





## Agenda

- Overall impressions
- Question-by-question report-out
- Overarching themes and observations
  - Are you willing to make any informed assertions, or wager any “grounded theories?”
- Suggestions for process improvements
- How might you use depth interviewing in the future?



## Reflections on the Process

- What was your experience with the interviews?
  - **How similar or dissimilar were your interviewees?**
    - Many donors were completely different, whether in background , motivations, geography,
      - The demographics of participants reflected the diversity of the Bay Area
      - One donor came to actually experience the protocol; several others came for the incentive, and some didn't even know or remember
    - Donors were similar across the board in their personal connection to the artist, organization, project or cause (e.g., social justice)
  - **How thoughtful were the answers?**
    - All donors thought deeply about their answers and many were passionate in their response.
  - **Were there any emotional moments?**
    - Many donors had intense emotional reactions during the interview.
      - “I give to organizations whose conduct matches those of their words.”
      - “Those who push beyond the usefulness of life.”
      - “How could I choose because they’re all so meaningful for me.”
    - One donor who started off her interview reluctantly, ended up becoming emotional in sharing a story of helping an artist who had recently become “clean.”
    - Another donor became angry in talking about the amount of noise just “out there.”



## Reflections on the Process

- Was the exercise different than what you expected?
  - Participants noted that there is something that is 'connecting' about the whole experience (i.e., fosters the bond between artist and donor)
  - Donors were overall willing to share a lot of personal information although it may not have been necessary to answer the questions
  - Some interviewers were excited to have the opportunity to ask donors about other organizations and causes they give to, as they normally wouldn't do that with their own donors
  - The exercise was an opportunity to tap into something that was fundamental
- What did you most like about the interviewing process?
  - Many of the donors were happy to volunteer a lot of information about themselves and the motivation to give. Interviewers learned a great deal, getting to know donors better. One interviewer said, "I learned how to do marketing better from this exercise."



## Q1: Personal passions

- Anything unusual?
  - Donors passions include:
    - Caring for a child; a partner; staid theatre; Chinese American history; exploitation of women (e.g., predicament about young Asian women sold into the sex trade, even within the Bay Area); healing of class issues, especially in regards to class and race
  - One donor said he is passionate about “finding the antidote to disempowerment”
  - Politics, religion, environment, education, women’s empowerment, literacy
    - Many donors follow their passions directly to their giving tendencies
  - Many donors of color connected consistently to identity, community, and their life story
- How much arts vs. other interests?
  - Overall, there was a general distinction between artist donors and no-artist donors. The artist donors were passionate about and motivated by the art itself, artists and creativity. Non-artist donors were often spoke about passions outside the arts, and this fed into their giving practices



## Q2: How do you express yourself creatively?

- This question elicited a variety of responses, from playing the drums to massage therapy; awakening other people to their possibilities (i.e., developing a vision for others) to writing journals; some of the interviewees are artists
- There is a skewed perception of what constitutes ‘creative expression’ in people’s minds. Many hold that expressing oneself creatively must have a product attached to it, or that it implies some sort of talent which they don’t see in themselves
  - Although many donors didn’t always make the link to creative activities at first, in talking about activities, the creativity came out (e.g., one donor was adamant between what she thought was creative, whereas she did needlework, etc.)
  - One donor started off the answering with “I’m not creative,” then shared that she “could’ve been a stand-up comic,” and finally talked about her gifts as a storyteller
  - Another donor viewed creatively in a completely different way: “Nature is the cathedral of art in its natural form” and her creative expression is her sharing of nature and taking others river rafting



## Q3: Affinities with groups, associations: Why are they important to you?

- On the whole, donors talked about groups and associations that were connected to their passions, values or giving practices
  - One donor lent his talent to groups by helping with their 990s
  - One donor had direct involvement in youth cultivation groups
- ACLU “helps the world make sense of itself and make real to say what our goals are”
- In some cases speaking about what types of organization they affiliate with, opened up the conversation to talking about passions, core values and motivations for giving in a more expansive way
  - One donor’s donations were based on her personal associations - being an immigrant, being a woman, and being gay (e.g., KITKA)
- Some give or associate with an organizations because they can’t volunteer, so it is a way to plug in. Some do the opposite – they have no time to volunteer so they give a financial contribution
- In one case, the donor questioned the difference between what she should do versus what she does: “It’s not like I go to the ballet or anything, but perhaps I should”
  - Is there a type of pressure for some to have a certain set of affiliations?



## Q4: Core values

- Are there any convictions, beliefs, or principles that you have as a person that connect your various activities, or that explain why you do what you do?
  - There were many who responded immediately to this question, but others paused a lot, having to think about how to answer this
  - Trust, integrity and respect were core words to describe one donor's values
  - Another donor described her values into two components - the arts, and personal conviction from her family
  - Many donors were concerned with cultural divides and social justice issues
  - Authenticity
  - Helping others find their unique and creative voice
  - Express ideas and the importance of exchange/dialogue



## Q4: Core values - continued

- Some quotes in response to this question include:
  - "You just have to shut up and keep dancing...."
  - "I support causes which expand the identity given to me"
  - "The preciousness in each individual's life"
  - "I wish for expression for all, individual and community"
  - "The arts puts people in a level playing field...they are there when you don't have other ways to communicate"
  - "Make a contribution to making people's lives better"
  - "I believe people should try to elevate others lives....as you ascend grab others hands and take them with you"
  - "Expand cultural capital to all people"
  - "Being connected to community makes us better individually"
  - "I never thought of it that way"
  - One artist donor spoke of his connection to help people find a way into the performing arts, especially young people. "The body is a vehicle to connect the universe to the earth...it represents me, the earth, the sky...the body is an intermediary between the earth and gods"
  - "I support groups that aren't supported by mainstream culture."
  - "I am a student of mainstream culture. I believe that everyone has potential."
  - "I want to help turn my people around"
  - "Music makes life worth living...when I'm singing nothing else matters. If I had to choose between love and music, I would choose music"



## Q5: Breadth or focus of financial support

- How broad or focused are your donations? Can you give me some examples of different causes that you support financially?
  - One donor talked about her giving as “creating community one person at a time,” which led her to found a nonprofit that sends young children to other countries to do documentary films
  - Some donors give to local organizations exclusively, while others give internationally. For these donors location was not a motivating factor
  - Some donors said they give:
    - “Anytime the phone rings;”
    - “Whenever someone asks me;”
    - “When people are desperate”
  - Some donors didn’t consider that they gave very much, but when they started to list the organizations they gave to, it was evident that they give to a broad range of causes



## Q6: Gift that made you especially proud

- Can you give me an example of a contribution that you made over the past several years that you are especially proud of – a gift that was especially meaningful to you?
  - Many donors felt the most meaningful gift(s) were those in which they made the greatest impact
  - Often the matching gift was the most meaningful. One donor went into debt in order to make contribution because it was a matching gift
  - Several donors most meaningful gift was actually not a financial gift, but rather an executive management role or administrative role, or helping to launch a local project
    - “My best contributions have been sweat equity”
  - One donor, after thinking about it for awhile, said that her first gift to public radio that started her on this whole path to philanthropy
  - Another donor said that giving money to help a family in Mexico have a home was the most meaningful
  - One donor’s gift to a disabled person was meaningful because “They’re doing something I can actually see”



## Q7: The \$10K Question

- If you had \$10,000 to give to some nonprofit cause or project tomorrow, what would you choose to support?

Why?

- Several donors wanted to use the money to make a huge impact on an individual
  - One donor who said they would invest in someone who didn't have the ability to support themselves for something as basic as lunch money
  - Another donor said she would "find people with little needs but who wouldn't get a grant for it," such as a hearing aid for an artist
  - One donor wanted to make a gift that was "completely off the grid" for her - take the \$10,000 and give it to an individual to "make someone insanely happy"
  - One donor said he would start a college fund
- Several donors said they would give to organizations with more basic needs, such as the Food Bank
- Some donors didn't name specific organizations, but rather causes that they would support, such empowering girls, public advocacy for the arts, or overturning Prop 8 (for an immediate impact on the community)



## Q8: Desired Level of Control

- Would you say that your contributions are motivated by a general desire to support organizations or causes that are important to you, or out of a desire to support specific projects or activities that you feel are particularly worthwhile? Why?
  - Many donors said they give to organizations that matched core values
  - Some donors were different in terms of the size of the organization to which they were giving - with the large organizations it was about the organization, whereas with the smaller organizations it was more specifically about the project or artist
  - Artist donors were more particular about the project or artist, whereas non-artist donors give more generally and were more loyal to the organization



## Q9: Personal Involvement

- How much personal involvement do you like to have with the organizations you support? How do you like to be involved? Can you give me some examples?
  - There is a varied level of involvement, from just meeting the ED, to being able to drop by unexpectedly and be personally engaged in what is going on at any time
    - “My gift gives me access to conversations and groups that I wouldn’t have,” and she views this as an investment in her future advancement through the connections she’s made from this gift
    - One donor used to be involved more, but family obligations have changed her availability
    - “It has to mean something and personally be confirmed. What are you doing and what with the results be?”
  - Some donors are not interested in having any involvement at all



## Q10: Accountability

- How are you assured that your contributions are well used? Do you trust arts groups to use the funds wisely, or do you like to have some proof or evidence that your contributions were well-spent?
  - Probe: Are you satisfied with the level of accountability that your beneficiaries provide you?
  - Probe: What could be done to improve this?
  - Some donors were very sensitive to supporting overhead/administrative
  - "Success is not a metric, the effort, the creative process is the gift to society...just to have a dynamic interplay of voices in the community."
  - "[I would like] an affirmation that the gift was impactful, not thanked for it. I know they are thankful."
  - "Why would you consider [giving] if you didn't trust their ability?"
  - "I don't need to be doted on."
  - "I don't expect them to come to me to explain what has happened. It's up to me to come to them."
  - "The thing doesn't have to be faith-based, I have to be faith-based. It can be anything it wants."



## FFA Q11: What attracted you to this project?

- For many it was the match itself that was the attraction
- One donor gave to two different projects for different reasons. He had a personal connection – he is a board member, and his daughter perform with one organization; and with the other, he gave because they needed it
- There were in a number of different threads of motivations
  - Personal connection - knew someone in the project and personally asked
  - Obligation
  - Discipline
  - Sense of connection to place and community
  - Sense of need and urgency (empathy for the individual who called, the personal connection - make the call especially when cultivating new donors - the artist themselves making the call)



## FFA Q12: Awareness/influence of match

- Many donors felt the match was a tremendous influence, both in giving and the amount of the gift
- Other donors felt that the deadline and sense of urgency for the grant was a main motivation (“It made it that much more appealing”). However, a sense of urgency can also make donors nervous, suggesting the organization is not really organized
- One donor thought that the matching project was “out of their league” for the organization and that putting energy towards making the match distracted them from more pressing matters
- Some donors leveraged their donation as a match with their employers, doubling the value of the their donation automatically



## FFA Q14: Outcome/assessment/satisfaction

- Many donors didn't care about the outcome, and trusted that the money was put to good use. They wouldn't do anything differently, but perhaps would've liked to have met the artist, or even other donors to the project (e.g., a donor appreciation event)
- Many donors just want to have some sort of check-in, either during creation or after completion of the project
- Some of the donors attended an event where it was announced that the match had fallen somewhat short. One donor was frustrated that they hadn't asked for more funds at the event, as she would've given more for them to make their match
- One donor was annoyed in that he was solicited to support the organization, but didn't realize until he was interviewed that his gift went to an artist he didn't respect. His future gifts will be considered more carefully



## Overarching Ideas

- As artists, we have to find ways to reach more people because these people are out there, and maybe whatever it is that we do will tap into their core values/value systems. We need to communicate with them at a “value level.”
- Being interviewed was a cathartic experience. Donors were very excited to talk about what giving means to them. After reflecting for some time, one donor who hadn't thought much of themselves as a “donor,” spoke of giving \$10 to a child during a vacation. In this act of sharing, he recognized his own capacity to give.
- For many donors, giving is about the connection to their individual passions and giving from their passions
- There is a personal connection that drives associations/affiliations and giving patterns. Often donors give to an organization that they feel they have gotten something from, whether it is active participation or emotional return
- Although many donors are aligned by similar core values, they may not give to the same organizations or programs. They mix each value differently which leads them onto different paths of giving.



## Overarching Ideas

- There is an innate desire to connect personally and help the individual, whether it is helping individuals as building blocks of a healthier community, or helping individual artist so they can find and share their own voice. Giving for them is about saving lives, whatever form their giving takes.
- Personal connections, coupled with core values and local community connection are strong drivers that inspire donors to give
- Gifts that are more direct are most meaningful, when the impact is great and felt
- Smaller gifts are often the most meaningful: “It all feels important when you do not have a lot to give.”
- Many donors want to be apprised of the progress of the project as it is being created
- How do you earn the trust and communicate the trust? Many trust the people “I need to recognize some names on the staff or board” rather than the organization
- Messaging becomes more abstract as familiarity of the project/outcome decreases
- We are creating a community of common values and it is the exchange that is so valuable – donors are getting something out of this process, whether or not they are personally involved



## Potential Uses of Depth Interviewing in the Future

- The exercise itself could cultivate the connection between donors and artists/organizations. A process such as this creates the space where people can be heard, and they understand it is not a solicitation. This type of communication and connection is essential in the climate into which we are entering.
- This exercise could be applied to and enacted with board members and other staff
- Where do we find these people?
- Design giving opportunities that are varied in their approach
  - Some that are more tangible, that allows them the opportunity to make the connection and engage
  - Some where the donor does not have to get involved, and can just “show up to the launch of the project”



## Potential Uses of Depth Interviewing in the Future

- Have a varied approach to acknowledging donors (not cookie cutter).  
Not everyone wants the same thing
- Offer lower level donors access that they may not already have – show them that you value them no matter what level they donate at
- Ask people up front whether or not they want to be kept up to date on progress of project
- Provide different ‘bite-sized’ projects to support, as well as opportunities for larger gifts
- Start a group discussion to share learnings as part of this organization (e.g., wiki) as well as share experience of FFA grant
- Don’t be intimidated by talking to business people, wealthier people