

## **Using Data and Research for the Public Humanities:**

### **A Special Federation Pre-Conference Workshop with the Cultural Data Project**

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As we count down to the Federation Conference in Alabama, the Pennsylvania and New York councils invite our colleagues to a special pre-conference workshop with the Cultural Data Project. The workshop will focus on how data and research can advance the public humanities by improving council work, building the capacity of humanities organizations, and strengthening our case-making to funders and policy-makers. It will take place on Thursday, November 7 from 2 to 3:30 pm.

Essential to understanding how individuals think and feel, stories and nuanced descriptive data lie at the heart of council programming. However, quantitative data can also be a powerful tool in our work. Take, for example, the American Academy of Arts & Sciences' Humanities Indicators project and its recently released [2013 Humanities Report Card](#). This report uses hard numbers to show how the humanities are faring, dispelling some misunderstandings but also highlighting real challenges in our sector.

The [Cultural Data Project](#) (CDP) is another useful data and research resource for the public humanities. CDP offers a powerful online management tool that strengthens the arts and cultural sector. The CDP's unique system provides arts and cultural organizations with sophisticated reporting tools while gathering reliable, comprehensive data that grantmakers, researchers, and advocates can use to support the sector.

To participate, cultural organizations complete a CDP Data Profile online once annually and submit it as part of their grant applications to participating grantmakers. They can then use CDP's reporting features to analyze their financial and operational efficiency and compare themselves to their peers. CDP data has helped organizations advocate for increased board contributions, defeat proposed arts taxes, and better understand and improve their financial health. Participating grantmakers benefit from having standardized data on the sector to inform their decision making and program design. Through CDP, grantmakers can access an online interface to analyze their applicants' CDP data in a variety of ways, enabling them to better assess trends and needs within their applicant pool. CDP currently serves more than 15,000 arts and cultural organizations in Arizona, California, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Texas, Vermont, and the District of Columbia.

The NY council has collected CDP Funder Reports (brief reports adapted from an organization's CDP profile) from grant applicants for the past three years. During grant reviews, the grants team uses each report to gauge the applicant's programming capacity and overall financial health. The applicant pool data is then referenced prior to each advocacy season, to demonstrate the NY council's impact in the state's broader cultural sector. With the help of CDP data, last February, the council showcased the diversity of their awarded grants by geography, operating budget size, and organization type. Out of the 401 different reports received from 39 counties of the state, the most common organizations are museums, performing arts, and historical societies/sites. Going forward, the council aims to encourage greater CDP participation, particularly in rural areas and amongst underserved organizations, in order to better reflect New York's arts and cultural sector.

In addition to helping individual organizations and grantmakers, CDP's aggregated data provides rich fodder for broader research projects that help garner support for public culture. In collaboration with the [Greater Philadelphia Cultural Alliance \(GPCA\)](#), the PA council is undertaking an effort to put figures on the scope and contributions of the state's humanities sector. GPCA is a veteran of rigorous, innovative research that focuses on the relationship between the residents of the Philadelphia region and arts and culture and generously shares its research know-how with other members of the state's cultural community. Partnering with GPCA, the PA council

will define what humanities organizations are, take their count, and pinpoint where they are across the state. It will then examine the economic impact of a subset of these organizations -- those that are most active in public culture, and CDP will provide the basis for the economic impact analysis. Last, the PA project will map the resulting figures by federal legislative district. The mapping will be an invaluable way to further conversations with legislators about the value of the humanities.

The NY council is delving into research projects in another way by contributing to a funders' collaborative organized expressly to underwrite studies based on CDP data. The collaborative recently awarded \$110,000 to six nonprofits who will examine the role and impact of art and culture on communities.

At the pre-conference workshop in Birmingham, the PA and NY councils will be joined by CDP staff. We are planning an interactive discussion. The convening is open to any council interested in data and research, including those participating in CDP either as grantees or grantmakers. Directors, program and development staff, and board are invited join. **If you are interested in participating or learning more, please let us know of your interest by signing up [here](#).**

See you in Birmingham!