency to share their career building skills with other artists: about one-third teaches professional practices. This supports the idea that MEA serves a "seed" function in promulgating the availability of professional practices training. In addition, artists are active in the community. Three-quarters volunteer with an arts organization and one-quarter teach in K-12 schools.

I am currently teaching, or have taught in the past five years, professional practice skills to other artists.

> *YES – 38%*
> *No – 62%*

I am currently teaching, or have taught in the past five years, in a K-12 school setting.

> *YES – 24%*
> *No – 77%*

Of those who are currently teaching or have taught professional practice skills in the past five years, 68% received income for it.

8. Have awareness and ability to self-direct their careers

As noted above in the measures for confidence (#2), goals (#3) and networking (#5), artists report a moderate capacity for awareness and self-direction. While they have good capacity for setting and achieving career goals, they report mixed levels of confidence and networking.

9. Successfully identify and handle career change

Artists report a strong capacity to handle career change: 86% are very or somewhat effective in managing such change.

Of those who said they made a significant change in the direction of their artistic career, they managed change:

- Very effectively – 38%
- Somewhat effectively – 48%
- Somewhat ineffectively – 9%
- Very ineffectively – 5%

Additional Observations

Participation in Professional Practices Training

Artists place a value on professional practices training: more than half of all artists have participated in multiple trainings. They also feel empowered: nearly two-thirds believe they have sufficient skills to manager their careers and a majority feels they have sufficient access to additional skills when needed.

I have participated in multiple training programs to enhance my professional practice skills.

Strongly Agree/Agree – 58%
Neutral – 16%
Strongly Disagree/Disagree – 26%

I have the necessary level of professional practice skills I need to manage my artistic practice.

Strongly Agree/Agree – 64%
Neutral – 19%
Strongly Disagree/Disagree – 17%

I have sufficient access to resources and expertise to strengthen my professional practice skills when I need them.

Strongly Agree/Agree – 59%
Neutral – 19%
Strongly Disagree/Disagree – 22%

Artists' Finances

Total Income

Artists responding to the survey are not high earners by middle class standards. Nonetheless, they mostly earn more than the average US per capita income of $27,915 and on a par with the median US household income of $52,762

What is your approximate annual average income from all sources?

Under $50,000 - 40%
$50,000 - $75,000 - 33%
Over $75,000   - 7%

I have received income from teaching professional practice skills to other artists.

Yes – 31%
No – 69%

Income from Artwork

About one-third (32%) report their art career is their primary source of income. Also, one-third (36%) of artists report an increase in income from their artistic practice in the past two years, while income for more than one-third (39%) stayed the same, and decreased for one-quarter.

My arts practice/career is my primary source of income (including awards, sales, fees, fellowships, teaching, commissions, grants, etc.).

Yes – 32%
No – 68%

Has your income from your artwork and/or artistic practice changed in the past two years?

It has decreased substantially – 12%
It has decreased somewhat – 13%
It has stayed about the same – 39%
It has increased somewhat – 28%
It has increased substantially – 8%

Those who indicate their arts practice is their primary source of income are significantly more likely to:

- Have participated in multiple professional practices trainings

- Feel more confident and satisfied with their careers

- Feel satisfied with their careers

- Have clear and specific goals

- Be effectively progressing towards accomplishing goals

Differences by Age, Length of Practice and Gender

There are intriguing differences associated with difference in artists' age, the length of time they have been a practicing artist, and their gender.

<u>Age of Artist</u>

Younger artists (21-34 years of age) are significantly more likely to:

- Experienced more significant change in their lives (slight difference)

- Have accessible, clear networks of artists for support

- Have access to mentors

<u>Length of Practice</u>

Artists who are practicing for 7 years or less are:

- Less likely to have clear and specific career goals, although are much more active in their practice than they were 2 years ago.

- Are more likely to have experienced significant change.

- Are more likely to have an accessible, clear network.

More tenured artists (practicing for 13 years or more) are:

- More likely to have the necessary professional practices training needed.

- More likely to be teaching or have taught professional practices training.

- More likely to rely on their art for their primary source of income.

Length of residency (mystery result):

- Those artists who have lived in their current homes for 1-7 years are more likely to be satisfied with their artistic careers.

- Those artists who have lived in their current homes for more than 10 years are more dissatisfied with their careers.

<u>Gender</u>

- Males are significantly more likely to have specific careers goals.

- Males are significantly more likely to feel confident in building and navigating their careers.

Training Needs, Career Changes and Goals

Artists were asked a variety of open-ended (narrative) questions about additional training needed, major factors influencing their artistic careers, and their goals.

<u>Additional Training Needed</u>

- Proposal/grant writing training
- Marketing training
- Financial/accounting training / business practices training
- Computer skills training

Also cited frequently is access to networks providing opportunities or like-minded groups:

- Networking skills – communications training, public speaking and presentation skills
- Access to mentors
- Access to networks providing opportunity – funders, business, galleries, grantors
- How to network and where to find the opportunities

<u>Career Changes</u>

This question provided general insights to the types of changes and influences on change that have affected the respondents to the survey. While there were nearly 1,200 responses to this question from visual artists, there are a number of catalysts for change that were cited:

- Relocation: challenges and opportunities
- Economic circumstances: losing a job, retiring, family life changes
- Health issues: either individually or among family members, including elder care
- Seeking to explore new forms of expression in their art work
- Typical life changes: recently graduating, returning to school, deciding to travel, retirement and refocusing of work, recommitment to a studio practice
- New influences on work
- Evolving as a practicing artist and becoming 'more successful' (defined in numerous ways)
- Integrating or utilizing professional practices training

<u>Career Goals</u>

- They want to create:
  - New art
  - A stable profession
  - Competent skills
  - Great portfolios
- They want to be self-sufficient through the use of their business skills.
- They want to successfully show and present work in a professional setting.
- They want gallery representation.
- If they already are showing, they want to expand to different geographic areas.
- They want to take workshops focused on improving their art or business skill levels.

Much of the dialogue for career goals echoes the training needs:

- Access and networking – galleries, managers, agents, partnerships
- Grant writing
- Marketing
- Mentors
- Goal setting, strategy, business skills
- Professional development workshops

<u>Student Debt</u>

A primary challenge facing artists is their student debt. Much has been written and publicized about this national issue, and this is reflected in the real-world comments of artists to this survey. Given the fact that so many respondents have undergraduate and graduate degrees, it is likely that many have borrowed to finance their artistic education. Yet the financial responses in this survey underscore the fact that even these relatively well-educated and highly qualified artists have difficulty paying their student loans in careers that are often low paying.

Strength of Artists Response to the Survey

The number and depth of artists' responses to this survey is a strong indication of the validity of an ongoing assessment process. They certainly have provided a rich data set. Moreover, through this response, artists express a general desire to provide input and participate in a process that can improve their careers and the ecosystem in which artists work.

Artists' Profile

Artistic Practice

The great majority of all respondents identify themselves as visual artists but most also identify as multi-disciplinary.

Artistic Media	
Multiple selections allowed	
Visual Artists	85%
Performing Artists	14%
Literary Artists	10%
Playwright/composer	3%
Film and Media	8%
Design and graphic arts	13%

A multi-disciplinary practice is the norm.

- 80% of those who selected **design and graphic artists** identify as visual artists

- 68% of those who selected **film and media** identify as visual artists

- 54% of those who selected **literary artists** identify as visual artists

- 47% of those who selected **performing artists** identify as visual artists

- 37% of those who selected **playwright/composers** identify as visual artists

A word cloud of artists' media: largest size words are most often mentioned to describe their work.

Demographic Profile

Respondents are age-diverse with 24% between the ages of 21 and 34; 41% between 35 and 54; and 34% over the age of 55. Most of the respondents are female (70%); males comprise 28%. As one would expect from MEA artists, they have high levels of education: 19% hold a BFA and 31% an MFA; 36% have a Bachelor's degree or above (not including MFA/BFA). They identify mostly as White (73%) with 5% Black/African American, 4% Bi- or –multi-racial, 4% Hispanic, and 4% Asian. Compared to the overall US population, they are more representative in terms of White, Asian and bi- or multi-racial, and less representative of the national African American and Hispanic populations.

Selected Demographics for Artist Respondents

Education	MEA	US
Bachelors Degree	36%	32%
BFA	19%	--
MFA	31%	8% (Masters)

Race/Ethnicity		
White	73%	78%
Hispanic	4%	17%
Black/African American	5%	13%
Asian	4%	5%
Bi- or Multi-racial	4%	2%

Residency

Most artists are long-term residents of their current location.

- More than 10 years – 54%

- 5-10 years – 17%

- 1-5 years – 29%

Grantees that Provided Respondents' Training

Nearly all MEA grantees are represented in this survey, with a broadly representative cross-section of artists from all grantees and geographic regions. Creative Capital has the most respondents, reflecting its national scope and long-term participation in MEA, often times partnering with other MEA grantees. It is noteworthy that artists' service organizations comprised 62% of all respondents, universities 24% and 14% who did not identify a provider. This reflects the fact that artists' service organizations are serving a significantly greater number of artists, which is confirmed by grantee reports.

Where Respondents Took Their Training
Percentage of all respondents

Grantee	Percent
Creative Capital	16.70%
Chicago Artists' Coalition	7.80%
School of the Art Institute of Chicago	7.70%
Artist Trust	7.30%
New York Foundation for the Arts	6.60%
Maryland Institute College of Art	4.90%
Springboard for the Arts	4.30%
College Art Association	4.20%
ArtServe Michigan	4.00%
Artist INC	2.50%
San Francisco Art Institute	1.70%
Arts and Business Council of Greater Boston	1.60%
Montana Arts Council	1.60%
Arts Council of New Orleans	1.40%
University of Wisconsin, Madison	1.40%
California Institute of the Arts	1.20%
Arts Council of Greater New Haven	1.10%
Savannah College of Art and Design	1.10%
Pratt Institute	1.10%
Parsons The New School for Design	1.00%
Cultural Alliance of Fairfield County	0.90%
School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston	0.90%
College of the Arts California	0.80%
DiverseWorks	0.70%
Greater Hartford Arts Council	0.70%
Rhode Island School of Design	0.70%
Side Street Projects	0.60%
Virginia Commonwealth University	0.60%
Columbia University	0.50%
Ohio State University	0.30%
Arts Incubator of the Rockies (Beet Street)	0.20%
Atlanta Contemporary Art Center	0.10%
Legal Art	0.10%
University of Texas (new)	0.00%

Grantee Survey Findings

Overall Findings

Thirty-three current and former grantees participated in this project, responding to the survey, assisting with distribution of the artists' survey, and providing information on their training programs from 2003 through 2012. The survey was comprised of two primary sections: a checklist on curriculum utilizing the framework developed for MEA by the Urban Institute, and a set of qualitative questions focused on trends in professional practices training and current issues affecting the field. In addition, grantees were asked for their perception of the role that the MEA program has played in the expansion of professional practices training.

Several themes emerged throughout the survey. The following section explores the approach to curriculum in depth, though several highlights to consider include:

- The most commonly taught courses focused on marketing and communications, both conventional and web-based; personal, financial and business planning; and developing networks.

- There is a strong relationship between the categorizations presented in the curriculum framework developed for MEA by the Urban Institute and grantees' actual curricula. However, grantees indicated that it was more likely for curriculum to be developed based on a local assessment of their artists' community and perceived needs among constituents. While the framework is a useful reference point, it is somewhat static and not responsive to environmental changes and curriculum updates based on the grantees' experience in presenting training programs and feedback from participants.

Opinions about MEA Funding's Impact

The impact of MEA funding has been significant on grantees and the field.

- Among the 34 grantees responding to the survey and providing historical data on the number and type of training programs presented, the number of training sites in 2003 was 12 (heavily clustered in the mid-Atlantic corridor); in 2008 it was 92 and in 2012 it was 287. The geographic reach has also expanded nationally professional practices.

- Grantees were asked "If you think professional practices training is becoming more available to artists, what role, if any, has MEA and the Tremaine Foundation played in this expansion?" Responses to this question were nearly unanimous on the importance of the MEA program:

  ‣ Seeding the field

  ‣ Developing a set of best practices and raising the standards around program presentation and curriculum development

  ‣ Providing the support for expanding nascent programs to encompass broader offerings

  ‣ The creation of a national "network"

  ‣ Leveraging additional philanthropy on the local and/or regional level

- Grantee comments on the impact of MEA funding were extensive. The following quotes are worth noting:

  MEA and the Tremaine Foundation set that trend on a grand scale by creating the national cohort and supporting organizations in creating their own programs. This model allowed for a great deal of learning from one another in this new field.

Most of the professional development opportunities I know are either supported by Tremaine directly or modeled off of professional learning that is supported by Tremaine. I know that Tremaine has ignited, as a result of their efforts, thousands of profession development workshops and learning opportunities.

For us without this support we could not have learned so quickly from the community and adopted a best practices approach from the beginning - so given that we are 2.5 years into our work as part of this network and we have far exceeded our original expectations. Also because of the work MEA and Tremaine has done in the field it has helped significantly in our conversations with local foundations about the importance and need of this work.

It has been the long-term investment and continued support in this area that has allowed the field to evolve over the years. Where previous efforts may have been silo-ed or reliant on small clusters of services, this program has supported and made possible a systematic and collective approach that helps to establish and share best practices for greater impact.

It is important that the (EHTF) foundation has been interested in and able to offer large grants to support these services, where the funds are enough to really build and sustain a program. The fact that the grants support significant personnel costs is extremely important as well, as this is typically the most expensive and essential line item for these service-oriented programs. EHTF was one of the first organizations to recognize service organizations, whose primary agents are the specialized personnel who develop and run these widely varied programs.

MEA and the Tremaine Foundation have been key in setting an agenda and a yardstick for most professional practice training. The convenings through Tremaine and through LINC provided exponential learning in curriculum development, language, and philosophical guidelines for much of the national discussion.

Since the inception of our support from Tremaine Foundation, a phenomenal impact was made on (our school) and greatly expanded the School's ability to be in dialogue with arts leaders, shapers and entrepreneurs in the field. We were able to create, build and rebuild this curriculum over time and have meaningful dialogue about the most relevant tools and curriculum, which could then be implemented.

Current Challenges

The grantees were asked about current challenges to sustaining professional practices training in their organizations. Perhaps predictably in the current economic environment there was nearly unanimous reference to identifying new funding sources to support the work and, in tandem with this was the challenge that few artists can afford the tuition. As one grantee stated, "The most difficult challenge is in securing permanent funding for the program." Another perspective that was common was in identifying appropriate or qualified instructors. This is encapsulated in this grantee's comment, "Finding appropriate faculty/visiting lecturers in professional practices training is sometimes difficult. In applying for the Tremaine grant we hoped to address the costs of bringing in multiple instructors from a variety of fields."

There were variations in the responses on the question of current challenges by those in academic institutions. Examples include, "Earmarking operational funds to support the further development of professional practices. The entire (university) community values such training, but with limited institutional resources it is an ongoing challenge to support such initiatives." And on the challenge of acceptance of PPT within an academic environment there were several comments such as, "…convincing more conservative faculty of the importance of such training." This was not a universal response but one that was common enough to suggest that these internal barriers remain within academic institutions.

Current Environment

Grantees were asked a series of questions that examined the current environment and how it affected both the grantees' choices in professional practices programming as well artists' ability to have successful careers. There were three themes that were prevalent:

- Marketing and communications, broadly defined, is the single most important focus in training. This encompasses changes in technology – generating revenue on-line as well as the role of social media in building a career – as well as more conventional marketing topics around the artists ability to articulate what their work is about and building the networks necessary to generate revenue from their "creative product."

- Organizations presenting professional practices training, particularly the service organizations (though by no means uniquely), understand the importance of follow-up activities to support the artists in implementing what they have learned. The primary methods being used are on-line networks; social gatherings and artist network events; and distance-learning programs. It appears that the single most important and useful follow-up programs are those that have a "human element," one-on-one coaching and/or mentoring. These methods are the most expensive and labor intensive and require a network that is trained in their delivery. Many grantees indicated the need for these services. Some are already providing them and others are considering them. In all cases the demand outstrips the available resources to provide and support these activities.

- Basic planning skills were an indispensable foundation. This supports success for artists in a range of desirable outcomes, from being adaptable to a changing environment to putting into place the basic building blocks to managing an artistic practice.

Topics Taught in Grantees' Curriculum

Grantees identified topics taught in their professional practices training (PPT) curricula, utilizing the curriculum framework developed by the Urban Institute for the MEA Program in 2011. The curriculum framework represents a comprehensive list of topics of potential use to artists in addressing their career needs. It is not a model or ideal curriculum for all grantees. So the primary purpose of researching grantees' curricula was to learn what is actually being taught and to compare that to the framework and the needs identified by artists in their survey.

What Grantees Are Teaching

The curriculum framework identifies ten curriculum areas and 32 specific topics. This chart shows the most taught topics. Most-taught topics focus on marketing, networking, legal issues, business and financial planning, career planning, project management and financial literacy. Least-taught topics include ethics, insurance/risk management, research and development, and space. The most-taught topics closely align with the training needs most often identified by artists, suggesting that grantees' curricula are highly market-sensitive.

Most-Taught MEA Topics

Taught by two-thirds or more of grantees

Taught by half to two-thirds of grantees

Business and Financial Planning	Marketing
Training in business and financial planning	Presentations to multiple audiences
Financial literacy	Public speaking
Business etiquette	Conventional marketing methods
Small business development	Web-based marketing
Career Planning	Social media
Exposure to a wide range of career paths	**Networking**
Self-assessment exercises	Developing networks in the field
Training in personal planning	Developing networks outside the arts field
Ethics	Social networking tools
Ethics in the arts business field	**Project Management**
Ethics among arts colleagues	Project development and management
Insurance/Risk Management	Archiving and documenting work
Skills and tools to assess potential risks and liabilities	Documenting social impacts of work
Health insurance	**Research and Development**
Property insurance	Securing material supports in the arts
Retirement insurance	Analyzing socio-economic conditions
Legal Issues	Understanding studies and reports
Negotiations and contracts	**Space**
Intellectual property	Obtaining appropriate spaces
Tax laws	
Estate planning for artists	

This table provides topics in most-taught order, adding a column (on the right) that includes partially taught topics. Clearly, when partially taught topics are considered, the scope of the curriculum expands to nearly all topics.

PPT Curriculum Topics Taught in MEA-Funded Training
By percentage of grantees that teach each topic

Does your curriculum include programming and/or elements that provide (yes, partially or no)…

Taught by two-thirds or more of grantees

Taught by half to two-thirds of grantees

	YES			YES + PARTIALLY
88.6	Presentations to multiple audiences		94.3	Business etiquette
85.7	Conventional marketing methods		94.3	Web-based marketing
82.9	Web-based marketing		94.3	Securing material supports in the arts
82.9	Social media		91.4	Presentations to multiple audiences
80.0	Developing networks in the arts field		91.4	Conventional marketing methods
80.0	Social networking tools		91.4	Developing networks in the arts field
77.1	Securing material supports in the arts		88.6	Training in personal planning
74.3	Training in personal planning		88.6	Financial literacy
74.3	Project development and management		88.6	Negotiations and contracts
74.3	Intellectual property		88.6	Public speaking
65.7	Archiving and documenting work		88.6	Social media
65.7	Public speaking		88.6	Exposure to a wide range of career paths
62.9	Tax laws		85.7	Self-assessment exercises
60.0	Training in business and financial planning		85.7	Training in business and financial planning
60.0	Business etiquette		85.7	Project development and management
60.0	Financial literacy		85.7	Intellectual property
60.0	Negotiations and contracts		85.7	Social networking tools
54.3	Self-assessment exercises		82.9	Tax laws
54.3	Developing networks outside the arts field		82.9	Developing networks outside the arts field
48.6	Ethics among artist colleagues		80.0	Small business development
45.7	Small business development		80.0	Archiving and documenting work
45.7	Analyzing socio-economic conditions		80.0	Obtaining appropriate spaces
45.7	Obtaining appropriate spaces		74.3	Ethics in the arts business field
42.9	Ethics in the arts business field		71.4	Ethics among artist colleagues
40.0	Skills and tools to assess potential risks and liabilities		65.7	Documenting social impacts of work
37.1	Exposure to a wide range of career paths		65.7	Analyzing socio-economic conditions
28.6	Documenting social impacts of work		62.9	Skills and tools to assess potential risks and liabilities
17.1	Estate planning for artists		51.4	Understanding studies and reports
17.1	Understanding studies and reports		42.9	Health insurance
14.3	Health insurance		42.9	Estate planning for artists
11.4	Property insurance		40.0	Property insurance
2.9	Retirement insurance		14.3	Retirement insurance

Mapping the MEA Program

The Foundation has pursued a sustained policy of expanding the MEA program for the purpose of seeding professional practices training centers throughout the country and promoting the widespread adoption of such training. Findings of this project clearly indicate that this policy has resulted in significant national expansion and reach of the program, in terms of the number of grantees, trainings sites, and artists served. In addition, approximately one-third of artists responding to the survey also teach professional practices training, so it is reasonable to assume that the "seeding" function is taking hold among artists themselves, in addition to the universities and organizations where they teach.
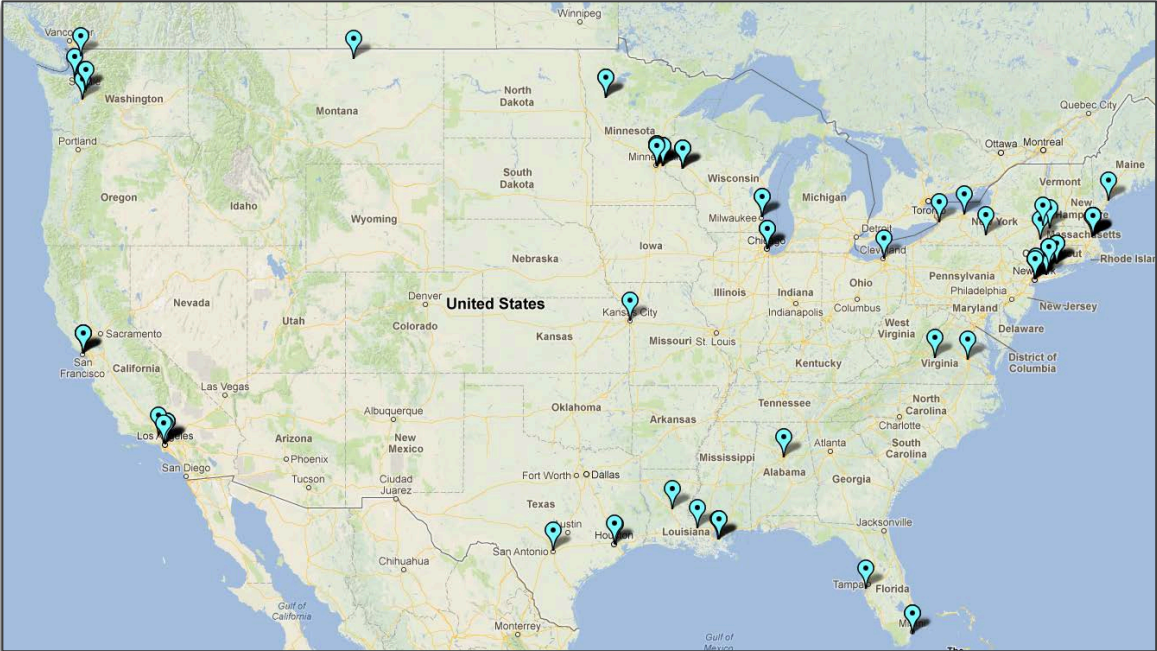
MEA Training Sites

MEA trainings have expanded substantially in the eleven years of the program. The number of training sites in 2003 was 12 (heavily clustered in the mid-Atlantic corridor); in 2008 it was 109 and in 2012 it was 252 (a non-cumulative count). The geographic reach has also expanded nationally. The following maps show the locations of training sites in the three benchmark years. Note that some grantees have multiple training locations (e.g., Creative Capital, New York Foundation for the Arts, Springboard for the Arts).

2003 MEA Training Sites (12 locations)

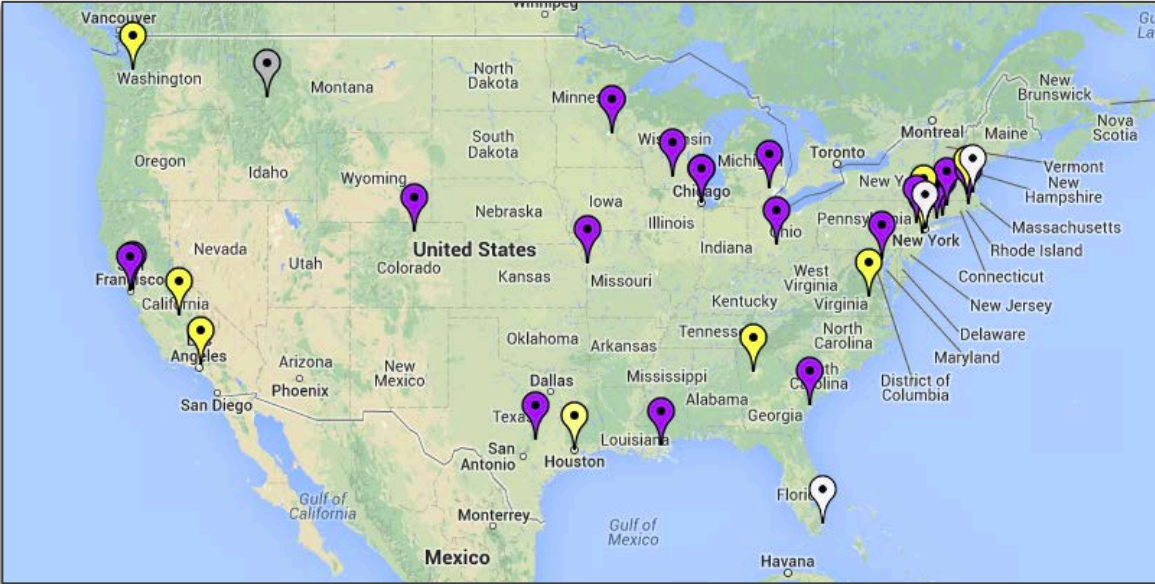## 2008 MEA Training Sites (109 locations)

2012 MEA Training Sites (252 locations)

The following map shows the location of all MEA grantees (current, past, future and those with grants that are ending).

2012 MEA Grantees (34)


= CURRENT GRANTEES

= PAST GRANTEES

= FUTURE GRANTEE

= GRANT ENDING

At time of survey

Growth in Training Sites

The Foundation's sustained investment has had a cumulative impact on the amount of professional practices training. The Foundation's total grant funding for MEA has approximately doubled during the 11 years of the program, from $408,000 to $802,500. During that same time, training sites have risen from 12 to 252. The following chart shows the growth in the number of MEA training sites and the Foundation's dollar investment, between 2003 and 2012.

MEA Training Sites Versus Foundation Investment
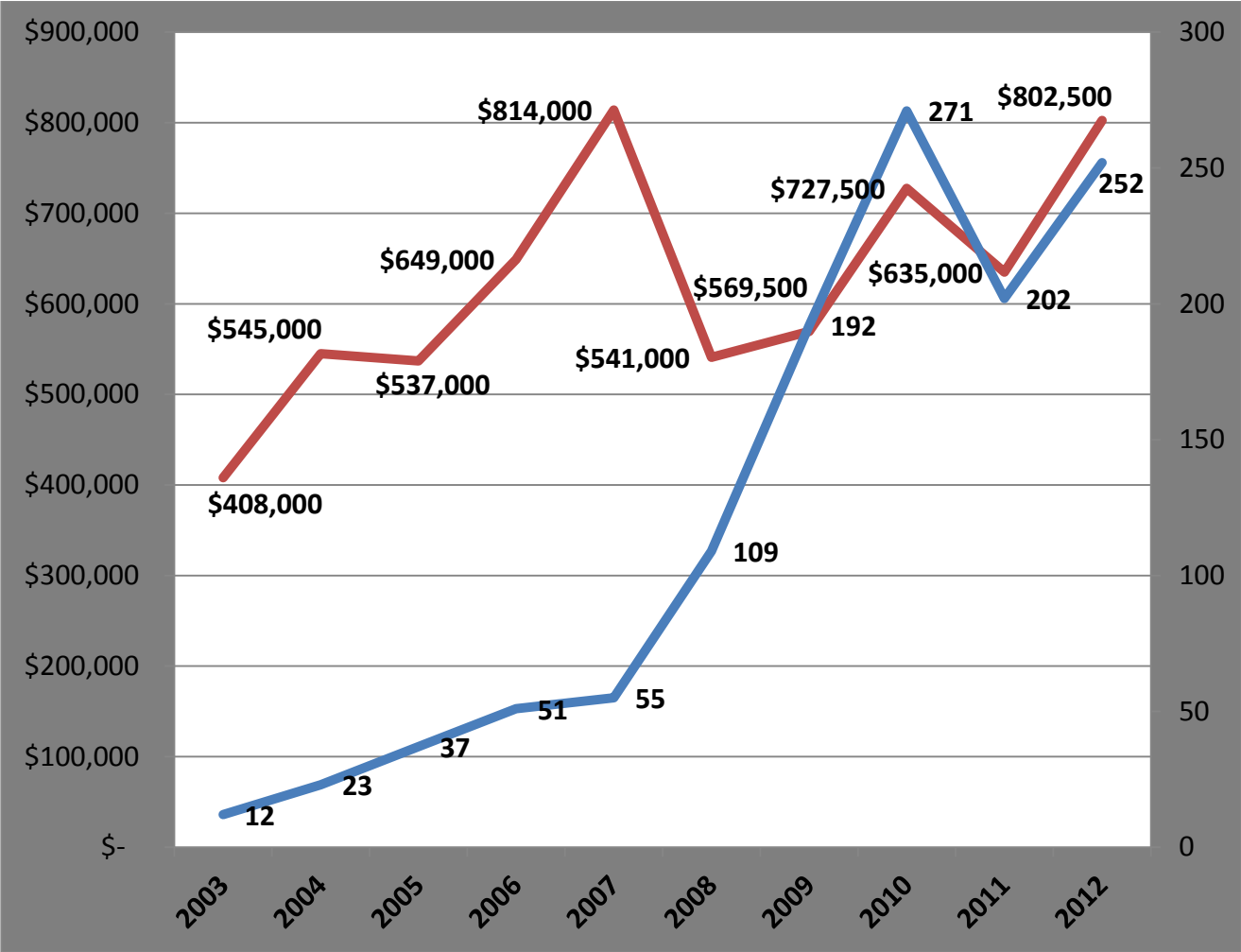
MEA Artists

There are an estimated 18,000 artists who have taken professional practices training funded by the MEA Program in the past eleven years. The artists' survey conducted for this assessment yielded 2,160 artists respondents. Virtually all have taken trainings provided by MEA grantees but potentially in a course or workshop funded through other means.

The following map shows the scale and geographic reach of artists responding to the survey. Each blue flag represents one zip code and many zip codes have multiple respondents. Each yellow flag represents a grantee location. Artists are from virtually all regions of the United States. Only two states, Hawai'i and Arkansas, are not represented among either grantees or respondents to the survey. There are a few international respondents, though not all international respondents are shown on this map.

Artists' Survey Respondents (2,160)

Focus Group Findings

Five artist focus groups were conducted following the artists' survey analysis. Two focus groups were conducted through a web-based video conferencing service and included artists from across the country. Two focus groups were conducted in Boston, MA and one in Kansas City, MO. Participants in four of the focus groups were alumni of at least one professional practices training program presented by a MEA grantee. The fifth focus group was conducted with a group of 17 African-American artists in Roxbury, MA through the assistance of Discover Roxbury, a community development agency that has a specific program (ArtRox) to support and encourage artists in Roxbury.

The participating artists were probed on a set of questions intended to clarify findings in the survey. These questions included:

- What types of professional practices training would be valuable to the artists now or in the near future building on or embellishing past participation? (E.g., refresher course, niche courses, help desks, one-on-one coaching, peer coaching, online reference materials, etc.]

- What kinds of distance learning would work for the artists? Would they participate in distance learning?

- What is the interest among the artists in receiving coaching? What is their understanding of coaching? What methods of delivery would be appropriate (one-on-one, peer, on-line, by phone, etc.)

- The survey results indicated approximately one-third of artists reported feeling satisfied with their careers. What contributes to a sense of satisfaction in your career? What are the factors to satisfaction in their careers?

- What contributes to a sense of confidence in navigating careers for artists?

- The survey results reflected significant differences for age. How do your age and stage of career affect you? How could assistance of any kind better meet your needs at your age and stage of career?

In addition, in each focus group the issue of lack of diversity in training programs was discussed.

Overall, focus group findings supported the survey findings, and the group discussions provided an opportunity to explore specific issues on the continuum of learning, access/diversity, and career satisfaction and confidence.

Continuum of Learning

- Artists in all focus groups articulated the need for some form of follow-up support for their participation in one or more professional practices training programs. The preferred form of this support varied widely, but generally includes coaching, mentoring (specifically expressed by younger artists), and access to deeper information on specific topics (such as marketing, web-based sales, specific technologies).

- A strong theme expressed was the need for follow-up support including services/assistance of an 'outside' expert that would help the individual artist integrate and utilize what they have learned. As stated by one artist" "I need someone to push me and hold me accountable for my own success."

- Online-based systems are seen as a primary delivery tool for topic based learning. This was strongly supported as an 'on-demand' need that allows for the vagaries of daily schedules. As one artist said: "I have two small children. My hours in the studio are limited and focused and surrounded *by* the schedules of daily life. It seems that 2 or 3 in the morning is the only time I have to go online and pay attention to these issues. It needs to be there when I want it and have the time. I can't fit into regularly scheduled sessions."

- Coaching is seen as a highly desired support system, whether through peer or professional coaching. Strong preferences were expressed for one-on-one, in-person interaction. Two contributing themes emerged. One related to building trust and a sense that "this person knows me and knows my work." and another related to the need for human interaction out of the studio - removing the artist from isolation. Comments included: "How can I trust anyone to push me if they haven't been to my studio, observed my work and understand my process? If that doesn't happen at the beginning I would have a hard time feeling comfortable 'baring' my business soul." Another artist commented, "I live in a hermetically sealed world. Having the opportunity to be pulled out of that world and challenged on how to be more successful would be incredibly valuable."

There were distinct differences, primarily by age, in the willingness to utilize web-based tools for coaching and mentorship. Younger artists indicated an expectation the web is the primary delivery system. Older artists expressed significant concerns around using technology they were not necessarily comfortable with, and emphasized that building trust required in-person interaction. The older artists however did express that, once trust was established, they would be more comfortable working with a coach through telephone discussions and/or web-based technology.

Career Satisfaction

When asked about career satisfaction, artists in the focus groups indicated that several factors contribute to satisfaction. There is not a direct correlation to financial success, though for several participants satisfaction is blurred by the demands of multiple jobs and the demands of family. Feedback was primarily centered on the creative/process aspects of their career. Specific comments when asked "what contributes to your sense of satisfaction" included:

- "No one in a creative field is ever satisfied! It's always about that next big thing. Striving and wanting more is part of the work/field."

- "I need to feed my work constantly with new ideas. I'm satisfied when I feel that I've mastered a technique and can put it to good use. For me it is about shutting out the world, focusing and exploring. But if I am frustrated, I am not satisfied."

While this is the primary theme around satisfaction, there were several comments related to managing life-demands affecting a sense of satisfaction.

- "I manage to do 15 things every day. And my time in the studio is only one of those items to be checked off. So I am exhausted at the end of day and it is hard to feel a sense of satisfaction when it just becomes about managing the day to day."

- "It is hard to focus at times when I teach for four hours and then have a few hours in the studio before moving on to something else that is necessary. I suppose I would be more satisfied if I was only in the studio and didn't have to hold another job. But then again, I suppose that wouldn't be satisfying either."

- Another prominent theme around satisfaction is the general sense that. "Artists still are not appreciated in our society." Comments ranged from, "People assume I am not successful and that I am starving because I have a studio practice. Its ludicrous!" to "Why didn't they bring back the WPA when the recession hit!"

- "Some of it is environmental. Success in our culture is not often about engaging in creative ideas; rather, the measures are financial or conventional career success. The creative aspect of human beings is undervalued. I have great satisfaction but external factors, politics, social and economic systems are a problem."

- "I'm satisfied when I'm taken seriously. Not just when my work sells, but when others interact with my work and are ready to engage in a debate on the ideas inherent in my work."

Career Confidence

Confidence in navigating a career is distinct from a sense of satisfaction. When asked what would contribute to having a greater sense of confidence participants focused on access to information, resources and expertise.

- "Understanding what is necessary to be successful. Having the knowledge and skills to do what we need to do."

- "I have greater confidence when I accomplish goals that I set for myself. It gives you confidence to keep going. Accomplishment leads to confidence! The workshop I attended was a huge help in focusing on outlining my career goals. It provided a way to measure my own sense of success."

- "Striving for a goal gives you confidence. I've also found that networking with others is important. Seeing other people doing what you'd like to do and seeing what it looks like makes it less intimidating. Also that there are lots of ways to do your work. There are different models to make money. Knowing there are options is helpful."

- "It would be helpful to have a national database of people like accountants who specialize or understand artists, and treat them respectfully, seriously. Connections with professional services who 'understand.'"

- "Artists need a translation function. To avoid the condescension, having access to people or programs who can interpret the demands of operating a business for artists is really important. But they have to understand the particulars of OUR business."

Diversity

As indicated in the analysis of the artists' survey, the overwhelming majority of respondents are White, female and older. There was moderate representation from diverse artists who identify (in particular) as Asian, African American, Latino/Hispanic or Native American. This was a specific area explored in the focus groups, focusing on what issues contribute to a lack of diversity in participation in professional practices training. The most significant themes to emerge include lack of knowledge of training opportunities and a lack of resources to participate. In addition, some suggested that the challenge for those offering training was to create relationships in their community that would reduce barriers to accessibility. As indicated above, one focus group was conducted specifically with artists in Roxbury, Massachusetts. Seventeen artists participated in the discussion. The majority of the group were African American but included Latino artists as well. It is notable that as a result of this particular focus group, which was made possible when the grantee partnered with ArtRox, a community-based organization, that the two organizations are now partnering to bring professional practices training *directly* into the Roxbury community. The simple act of convening the focus group yielded a new relationship and commitment to new access to training.

Themes that emerged in this session and were echoed across all focus groups include:

- "There just isn't any information directed to us, in our community, where we live. And while I am vaguely aware of programs that are out there, they are inaccessible to me—geographically and financially. They just don't seem to be aimed at me."

- "I'm old-fashioned. I don't use a smart phone and I don't really go online. So if they come to where I am and let me know about it, I'll be there."

- "A lot of Latino and African American artists feel outside the system. You get stuck in the mode of being a victim and isolate yourself in your own communities. A lot of our shows were for ourselves. African Americans showed up for African American shows. You have to feel your artistic practice is valued. But it is hard to break down those barriers. My studio is in this community and folks don't want to cross the line."

- "Transportation is a huge issue. The workshops are in places that serve a majority community but not a minority community. What about bringing these programs to where we live?"

Participating Grantees

A total of 34 current and past MEA grantees participated in the assessment.

Artist INC

Artist Trust

Arts & Business Council of Greater Boston

Arts Council of Greater New Haven

Arts Council of New Orleans

Arts Incubator of the Rockies

ArtServe Michigan

California College of the Arts

California Institute of the Arts

Cannonball (formerly LegalArt)

Chicago Artists' Coalition

College Art Association

Columbia University

Creative Capital

Cultural Alliance of Fairfield County

DiverseWorks

Maryland Institute College of Art

Montana Arts Council

New York Foundation for the Arts

Ohio State University

Parsons the New School for Design

Pratt Institute

Rhode Island School of Design

San Francisco Art Institute

Savannah College of Art and Design

School of the Art Institute of Chicago

School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

Side Street Projects

Springboard for the Arts

The Arts Company / Artists in Context

The Ohio State University

University of Texas at Austin

University of Wisconsin-Madison Art Department

Virginia Commonwealth University School of the Arts

MEA Logic Model

Marketplace Empowerment for Artists:: LOGIC MODEL

SITUATION	INPUTS	ACTIVITIES	OUTPUTS
To empower visual artists with tools to help them succeed in artistic endeavors without being strictly reliant on patrons, grants or federal funding.	Grantees' capacities (educational, reach into artist communities) EHTF funding/grants and imprimatur EHTF funding/grants and imprimatur Visual artists (students) Networks/connections among artists Trainers	Professional practice training classes (trainers, curricula). Classes last from one day to 7 months. Topics include: Career Planning Business and Financial Planning Insurance/Risk Management Legal Issues Project Management Marketing Networking Ethics Research and Development Space Annual convening of grantees Peer networking among artists	Artists complete their training classes Trainers refine curricula Artists' networks evolve Grantees meet and share information Proliferation of professional practices training Grantees develop relationships that enhance their effectiveness New resources are made available to artists on an informal basis

OUTCOMES

Knowledge	Indicators	Long-Term Impact
Artists: Are empowered to be self-reliant in their careers	Artists:	Professional practices training is an accepted part of artists' training
Continue art-making or creative practice (don't stop art-making)	Define and progress towards individual career goals;	All artists have access to professional practices training (lack of barriers)
Possess effective career skills	Continue art-making or creative practice;	All artists understand the value of professional practices training
Achieve overall career satisfaction	Report confidence in navigating their careers;	All universities include professional practices training in their artist training programs
Have effective networks	Report satisfaction with their careers; report having an effective (large) network;	All artists understand that they can be self-reliant
Understand their need for professional practices training	Report value from MEA professional practices training	All artists have access to information to make career choices
Enabled to identify and learn additional business skills as needed	Artists teach professional practices, participate in field-building activities	All artists are empowered to define and pursue their own individual career success
Empowered to self-direct the focus and timing of their careers	Artists' report awareness and ability to self-direct their careers	All artists have needed small business skills, or know how to gain them
Better able to navigate career changes	Artists successfully identify and handle career change	There is an effective network of trainers
		There are more publications and other training resources available
		Art world embraces a range of career success, including studio/gallery model, community-focused art-making, and hybrid careers