



LA COUNTY ARTS REPORT

VOLUNTEERS

IN NONPROFIT ARTS ORGANIZATIONS IN LA COUNTY

ANALYSIS OF DATA FROM THE CULTURAL DATA PROJECT

NOVEMBER 2015

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT REQUIRES A SIGNIFICANT INVESTMENT OF TIME AND RESOURCES FOR MOST NONPROFITS. WHILE VOLUNTEERS ARE TRADITIONALLY TREATED AS A SOURCE OF LABOR, THEY MIGHT ALSO BE CONSIDERED PART OF THE ORGANIZATION'S PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY.

Volunteer labor is at the heart of what makes nonprofits run. Managing those volunteers is one of a nonprofit's most significant tasks. Data reported by arts nonprofits in LA County to the Cultural Data Project (CDP) suggests this is as true in the arts as in other nonprofit sectors. Among arts nonprofits, volunteers take on responsibilities as artists, fundraisers, program staff or they may provide other general support.

Of those arts nonprofits that report to the CDP, 83 percent had volunteers working for them in 2012. A total of 35,076 volunteers gave 5.8 million hours of work that year. Nearly 74 percent of organizations with volunteers reported having more

volunteers than paid staff. In addition to those volunteers, 5,185 board members gave their time to arts nonprofits in LA County that year.

Multidisciplinary organizations used the largest number of volunteers in 2012, while theatre organizations used the largest number of volunteer hours.

Visual arts organizations had the largest number of average hours per volunteer.

Across all disciplines, the largest share of volunteers did program work, and the second largest share was artists.

Managing all those volunteers and their time were staff (and sometimes volunteers)

at 386 arts nonprofits across LA County. Volunteer management constitutes a significant investment of time and resources for nonprofit organizations. From recruitment and screening to scheduling and recognition, most nonprofits treat their volunteers as a valued source of labor, a tool that helps them achieve their mission.

In the arts, however, people often volunteer because they want to participate in the creation of an art, or to have special access to the artists and their artworks. As such, their motivations are very similar to those of visitors and audience members. In arts nonprofits, volunteer work may not simply be a tool for achieving mission, but may actually be fulfillment of the mission itself. Arts nonprofits should consider integrating their volunteers into their public engagement plan. This has the potential to open up new

roles and new opportunities for both the volunteer and the organization.

This study begins by defining the term “volunteer,” investigating the complexity of volunteers’ varied motivations, exploring different ways to understand the value of volunteering, and examining the special role of artist volunteers in arts nonprofits. It concludes with a series of recommendations that may help arts nonprofits improve their volunteer management and think of their volunteers in a whole new light.

The data presented here – as well as our preceding [salaries](#) and [benefits](#) studies – should be seen not as a definitive answer to questions about labor and compensation in local arts nonprofits, but as a starting point for conversations about the status of the nonprofit arts ecology in LA County.

INTRODUCTION

THIS STUDY EXPLORES VOLUNTEERING IN NONPROFIT ARTS ORGANIZATIONS IN LA COUNTY. HOW MANY ARE THERE, AND WHAT IS THEIR ROLE?

Volunteer management constitutes a major investment of time and resources for any nonprofit, including those in the arts. For volunteers, motivations are as complex as the individuals who give their time. The capacity of nonprofits to manage their volunteers can vary significantly from one organization to the next.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, one quarter of all Americans – nearly 63 million people – did some kind of volunteer work in 2014,¹ work that went unpaid (other than having expenses covered) for an organization. It includes everything from long-term, regular

volunteering – sometimes referred to as “career volunteering”² – to one-time events lasting only a few hours. The 2014 figure was a slight decline from the national volunteer rate of 26.3 percent in 2010.

For the largest share of volunteers, (33.3 percent) the primary type of organization they volunteered with was a religious organization. For another quarter of these volunteers, the main type of organization was educational or youth service. By comparison, 3.9 percent (approximately 2.4 million people in the U.S.) named a “sport, hobby, cultural or arts” organization as their main place of volunteering.

This study explores volunteering in non-profit arts organizations in LA County using data from the Cultural Data Project (CDP). The CDP provides data on volunteering, reported by arts nonprofits across the county (see the **Methods** section for more details). Current research on volunteering in nonprofits, is presented in the **Context** section, and it suggests new ways of

thinking about volunteers, particularly in arts nonprofits. The **Findings** section presents how many volunteers are doing what categories of work in what types of arts nonprofits in LA County. The **Conclusion** offers a series of recommendations to help arts nonprofits manage their volunteers more effectively.

CONTEXT

WHAT IS VOLUNTEERING? WHY DO PEOPLE VOLUNTEER? WHAT IS THE VALUE OF VOLUNTEER WORK?

WHAT IS VOLUNTEERING?

While the concept of volunteering is deeply embedded in American culture, defining the term and measuring its impact can be difficult. Different studies ask about volunteering in different ways, and come to vastly different conclusions. For example, one survey by the Bureau of Labor Statistics found that 25 percent of all people in the U.S. do some kind of volunteer work. By comparison, an international survey conducted by Gallup found 113 million Americans – 44 percent of the population – reported volunteering.³

In a very different survey conducted for The James Irvine Foundation, 30 percent of Californians reported volunteering in some way specifically to help an arts or cultural

organization.⁴ In their survey, African Americans reported volunteering or doing charity work for a cultural or arts organization at higher rates (41 percent) than Asian Americans (34 percent), Whites (32 percent) or Latinos (24 percent).

But what is volunteering, exactly? A parent driving his or her child to band practice every week is not considered to be volunteering, nor is it considered volunteering when that parent takes the child's friends to band practice as well. However, an unrelated person who picks up several children on behalf of a nonprofit organization and takes them to that same band practice, on a regular basis or even just once, would likely be called a volunteer.

Volunteering includes a wide range of tasks and activities that may or may not take place on site at the arts organization and may take place at a variety of times. It may be highly structured and formalized, or it may be very loose and ad hoc. One theatre volunteer might spend hours in rehearsals and performances on stage, while another sews and fits costumes backstage, and yet another creates a website or flyer for the theatre without ever leaving home. In each of these cases, the volunteer has an opportunity to give their “time, talent, voice or money”⁵ to something they support.

One study that set out to come up with a definition of “volunteer” that would reflect a common understanding of the term identified four dimensions.⁶ The more that the volunteer’s work reflects these four qualities, the more it is considered to be “volunteering”:

- **Free choice** – the volunteer freely chooses to do the work and is uncoerced
- **Remuneration** – the volunteer receives little or no financial reward for the work
- **Structure** – the work is structured in some way
- **Intended beneficiaries** – the beneficiaries are not closely connected to the volunteer.

WHY DO PEOPLE VOLUNTEER?

Individuals volunteer for many reasons, from the personal to the professional. Nonprofits with a wide range of tasks and activities for volunteers to do may assess incoming volunteers for skills, in order to make the best match possible. Matching volunteers for both skills and motivations can lead to a more successful experience for both the organization and the volunteer.⁷ It may ensure a longer-term commitment by the volunteer. Some assess new volunteers for their motivations, using tools such as the Volunteer Functions Inventory [see **Box 1**].⁸ Organizations working with vulnerable populations commonly screen their volunteers and conduct background checks, though this is recommended as a best practice for all nonprofits.⁹ However, many organizations do not assess volunteers, either because their volunteer opportunities are limited, or because they lack the capacity to engage in a detailed assessment.

A volunteer’s motivations can change over time as the individual becomes increasingly skilled and knowledgeable in his or her tasks and about the organization, then begins to realize the limitations of the volunteer role. One study described volunteers as moving from a **romantic**

idealism to **limited** idealism to **sober** idealism as they better understood their roles, responsibilities and opportunities.¹⁰ Understanding these stages and transitions can help an organization keep volunteers engaged as their motivations evolve over time.

While each volunteer may be motivated by a mix of factors, for most people one or two predominate. When administering the VFI to museum volunteers in Australia, one study found they could be sorted into three sub-groups, based on their mix of motivations: **Enthusiasts** volunteered because of their interest in the content or subject matter; **Opportunists** used volunteering to advance professionally; and **Enhancers** volunteered in order to improve their personal lives.¹¹

Depending on their motivations, volunteering may be “serious leisure” for some people, as they systematically engage with an activity that requires specialized skills or knowledge, and is substantial, meaningful and fulfilling.¹² Several studies in the cultural sector have found that museum **volunteers** have motivations similar to those of museum **visitors**, in terms of the content or subject of the museum, and in their interest in

Box 1: Volunteer Functions Inventory (VFI)

One of the most well-established measurement tools for understanding volunteer motivations is the Volunteer Functions Inventory (VFI). The reliability and validity of this tool has been tested in a variety of circumstances. The VFI identifies six key functions – or motivations – for volunteering:

Values – expressing altruistic and humanitarian values

Understanding – having new learning experiences and the chance to exercise knowledge, skills and abilities that might otherwise go unpracticed

Social – being with one’s friends or engaging in an activity viewed favorably by important others

Career – gaining professional benefits

Protective – protecting the ego from negative features of the self, such as reducing guilt over being more fortunate than others

Enhancement – striving for personal improvement

learning more. In particular, visitors who have developed deep knowledge of the subject of the museum (referred to as “literary pilgrims” in one UK study) very

often feel the same deep connections to the collection or site that volunteers do.¹³ Volunteers are different, however, in that they are also interested in helping others to learn.¹⁴

This has led to an emerging theory that some volunteers in the arts and cultural sector – especially those motivated by such factors as having special access to the collection or developing their own personal knowledge – should be considered a special type of visitor or audience member.¹⁵ This theory is complementary to treating volunteers as a source of labor, and it suggests other models for managing volunteers beyond the employment model. In practice, this could extend into arts organizations integrating volunteers into their public engagement plan. While it might be easiest to imagine this for artist volunteers, it would be equally important to think about the motivations of all kinds of volunteers, including docents, ushers, fundraisers, receptionists, web designers and social media interns. This new lens for thinking about volunteers has the potential to make significant changes in volunteer management practices in arts organizations.

WHAT IS THE VALUE OF VOLUNTEER WORK?

In the U.S., volunteering is generally seen as an economic activity, a way for a nonprofit organization to do its work and achieve its goals through unpaid labor. Each year, for example, the Independent Sector calculates an hourly estimate of the value of volunteer time, using data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The Independent Sector calculated the value of volunteering at \$23.07 per hour nationally in 2014, and \$26.87 per hour in California.¹⁶

This “replacement cost” approach is based on the assumption that a volunteer’s work is equal to that of a paid employee. It does not take into account the costs of managing volunteers – which often do not appear as line items in nonprofit budgets – such as recruitment, screening, training and recognition.¹⁷ Volunteer costs such as work spaces and insurance associated with managing volunteers are often subsumed into general overhead. (See **Box 2** for more on ways to calculate the dollar value of volunteer time.)

Volunteers may not have the same formal training or experience of paid employees. This may make the real value of their labor less than that of a skilled employee doing the same work. One alternative is to treat

Box 2: Calculating the value of volunteer time

Knowing the dollar value of volunteer labor can help nonprofits in their annual reports, grant proposals and publicity materials. Certain types of volunteer time can be included as in-kind contributions in some but not all financial statements.

Several approaches and resources are available to help nonprofits calculate that value.

The replacement cost approach is the simplest, though it assumes the volunteer has the same skills as a paid employee and excludes management costs. This could be based on median hourly wage for LA County overall, or individualized by wages for the occupation most like the work being done by the volunteer. Wage data is available from the U.S. Department of Labor's [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#).

For more precise measurement, the costs of volunteer management should be subtracted from the value of that labor.

For even more sophisticated measurement, the Canadian Centre for Philanthropy has a detailed guide¹⁸ that offers eight different ways to measure the value of volunteer labor, falling into three main categories:

- **Human resource productivity**
- **Volunteer program efficiency**
- **Community support**

No matter what approach is used, calculating the value of volunteer time begins with one challenging but necessary first step: the consistent tracking of volunteer hours. Seek professional guidance when considering whether to include the value of those hours on any financial documents.

volunteers as complements to paid workers, not as replacements.¹⁹ In interviews with leaders of nonprofit organizations with large, well-respected volunteer programs, the Grantmaker Forum on Community and National Service found these executives rated the value of their volunteers as anywhere between 42 cents per hour to \$410 per hour.²⁰ These leaders also reported that today's volunteers generally have greater skills to share but less time available to share them.

While the value of volunteering is often associated with individual organizations, it can also be viewed from a societal perspective. Volunteerism can serve as a channel for civic engagement, helping to raise the voices and enhance participation of a range of groups at all levels in a community, while also holding individuals and organizations with power and resources accountable for how they use them.²¹

THE ROLE OF ARTISTS AS VOLUNTEERS IN ARTS NONPROFITS

Emerging work in the volunteer sector writ large has begun to emphasize the importance of putting volunteers and volunteering at the center of a nonprofit's work, treating it as a core strategic function, rather than an add-on or supplement to the "real work" of the organization.²² For many arts nonprofits this is already true, as many utilize volunteer artists to create, perform and present works of art.

While artists play this special role as volunteers in arts organizations, that role is not without controversy. Some artists use nonprofit volunteer work as a place to hone their craft and build their professional resume, while others give their labor to establish nonprofits with the goal of bringing art to underserved communities.

When they volunteer, artists are engaged in their vocation. As such, the roles of artist/volunteer/visitor or audience member are often intermingled.

The 2015 debate over whether Actors Equity should create a minimum hourly wage for actors working in 99-seat theatres in LA²³ raised larger questions about artists who provide their labor for free and whether they ought to be paid or be considered volunteers. Easy availability of free and low-cost music, books and video online have put downward pressure on earnings for musicians, authors, actors, painters, dancers and others seeking to make a living as artists. At times the debate has turned to whether artists should be paid for their work at all.²⁴ The questions of how artists should be paid and how they can make a living in the internet era are complicated and as yet unresolved.

METHODS

THIS STUDY ANALYZES DATA ON VOLUNTEERS IN LA COUNTY ARTS NONPROFITS FROM THE CULTURAL DATA PROJECT.

This study is based on data about volunteers reported to the Cultural Data Project (CDP) for the years 2007-2012. CDP is a web-based data system utilized by arts and culture grantmakers in fourteen states and the District of Columbia. Today, 37 public and private grantmakers in California require some or all of their arts and culture grantees to submit data to the CDP. Most CDP data is financial, though it includes information about services provided, numbers of program participants, staffing and volunteers as well. Unless otherwise noted, all data in this report is from arts nonprofits as they reported it to the CDP.

In 2009, the LA County Arts Commission, in collaboration with other public and private funders in California, began requiring

grantees to submit their data to CDP as part of their grant application process. When applicants complete the CDP, they are required to provide at least three years of historical information.

For this report, statewide data on all California organizations that had completed the CDP as of February 2015 were accessed. Data for years prior to 2007 were removed because the number of records was disproportionately small. 2013 data was also removed because full CDP review of that year's data was not yet complete. Government agencies were removed from the dataset, leaving only nonprofit organizations. This dataset includes 501(c)3 nonprofit organizations as well as smaller unincorporated organizations that are fiscally sponsored.

Our prior reports in this series on [Salaries](#) and [Benefits](#) reported on data from 2007 through 2011. By the time this new dataset was drawn, 2012 data were adequately complete to include it. Some data from prior

years may have been updated in the interim, so figures in this report are not a perfect match for the prior reports. The value of adding an additional year of data outweighs the cost of imperfect comparisons.

Box 3: Do these findings represent all arts nonprofits in LA County?

The CDP dataset does not constitute a random sample of all arts organizations, nor was it designed to. Nonetheless, it provides some of the richest data available at this level of analysis. The data analyzed here come from a five year unduplicated count of 650 arts nonprofits in LA County and 1,963 statewide.

Prior research has found that CDP data overrepresent larger nonprofits and some disciplines while underrepresenting smaller nonprofits, some other disciplines as well as certain regions of California. It should not be assumed that findings from this study would

apply to all arts and culture nonprofits in LA County or in California.

The National Center for Charitable Statistics (NCCS) reports there were 3,606 **Arts, Culture and Humanities** nonprofits in LA County in May 2015, and 13,382 statewide.²⁵

This study – as well as our preceding [salaries](#) and [benefits](#) studies – should be seen not as a definitive answer to questions about labor and compensation in local arts nonprofits, but as a starting point for conversations about the status of the nonprofit arts ecology in LA County.

As this report goes to press, the Cultural Data Project is changing its name to DataArts. More information about the transition can be found at <http://www.culturaldata.org>.

FINDINGS

IN 2012, 35,076 VOLUNTEERS WORKED NEARLY SIX MILLION HOURS AT 386 ARTS NONPROFITS IN LA COUNTY.

Among LA County arts nonprofits participating in the CDP, 83 percent (n = 386)²⁶ reported having volunteers in 2012. The total number of volunteers working for those organizations rose by nearly 33 percent from 2007, when 27,065 people volunteered, to 35,076 volunteers in 2012. In 2012, volunteers worked nearly six million hours as artists, fundraisers, general support and program staff. In addition to these volunteers, arts nonprofits reported a total of 5,185 board members in 2012.²⁷

The total number of volunteers and their hours rose despite the fact that the share of arts organizations reporting volunteers declined from 88 percent of all organizations in 2007 to 83 percent in 2012.

CDP instructions define volunteers simply as people who work without compensation.²⁸ Board members are reported separately and not included in volunteer numbers. Full-time volunteers are those who work at least seven hours per day for five days per week on an annual basis, or the equivalent. Part-time volunteers are those who work less. As with employees, volunteers are reported as one of four types: Artists, Fundraising, General and Program (see **Box 4** for a description). Arts organizations also report their paid staff, contractors and interns in these four categories.²⁹

Figure 1 shows how the numbers of volunteers changed over time, broken out by the four types of volunteers reported to

the CDP. **Figure 2** shows those same volunteers by their full-time equivalent (FTE)³⁰ hours.

Box 4: Volunteer types: definitions

The Cultural Data Project asks organizations to report volunteer data according to the following four categories. Some organizations may split an individual’s hours across these categories when reporting these data.

Artists: Volunteers directly performing the mission of the organization such as artists, musicians and dancers. This may include conductors, curators, choreographers, etc., depending on the organization’s classification of these positions.

Fundraising: Volunteers charged with soliciting grants and contributions of money and goods and services from potential donors.

General: Volunteers not specifically associated with a particular program or fundraising activity but which are necessary to the organization’s conduct of those activities and its existence.

Program: Volunteers indirectly performing program-related activities such as program directors, coordinators, instructors, artistic directors, etc.

As seen in both figures, Program volunteers make up the largest share, followed by Artists. General and Fundraising volunteers make up a notably smaller share.

Can the increase in volunteers over time be attributed simply to the increase in

FIG. 1 TOTAL NUMBER OF VOLUNTEERS IN LA COUNTY ARTS NONPROFITS

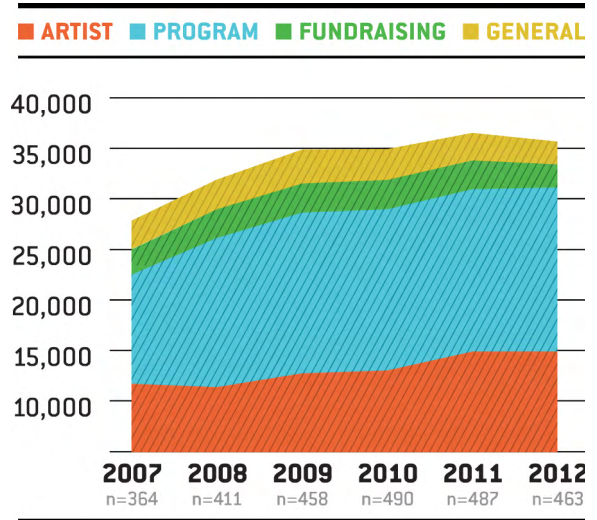
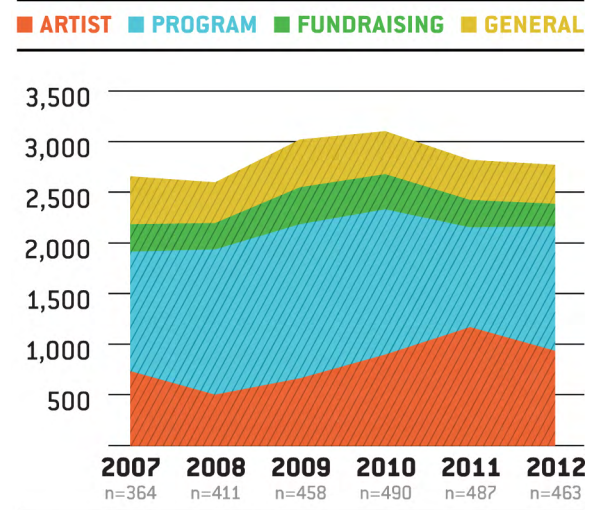


FIG. 2 TOTAL NUMBER OF FULL-TIME EQUIVALENT (FTE) VOLUNTEERS IN LA COUNTY ARTS NONPROFITS



organizations reporting to the CDP? Only in part. The total number of organizations in this dataset also rose by nearly 30 percent from 2007 (n=365) to 2012 (n=463). When a subset made up of only those organizations that reported data for all six years included in this analysis (n=232), the total number of volunteers did increase 30 percent. However, the total number of FTE volunteers actually fell by 19 percent.

Most people volunteered on a part-time basis. In 2012, two percent of all volunteers were full-time. However, this does vary slightly by type, with a slightly larger share of General volunteers doing their work full-time. The average number of hours per part-time volunteer has risen about the same amount as the total number of volunteers, just under 30 percent, from

12 hours in 2007 to 16 hours in 2012. The actual number of hours worked per part-time volunteer is not reported and may vary widely.

Of the 386 arts nonprofits in LA County that did have volunteers in 2012, the range of volunteer utilization was wide, as **Table 1** shows. This table compares figures for full-time volunteers to part-time volunteers, then compares figures for all volunteers to FTE volunteers.

In LA County, nearly 74 percent of arts nonprofits reported having more individual volunteers working for them than individual paid staff in 2012. The number of volunteers is still higher even when calculated by hours: 56 percent of arts nonprofits reported more volunteer FTEs than paid staff FTEs.

TABLE 1: DISTRIBUTION OF VOLUNTEERS IN LA COUNTY ARTS NONPROFITS IN 2012

	AVERAGE NUMBER OF VOLUNTEERS PER ORGANIZATION	MEDIAN NUMBER OF VOLUNTEERS PER ORGANIZATION	TOTAL VOLUNTEERS IN ALL ORGANIZATIONS
FULL-TIME VOLUNTEERS	8.3	2	604
PART-TIME VOLUNTEERS	93.7	32	34,472
TOTAL VOLUNTEERS	90.7	30	35,076
TOTAL FTE VOLUNTEERS	7.2	2	2,775

The ratio of volunteers to paid staff varies by the budget size of the organization (as measured by annual expenses). **Figure 3** breaks this down by budget categories of the LA County Arts Commission’s Organizational Grant Program (OGP).³¹

As Figure 3 shows, smaller organizations as a whole utilize far more volunteer labor as compared to the amount of paid labor they use. However, the average number of volunteers per organization is still greater for larger budget organizations, as can be seen in **Figure 4**.

FIG. 3. RATIO OF FTE VOLUNTEERS TO FTE PAID STAFF, BY BUDGET SIZE, 2012 (n=386)

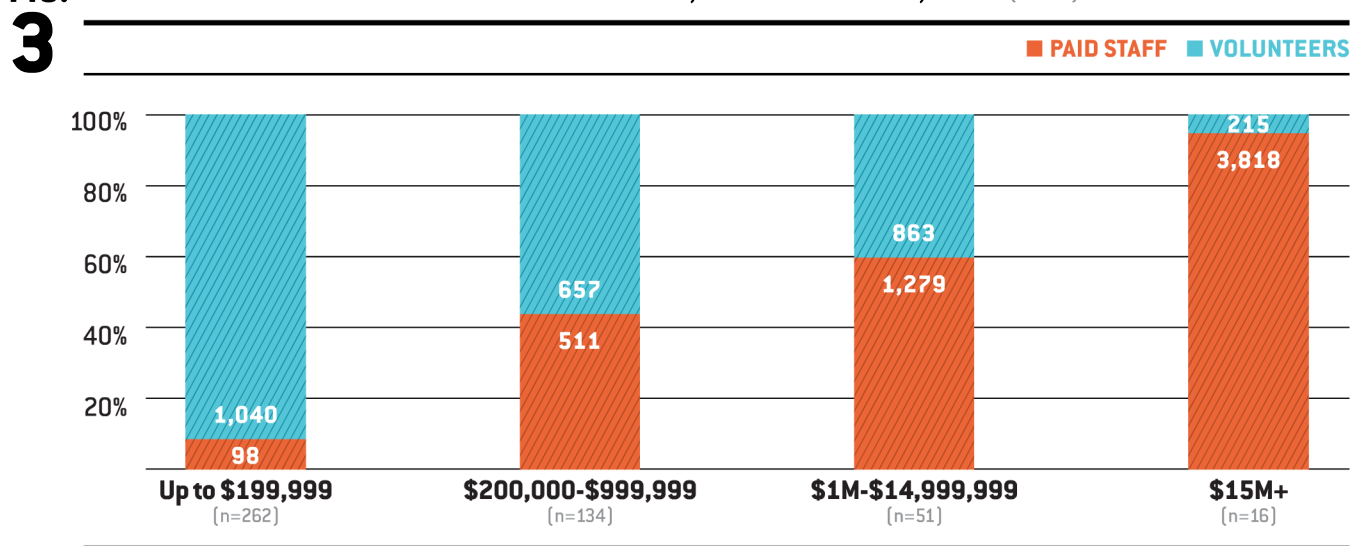
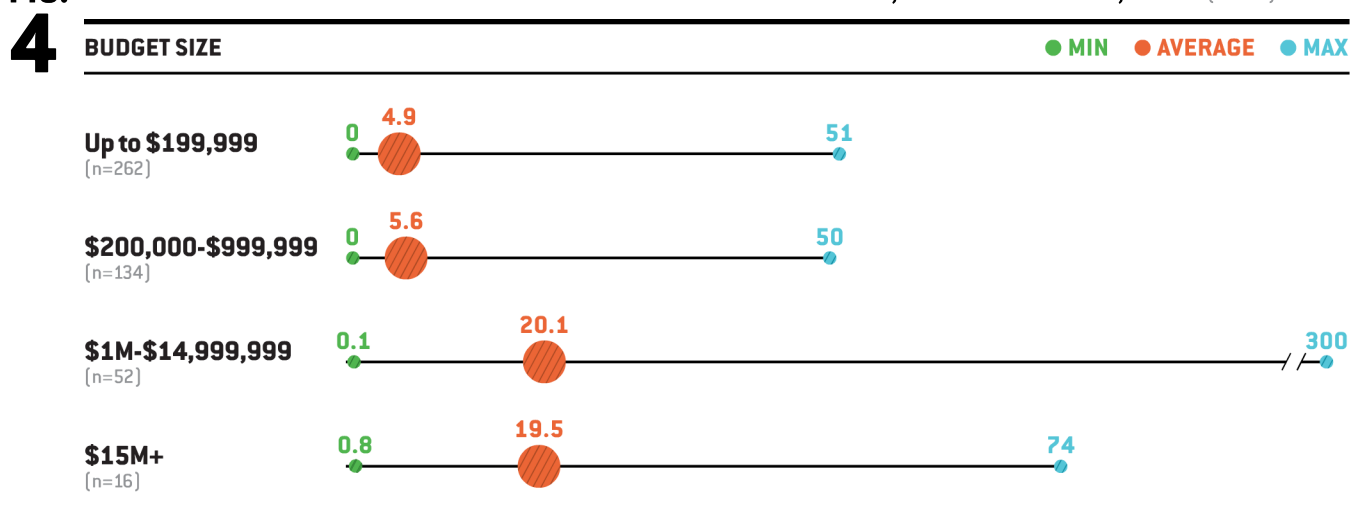


FIG. 4. AVERAGE NUMBER OF FTE VOLUNTEERS PER ARTS NONPROFIT, BY BUDGET SIZE, 2012 (n=386)



In other words, larger organizations utilize many more volunteers on average than smaller organizations do, but paid staff makes up a larger share of their total labor force.

Figure 5 shows the share of LA County arts nonprofits using volunteers by discipline, as well as the total number of FTE volunteers in that discipline in 2012.³² On the high end, 94 percent of Opera/Musical Theatre nonprofits (n = 16) utilized 67 FTE volunteers. By comparison, 70 percent of

Media Arts organizations (n = 20) utilized volunteers, but had nearly twice as many, with 119 FTEs.

The average number of hours worked per volunteer also varies by discipline, as **Table 2** shows. The disciplines with the greatest number of arts nonprofits do not necessarily have the largest number of volunteers. Nor do the disciplines with the greatest number of volunteers have the greatest number of volunteer hours.

FIG. 5 SHARE OF LA COUNTY ARTS NONPROFITS REPORTING TO THE CDP: VOLUNTEERS IN 2012, BY DISCIPLINE ³³ showing total number of organizations per discipline, and total number of FTE volunteers

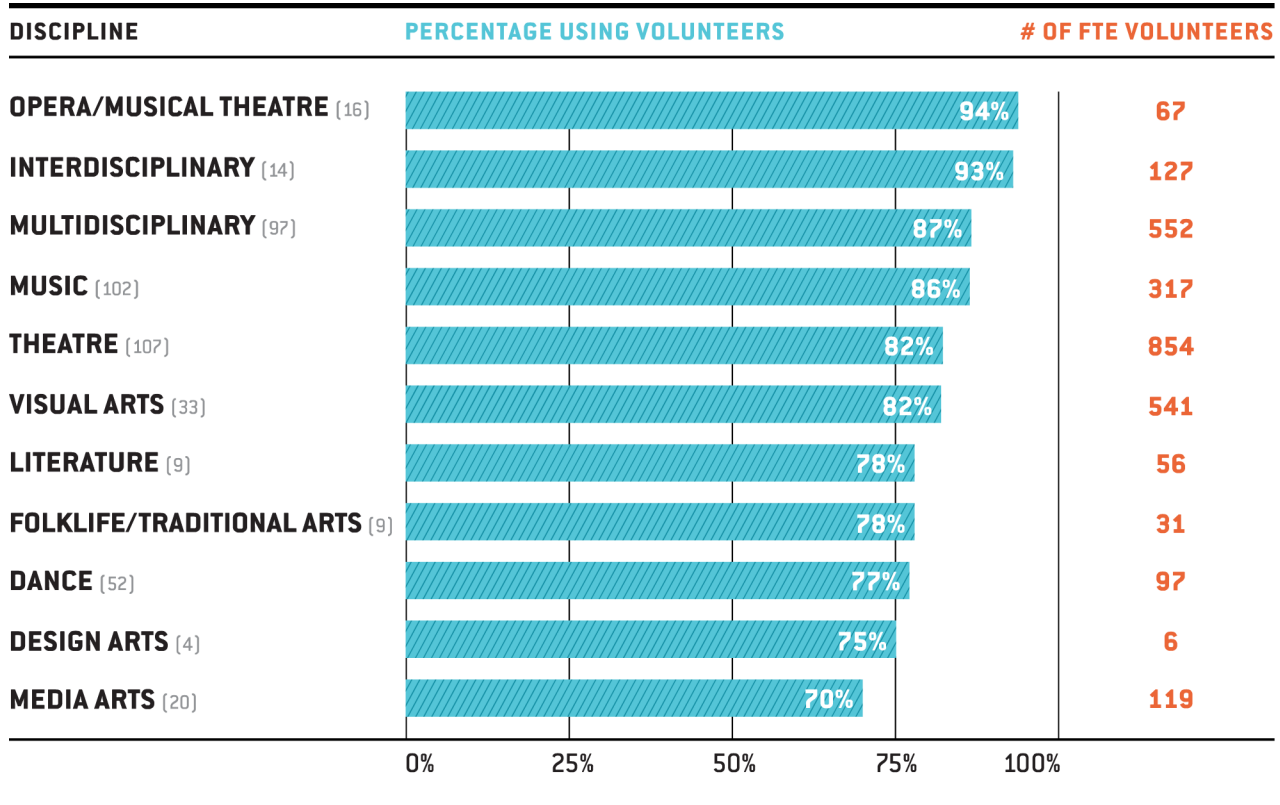


TABLE 2: AVERAGE NUMBER OF HOURS WORKED PER VOLUNTEER, BY DISCIPLINE (2012)

DISCIPLINE	NUMBER OF ORGS WITH VOLUNTEERS	NUMBER OF VOLUNTEERS	AVERAGE HOURS PER VOLUNTEER
VISUAL ARTS	26	2,611	362.8
DESIGN ARTS	3	32	328.1
THEATRE	88	7,025	212.7
FOLKLIFE/TRADITIONAL ARTS	7	356	153.5
MEDIA ARTS	14	1,430	146.1
MUSIC	88	4,137	134.2
INTERDISCIPLINARY	13	1,697	130.8
DANCE	40	1,419	119.8
MULTIDISCIPLINARY	84	9,784	98.7
OPERA/MUSICAL THEATRE	15	1,553	75.6
LITERATURE	7	3,652	26.8

FIG. NO. OF VOLUNTEERS BY THE NO. OF HOURS WORKED, BY DISCIPLINE & SIZE OF DISCIPLINE, 2012

6

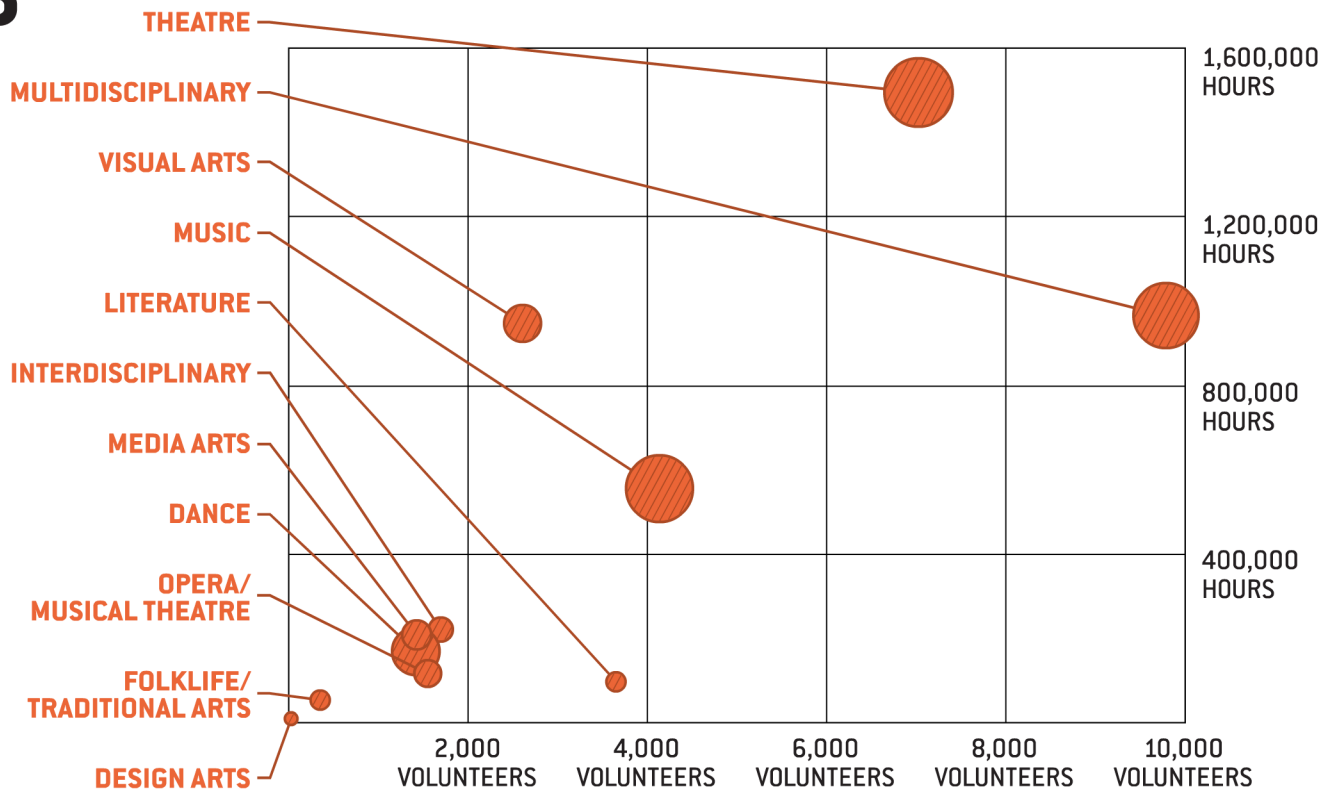


Figure 6 shows the relationship between the number of volunteers, the number of hours they worked and the number of organizations that use volunteering, as those factors broke out by discipline. This shows how those organizations using the **largest number of volunteers** may not have the **largest number of volunteer hours**. The size of the circle represents the share of organizations in that discipline reporting volunteers. For the most part, the more volunteers in a discipline, the more volunteer hours were worked.

As Figure 6 shows, 7,025 volunteers provided the greatest number of hours of labor of all disciplines – nearly 1.5 million hours combined – to 107 Theatre nonprofits. By comparison, 97 Multidisciplinary nonprofits had the largest number of volunteers (9,784), and they worked just under one million hours combined. It is worth noting that Theatre volunteer hours constituted nearly 31 percent of all volunteer hours worked in 2012.

CONCLUSION

VOLUNTEERS ARE AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE LA COUNTY NONPROFIT ARTS ECOLOGY. THEY ALSO HAVE THE POTENTIAL TO PLAY A SPECIAL ROLE AS VOLUNTEERS OR VISITORS IN AN ORGANIZATION'S PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY.

DISCUSSION

Among those arts nonprofits in LA County that report to the CDP, only a few did not report using volunteers, and the number of volunteers has risen since 2007.

Volunteering varies dramatically by the size of the organization and by discipline.

Different types of organizations likely attract different types of people to do a wide variety of tasks. Most volunteers in LA County arts nonprofits are part-time, and they volunteer an average of sixteen hours in a year.

Whether the organization is large or small, volunteer management is a significant task for the organization. Effective management of volunteers requires investment of both time and financial resources.

While most nonprofits consider their volunteers as a highly valued labor pool,

recent research suggests that, depending on their motivations, some volunteers may also be seen as a special type of visitor. The idea of managing volunteers as a type of audience member or visitor may have particular resonance in LA County arts nonprofits. This may be especially true for artists, but, volunteers in program, fundraising and other roles may equally be participating as serious amateurs in the arts field they love. This rise of volunteering in arts nonprofits takes place in an era when artists and arts organizations are actively working to increase and expand their engagement with the public. This includes engagement with nontraditional audiences, engagement with social issues and community needs, and engagement that gives people an opportunity not just to watch art being made but to make art

themselves. Arts nonprofits can see their volunteers not just as a tool that helps them achieve their mission but as part of the mission itself.

In other words, arts nonprofits have not one but three different ways they might view and value their volunteers, and they are not mutually exclusive. A volunteer might be considered (and managed) as

- **A source of labor,**
- **A special type of visitor or audience member, and**
- **Part of the organization's public engagement strategy.**

The lens through which a nonprofit chooses to see its volunteers will have ramifications for volunteer recruitment, and using more than one lens could lead to improved volunteer management. Including volunteers as part of the organization's public engagement strategy could help arts nonprofits expand their reach. This new lens could also have significant ramifications for volunteer management. Managing a workforce is different from managing visitors/audience which is different from engagement work. These three tasks may be done by different people

at larger organizations. In smaller organizations, all these tasks may be done by the same few individuals. Nonetheless, each of these three lenses has a different perspective to offer.

The special role that artists play as volunteers in arts nonprofits deserves careful consideration. Their work does not simply support the mission but often is, itself, the mission of the organization. The question of whether and how artists are paid for their vocation is a complicated one with which arts nonprofits must grapple.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Volunteering is deeply embedded in the ecology of arts nonprofits in LA County. Recruitment and management of those volunteers takes time and money, but the value to the organization can be significant, whether they are seen as labor, as visitors and audience members, or as a key part of the organization's public engagement strategy. Capacity building programs such as the [CaliforniaVolunteers Service Enterprise Initiative](#) (CVSEI) are available to help nonprofits learn how to more effectively leverage volunteers across the organization. Below are recommendations to help arts nonprofits make the most of this valuable resource.

☞ **Day to day volunteer logistics**

- Provide orientation, training and job descriptions for all volunteers, no matter what tasks they will be doing.
- Screen all volunteers, and conduct background checks, especially if they are going to be working with vulnerable populations.
- Track volunteers electronically, both the number of individuals and their hours. While a simple spreadsheet can be adequate, a number of free or low-cost software options are available.
- Recognize volunteers for the time, talent, voice and money they contribute to your work.
- When treating volunteers as labor, calculate both the value of the volunteers' time and the costs of managing them.

☞ **Volunteer management policies**

- Assess volunteers for motivations as well as skills. Tools like the Volunteer Functions Inventory are available, but a less formal process can also be effective.
- Give volunteers tasks that fit both their skills and their motivations, to help them get what they want out of the experience.
- Review volunteer motivations and activities to see if the work some or all of them are doing is more like a labor force, more like a special audience or visitor, or more like public engagement, and manage them accordingly.
- Consider how volunteering could be incorporated into the organization's wider public engagement strategy. This may open up new roles and opportunities for volunteers.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2015). *Volunteering in the United States – 2014*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. Retrieved from <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/volun.pdf>.
- 2 Stebbins, R.A. (1982). Series Leisure: A conceptual statement. *The Pacific Sociological Review*, volume 25(2), pages 251-272. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/1388726?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents.
- 3 Charities Aid Foundation. (2014). *World Giving Index 2014*. Retrieved from https://www.cafonline.org/docs/default-source/about-us-publications/caf_wgi2014_report_1555awebfinal.pdf.
- 4 Novak-Leonard, J., Reynolds, M., English, N. & Bradburn, N. (2015). *The Cultural Lives of Californians: Insights from the California survey of arts and cultural participation*. Retrieved from <https://www.irvine.org/arts/what-were-learning/the-cultural-lives-of-californians>.
- 5 Points of Light. (2012, March 7). Strategic Planning: Social, Demographic, Economic, Technological Trends in the Volunteer Sector. *Volunteering and Social Good Blog*. Retrieved from <http://www.pointsoflight.org/blog/2011/03/07/strategic-planning-social-demographic-economic-technological-trends-volunteer-sector>.
- 6 Cnaan, R.A., Handy, F. & Wadsworth, M. (1996). Defining who is a volunteer: Conceptual and empirical considerations. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, volume 25(3), pages 364-383.
- 7 Clary, E.G., Snyder, M., Ridge, R.D., Copeland, J., Stukas, A.A., Haugen, J. & Miene, P. (1998). Understanding and assessing the motivations of volunteers: A functional approach. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, volume 74(6), pages 1516-1530.
- 8 Clary et. al., 1998.
- 9 See, for example, Shanklin, A. (2009). Criminal Records Checks for Prospective Staff and Volunteers. *Blue Avocado*. Retrieved from <http://www.blueavocado.org/content/criminal-records-checks-prospective-staff-and-volunteers>, and Verified Volunteers (<http://www.verifiedvolunteers.com/Volunteer-Screening.aspx>).
- 10 Haski-Leventhal, D. & Bargal, D. (2008). The volunteer stages and transitions model: Organizational socialization of volunteers. *Human Relations*, volume 6(1), pages 67-102.
- 11 Deery, M., Jago, L. & Mair, J. (2011). Volunteering for museums: The variation in motives across volunteer age groups. *Curator: The Museum Journal*, volume 54(3), pages 313-325.
- 12 Orr, N. (2006). Museum volunteering: Heritage as 'serious leisure.' *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, volume 12(2), pages 194-210.
- 13 Smith, K.A. (2003). Literary enthusiasts and visitors and volunteers. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, volume 5(2), pages 83-95.
- 14 Holmes, K. (2003). Volunteers in the heritage sector: A neglected audience?' *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, volume 9(4), pages 341-355.
- 15 See Orr, (2006), Smith (2003) and Holmes (2003).
- 16 The Independent Sector. (2015). *The Value of Volunteer Time*. Retrieved from https://www.independentsector.org/volunteer_time.

- 17 Handy, F. & Srinivasan, N. (2005). The demand for volunteer labor: A study of hospital volunteers. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, volume 34(4), pages 491-509.
- 18 Goulbourne, M. & Embuldeniya, D. (2002). *Assigning economic value to volunteer activity: Eight tools for efficient program management*. Canadian Center for Philanthropy. Retrieved from http://www.volunteermbc.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/Assigning_Economic_Value_to_Volunteers.pdf. June 2, 2015.
- 19 Bowman, W. (2009). The economic value of volunteers to nonprofit organizations. *Nonprofit Management and Leadership*, volume 19(4), pages 491-506.
- 20 Grantmaker Forum on Community and National Service. (2003). *The Cost of a Volunteer*. Retrieved from <http://www.pacefunders.org/publications/pubs/Cost%20Volunteer%20FINAL.pdf>.
- 21 United Nations Volunteers Programme. (2015). *2015 State of the World's Volunteerism Report: Transforming Governance*. Retrieved from <http://www.volunteeractioncounts.org/en/swvr-2015.html>.
- 22 Reimagining Service Council. (2015). *Reimagining Service: Summary Report*. Retrieved from <http://www.reimagining-service.org/sites/default/files/Reimagining%20Service%20Summary%20Report%20Jan%202015.pdf>.
- 23 See, for example, Kim, J. & Kell, C. (2015, April 3). Actors Equity: Hear both sides of the 99-seat plan argument. *KPCC*. Retrieved from <http://www.scpr.org/programs/the-frame/2015/04/03/42246/actors-equity-hear-both-sides-of-the-99-seat-plan>
- 24 Schweitzer, E.C. (2013, October 23). Ten Reasons Artists and Authors Should Still Get Paid in the Age of the Internet. *Huffington Post*. Retrieved from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/eva-claudia-schweitzer/ten-reasons-artists-and-a_b_4143370.html
- 25 The Urban Institute, National Center for Charitable Statistics (2015). Internal Revenue Service, Exempt Organizations Master Business File. Retrieved from <http://nccsweb.urban.org>.
- 26 One organization with a 2012 volunteer count that was a significant outlier both to the entire dataset and to its six year reporting history was removed from the analysis.
- 27 Not an unduplicated count. Some individuals may serve on more than one nonprofit board of directors.
- 28 CDP Reference Guide: http://www.pacdp.org/content/CDP_Reference_Guide.pdf.
- 29 See our previous reports on [Salaries](#) and [Benefits](#) for more about how Artists, Fundraising, General and Program staff are paid.
- 30 “Full-time equivalent” or “FTE” is all full-time employees plus part-time employees converted to a full-time basis. For example, two part-time employees working half-time equal one FTE. The total number of individuals volunteering (or working) for an organization will usually be higher than the FTE count, as multiple part-time workers are combined into a single FTE count.
- 31 OGP categories are based on the organization’s annual budget size. In 2013-14, OGP budget categories were as follows: OGP I = \$99,999 and less; OGP II = \$100,000-499,999, OGP 2.5 = \$500,000-1,499,999; OGP III = \$1.5 million and greater. These budget categories were subsequently revised in the 2015-16 grant year.
- 32 Each organization in the CDP must select a single discipline code from the National Standard for Arts Information Exchange Project (NISIP) that best fits the organization. More about the NISP taxonomy can be found at <http://www.nasaa-arts.org/Research/Planning-and-Accountability/National-Standard-Reference-Center/About-the-National-Standard.php>.
- 33 Humanities Storytelling is not included in figures 5 and 6 because only one art nonprofit in that NISP category in LA County reported data to the CDP in 2012.

LOS ANGELES COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Mayor Michael D. Antonovich / Fifth District
Hilda L. Solis / First District
Mark Ridley-Thomas / Second District
Sheila Kuehl / Third District
Don Knabe / Fourth District

ARTS COMMISSIONERS

Claire Peeps
PRESIDENT

Bettina Korek
VICE PRESIDENT

Pamela Bright-Moon
SECRETARY

Betty Haagen
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Araceli Ruano
IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT

Eric Hanks
Helen Hernandez
Constance Jolcuvar
Peter Lesnik
Claudia Margolis
Kathryn McDonnell
Alis Clausen Odenthal
Norma Provencio Pichardo
Hope Warschaw
Rosalind Wyman

Laura Zucker
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Researched and prepared by
Bronwyn Mauldin, Director of Research and
Evaluation, LA County Arts Commission

Designed by Studio Fuse

Our thanks to Jennifer Novak-Leonard of
the Cultural Policy Center at the University
of Chicago, Brandee Menoher of Points
of Light and William Parent of the UCLA
Luskin School of Public Affairs for their
very helpful comments on an earlier draft
of this report.

