



Creative Stretch

FINDINGS FROM OREGON COMMUNITY FOUNDATION'S
CREATIVE HEIGHTS INITIATIVE

*"The biggest risk is NOT to take risks."
- Chamber Music Northwest*

Bill Flood and George Thorn – Initiative Evaluators and Report Authors

DECEMBER, 2018



Here for Oregon. Here for Good.

Cover photo

Portland Experimental Theatre Ensemble's
production of Anton Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya*.
Photo: Owen Carey

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Rainbow Dance Theatre's *SELFIE*
Photo: Cliff Coles

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Introduction

What happens when cultural organizations and artists/creatives receive early investment to stretch their practices and work in new ways when developing new work? This report documents the lessons learned from the first four years (2014-2017) of projects supported by Oregon Community Foundation's (OCF) Creative Heights Initiative. We hope that insights gained from these projects will build the capacity and confidence of other artists, creatives, and non-profits looking to stretch their creative practice, and encourage support for promising new work.

The mission of the OCF is to improve lives for all Oregonians through the power of philanthropy. Creative Heights is one of OCF's strategies to create more vibrant and accessible arts communities of all sizes across the state. Currently, around \$1 million is available annually, and grants can range from \$25,000-\$100,000.

Creative Heights was created to support artists and other cultural creatives in testing new ideas, stretching their creative practice, providing opportunities for Oregonians to experience innovative arts and culture, and increasing Oregon's cultural visibility and vitality. There are no other funding sources in Oregon supporting the creation, development, and presentation of new contemporary art and innovative cultural projects at this scale. What little regional or national funding exists tends to be accessible only by large organizations. More information about Creative Heights can be found [here](#).

This initiative quickly became a source of funds for the creation of new and often challenging work. Such work is most often accomplished through complex collaborations. Grantees quickly learned:

- 1. They can do more in collaboration than alone.***
- 2. Collaboration takes more time and resources than anticipated; and***
- 3. Collaboration requires clear, consistent communications both between and within partners.***

These three Core Findings are discussed in detail on pages 10-16.



Left Digital photograph of historic coos Item in UC Berkeley collection, 2017
Artist, Sara Siestrem, Hanis Coos

Right taxai loʔloʔ tʰsee məʔkməʔk kwansəm (huckleberry pie forever)
Huckleberry and Hemlock dyed Spruce Root, Sedge, and Bear Grass
Ceremonial Coos Cooking Basket, 2017
Artist, Sara Siestrem, Hanis Coos



Pianist Hunter Noack performs in Fort Rock, Oregon, part of *In a Landscape: Classical Music in the Wild* concert series.
Portland Chamber Orchestra Association
Photo: Corey Rood

From 2014–2017 over \$4 million was awarded to 50 arts, heritage, and humanities grantees in support of 58 projects. Awards ranged from \$10,500 to \$125,000, with the following representation by discipline: 17 theater; 16 music, 8 multidisciplinary; 6 cultural heritage; 4 dance; 4 visual; 2 film/media; and 1 literary. Projects represent a broad range of partners and new ways of thinking and working. Creative Heights guidelines stipulate that applicants must be Oregon 501(c)(3) non-profits. Individual artists/creatives and other groups are encouraged to work in partnership with a cultural 501(c)(3).

We have come to realize that risk is inherent in all creative work, and innovation is trying something new. The term “stretch” embraces what grantees are doing—extending in new ways and with new partners, testing and growing their missions and, most often, developing new work.



Milagro Theater performing *Óye Oya*, an original Spanish-language musical based on Cuban history and culture.
Photo: Russell Young

“For other cultural groups looking to advance creatively, our advice is that there needs to be organization-wide commitment to an artistically risky project and that relationship (with funders, community partners, artists, et al.) are key to this work. There were so many elements and moving parts to Astoria that a collaborative spirit was a must.”

- Portland Center Stage

We encourage you to review the list of grantees with project descriptions (Appendix B.)

PROJECT PROFILE

Artists Repertory Theatre

Launching a New Play Commissioning Initiative

In 2014 Artists Repertory Theatre (Artists Rep) received Creative Heights funding to launch a new play commissioning initiative. Artists Rep set out to issue eight commissions—at least four by women, at least four by writers of color, and at least one suitable for families and young audiences, and one Oregon Play Prize that carries a guarantee of production.

To create this entire program from scratch within two years was an enormous risk. The learning curve was steep, and the program was launched without full knowledge of the time and resources that would be needed to carry it out. What did they learn?

“While prudence and caution have their necessary place, sometimes it’s better to leap. We could have created this program incrementally, cautiously, over several years – that would have kept the impact on the rest of our programs to a more moderate level. But making this wholehearted leap and committing Artists Rep to such a bold goal, we were energized and stimulated in ways that reverberate throughout our entire theater.”
- Artists Rep

Artists Rep underestimated the cost of the program in two primary ways. They thought that \$40,000 would be sufficient for eight commissions (\$5,000 each), when \$10,000 is the average for a low to moderate level commission for emerging national playwrights. Additionally, the original budget did not account for the travel necessary to build relationships and work with writers from around the U.S. This learning has resulted in Artists Rep focusing on five commissions every two years, which enables the company to see the majority of commissions through to production.

The grant injected the organization with practical resources and creative energies that have impacted all of its artistic programs. Adding the Director of New Play Development & Dramaturgy staff position profoundly deepened Artists Rep’s artistic department. In addition to launching this program and commissions, Artists Rep had a resource the theater had not had in years—a professional dramaturg to support all of its productions, drive audience enrichment activities, assist with marketing and fundraising communications, and be a major contributor to the season selection process. This has elevated the quality all of artistic output, from program materials to bringing world premieres of commissioned scripts to the stage.

“We have begun to believe that we’re the kind of theater that ought to, and can, be a major player in the future of American theater.” Artists Rep

This project and its impact forced Artists Rep to think hard about what kind of theatre they believe is important and meaningful, which has greatly influenced the plays being produced. Artists Rep is now building relationships with national organizations and award-winning writers; without this initiative they would have no basis to pursue these relationships. As of this time, Artists Rep has produced two of the commissioned plays, *The Talented Ones* (Yussef El Guindi) and *The Thanksgiving Play* (Larissa FastHorse), and will premier *WolfPlay* (Hansol Jung) in Spring 2019. *The Thanksgiving Play* will open at Playwrights Horizons in New York, October 2018, and is in negotiation for several additional productions to follow. *WolfPlay* has also been picked up by a Chicago theater for 2020.

Artists Rep also received Creative Heights funding in 2017 to produce the world premiere of E.M. Lewis’ *Magellanica: A New and Accurate Map of the World*, a five part, five and a half-hour long epic about eight scientists who travel to the South Pole to determine whether or not there really is a hole in the sky. They also received a 2018 Creative Heights grant to support Native artist Anthony Hudson’s multimedia theatrical odyssey incorporating a drag clown persona, Standing Rock protesters, racist butter mascots, shamanic kale smoothies, & Peter Pan’s “Indian Princess” Tiger Lily in a quest for identity.

Advice from Artists Rep to other cultural organizations looking to stretch:

“Be bold, and give yourself plenty of time!”

Josh Weinstein and
Eric Pargac in Artist
Repertory Theatre’s
Magellanica.
Photo: Russel J. Young



Outcomes

The value and outcomes of supporting creative stretch in the development of new work is truly significant. Following is a summary of results/outcomes from the first four years of the Creative Heights Initiative. Outcomes are shown for artists and creatives, cultural organizations, Oregonians, and the Oregon Community Foundation.

OUTCOMES FOR ARTISTS AND CREATIVES

Over 290 artists and creatives have been given opportunities to create new work that stretched their talents and abilities; over 2,250 other artists, creatives, technical experts, management, volunteers and others collaborated in the development, presentation, and documentation of this work. These projects raise visibility of artists/creatives and build their experience and capacity to take on similar work.



Patricia Vazquez, Voz Workers' Rights Education Project, *Invisible Labor*, Portland performance based event in collaboration with José González, Eligio Mendoza and Eric Ssonko from the MLK Workers Center. Photo credit: Douglas Yarrow.

“I am learning that challenges generate opportunities. Maintaining a vision while being inclusive is difficult, but incredibly productive. Value process as much as end results, and learn how to communicate that. Consider how to support other artists in the region.”

- Artist Patricia Vazquez, VOZ Workers' Rights Education Project

These projects are bringing together many cultures. Over half of the Creative Heights grants, including Red Door Project, Artist Repertory Theatre, Oregon Humanities, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Portland Center Stage, Josephy Center, and Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua, and Siuslaw Indians, are requiring the organizations to contract with artists and cultural specialists from Native American, Spanish-speaking, African American, Asian, and other cultures. Projects are generating work for artists from these cultures, telling important and complex stories, building organizational know-how and confidence to work with artists of color and across new languages, and directly addressing issues of equity.



Joseph Gibson portrays a police officer in the August Wilson Red Door Project's production *Cop Out: Beyond Black, White & Blue*. Photo: Wade Owens

OUTCOMES FOR CULTURAL ORGANIZATIONS

Arts, heritage, and humanities organizations are evolving new partnerships and deepening existing partnerships, developing new funding sources, raising their visibility, and improving technological skills and resources. High-end technology and equipment companies came on board with the Hollywood Theatre's new cinema at the Portland Airport because of the innovative and exciting nature of the project. Eugene Concert Choir, Oregon Humanities, and other grantees have updated or completely re-designed their websites to be current and capable of presenting the new work.

Projects are building organizational confidence to continue the development of new, innovative work. In the same way, projects test and grow the missions of organizations; it is clear that you cannot stand still and stretch at the same time. Both Portland Experimental Theatre Ensemble and Portland Gay Men's Chorus identify their Creative Heights projects as key to testing their missions. Working with the project evaluator also makes grantees think more deeply about identifying and tracking indicators of project success.



Portland Gay Men's Chorus hosts the Beijing Queer Chorus (BQC) in the first out-of-country tour by a Chinese LGBTQT chorus. Many chorus members still perform in masks (in China) to protect their identities. Students at the Portland dress rehearsal created masks to showcase an aspect of their identity, and as a way of reflecting on how and why the BQC uses masks to hide (in China) their identities.

Photo: Beijing Queer Chorus

“We are leading with our ignorance... we have grown... yet we are continuing to grow.”

- Oregon Shakespeare Festival

“This kind of work puts the mission of the organization in question. How far can we stretch?”

- Portland Gay Men's Chorus



Britt Music and Arts Festival performing Michael Gordon's *Natural History* at Crater Lake.
Photo: Jim Teece

OUTCOMES FOR OREGONIANS

140 new works were generated through Creative Heights – a large body of creative work for Oregon. Thousands of people in Oregon (and beyond) are experiencing new ideas as audiences, including students and educators. Partnerships live on and grow, and the power to build new resources, including social and intellectual capital, should not be underestimated. Projects are putting Oregon on the map as a forward-thinking place that supports risk and innovation.

“You have to take risks; it improves and moves the whole (cultural) industry forward.”

- Britt Music and Arts Festival



Writer Zahir Janmohamed interviewing a pastor in Portland's Cully neighborhood for his story *Stake Your Place* ([Oregon Humanities](#))
Photo: Tojo Andrianarivo

OUTCOMES FOR OREGON COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

Through this initiative OCF is continually learning about Oregon artists/creatives and non-profits. Contact with the grants review panel (experts in the field) also deepens OCF's capacity to serve. Associating OCF with new, contemporary work potentially broadens outreach to new grantees, volunteers, and donors. The innovative nature of Creative Heights projects also garners OCF significant press and closely aligns with the original OCF donor intent. Underlying all of this is significant learning around core initiative concepts of risk/stretch, excellence, and impact.

PROJECT PROFILE

Portland Jazz Composers Ensemble

*Telling the Stories of
Unsung Oregonians
through Jazz
(Oregon Stories)*

The Portland Jazz Composers Ensemble (PJCE) received Creative Heights funding in 2015 to produce three radio documentary pieces with original jazz music that tell the stories of three unsung Oregonians -- George Akiyama (Japanese American World War II veteran who was threatened with violence when he returned home after the war), De Norval Unthank (Oregon's first Black physician), and Deborah Dempsey (first and only Columbia River Bar Pilot). Pieces were produced for broadcast on the KOPB and KMHD networks and for live performance in Portland, Hood River, and Astoria.

PJCE set out to make more ambitious work than ever before, by connecting audio storytelling to jazz performance. They also sought to set an example for the jazz field in Oregon, to show that the jazz community can connect to important cultural conversations outside of the music itself, and create a world-class artistic product at the same time.

The project pushed three jazz composers to make a narrative/story connection to their compositions. This is rare in jazz. PJCE found that the composers needed more specific preparation from the artistic director, and even with this assistance, the artistry of the entire project was sometimes overshadowed with overly dense musical underscore. PJCE learned that more advance preparation with composers was needed.

PJCE also learned the challenges of touring to rural communities, and specifically integrating audio cues in live performance. The Astoria concert had very low attendance – a lesson on the importance of promotion from the local venue and connection to local residents through the storytellers.

Through the Oregon Stories project PJCE achieved its first performances outside of Portland, first studio recording featuring the PJCE ensemble, first work with local composers of national significance, and first radio broadcast.

The project pushed PJCE to learn new things both in the musical realm and with fundraising and logistics. They made many new friends, and several of those new friends are now partners in new projects. PJCE is now a much more highly regarded organization in Portland's arts ecosystem, thanks to the recognition from the Creative Heights grant.

“We learned that the more we did to involve more partners in a meaningful way, the more successful we are. Our partnerships with the Oregon Historical Society and Oregon Humanities were particularly helpful. We were able to connect with audiences that would be particularly interested in the message of the project, even if they weren’t jazz fans.”

At the heart of this project was PJCE’s interest in building community through the telling of stories. PJCE was awarded another Creative Heights grant in 2017 to create a community-guided music, text, and video piece that tells the story of two little-known Oregon towns (Maxville and Vanport) with significant black and immigrant populations and the residents that made them unique.

Advice from PJCE to other cultural organizations looking to stretch:

“Building a team of people who can connect you with knowledge or resources in the “stretch” elements of a risky project will help to eliminate the blind spots that you don’t know you have, and the earlier you do this, the better.”



Marilyn Keller sings *From Maxville to Vanport* with the Portland Jazz Composers Ensemble.

Core Findings

CREATIVE STRETCH DOESN'T HAPPEN ALONE

The opportunity to expand in new directions means working closely with both prior and new collaborators/partners. The basic (but difficult to live by) rule of partnership applies over and over: you can do more with a partner than either of you can do alone. However, the process is time-consuming and probably will take more resources than you anticipate. Working collaboratively in new ways will push you and force you to question how you work, and thus, build your capacity for future work.

“Cross-sector partnerships expand the perspectives of all involved and strengthen the capacity of arts organizations to impact our greater community.”

- Oregon Symphony



Portland Opera's production of David Lang's *The Difficult of Crossing a Field*. Cast: (L-R) Ernest C. Jackson, Jr., Lisa Williamson, Damien Geter, Nicole Mitchell, Laila Murphy
Photo: Cory Weaver

“Excellence cannot be attained alone. When you work with a partner it tweaks your notion of excellence.”

- Oregon Symphony

YOU CAN'T TELL EXACTLY WHERE YOU ARE GOING, BUT YOU CAN PREPARE FOR THE JOURNEY

Following are key areas identified by grantees as critical to successful project planning and implementation. These areas all revolve around complex collaborations in the development of new work.

- Planning and Resource Development
- Alignment of Creative and Management Teams
- Communications
- Contracting and Working with Artists
- Technology
- Outreach/Engagement/Media Coverage
- Flexibility

➤ Planning and Resource Development

Project planning is very, very important to clarifying concept and intent, identifying collaborators and resources, and knowing how to work with collaborators through the course of the project. Successful projects often take several years to plan, such as Bill Will's exhibit at Hoffman Gallery. Grantees (especially in the first two years of the initiative) often under-budgeted and underestimated the management time and resources needed to support projects. Creation and development of new work often requires additional workshops, rehearsals, marketing, outreach and engagement than current work.

Finding the resources to support new work is often not easy, especially in the relatively conservative cultural climate of Oregon. Creative Heights will fund projects at a higher amount and percentages of budgets in recognition that risk capital is difficult to come by. Some audience members in the Oregon Symphony's concert showcasing new work addressing issues of homelessness (*Emergency Shelter Intake Form*) walked out of the concert hall; others were thrilled with the music and story being told. Some donors will fund new projects; others won't. Most important to remember is that it takes time to cultivate and manage new donors.



Joni Yates, Bill Will, Jesse Taylor, and Sara Thompson preparing for Bill Will's exhibition *Fun House* at Lewis and Clark College's Hoffman Gallery

“Excellence is to create a complete thought. These things take TIME. Have time to plan, reflect, change.”

- Bill Will, artist exhibiting at Hoffman Gallery/Lewis and Clark College



Hollywood Theatre's new cinema at the Portland International Airport – showcasing short films by Oregon filmmakers.

Photo Credit: Bill Purcell

“High-end technology and equipment companies are coming on board because of the nature of the project. But it takes time to manage these donors. The longer it takes the more resources we need.”

- Hollywood Theatre

The Creative Heights “stamp-of-approval” helps to jump-start fund development for these projects. We are continually learning from grantees how they are able to tap new funding resources when their work is supported by Creative Heights. Resources include other foundations, grants from public agencies, private donors, technology businesses, facilities/spaces, and most importantly, the connections, relationships, and intellectual capital brought to projects with new partners.

A challenge facing all of these organizations is how to continually raise funds for the development of new work, once the organization is committed to this direction and audience expectations are raised.

“How will we continue this kind of work when we have to focus on our core programming?”

- Oregon Children’s Theatre



A Fond Farewell—a chamber music collaboration between Third Angle New Music and Hand2Mouth Theatre reimagining the music of singer-songwriter Elliott Smith.
Photo: Jacob Wade

➤ Alignment of Creative and Management Teams

“It forced a kind of shared thinking and shared problem-solving across the entire organization. Everyone was impacted by the show. Our Artistic Director sent the script out to all department heads before we decided to do it; that is becoming normal.”

- Artist Repertory Theatre

The job of management is to create context for, understanding of, and engagement with the new work. Alignment of organizational leadership, management, and creative team are vital to achieving excellence. Some projects suffered from organizational sponsors who did not know how to support artists with strong experience and vision. There must be a connection and understanding of project vision between the lead artist and the non-profit sponsor. If not, disconnect may happen later. Other grantees underestimated the impact that the development and presentation of new work would have on the entire organization; not just the part of the organization in charge.

“This project introduced complexity into our mission. Excellence is adhering to our mission, along with rigor. This was all at a high level and was very much aided by CH funding. We are scrappy; this enabled us to do more.”

- Portland Experimental Theatre Ensemble

➤ Communications

The need for consistent communication between and with collaborators comes out loud and clear with grantees. The Oregon Shakespeare Festival, during development of *Secret Love In Peach Blossom Land*, implemented a cross-departmental coordination task force that met weekly before, during, and after production of the show. Grantees often underestimated the time that consistent communication takes. Lack of cross-partner and internal communications was the cause of anxiety and stress within several organizations. Think ahead about communications!

“Communication in complex collaborations is critical. Having a core team and regularly scheduled meetings is key.”

- Third Angle New Music

“Allow plenty of rehearsal time and opportunities for interaction with the audience. Communicate, communicate, communicate! Even though we thought we were doing a great job, the bewilderment on behalf of audiences used to a traditional concert format surprised us.”

- Chamber Music Northwest

➤ Contracting and Working With Artists

Several grantees have had to learn how to contract with new artists, specifically artists working outside the grantee’s primary arts discipline. Monitoring and holding artists to a delivery schedule was also a challenge within several projects. Some organizations were stunned when artists developed work outside the host organization’s comfort zone, especially regarding language deemed potentially inappropriate to audiences. Be prepared for artists working in new ways with new methods, technologies, languages.



Composer, multimedia artist, writer Paul D. Miller aka DJ Spooky, rehearsing *Heart of a Forest* with the Oregon State University Wind Ensemble.

› Technology

Development of new work has required grantees to build the technological and digital infrastructure essential for promoting, presenting and archiving new work, including redeveloping websites to accommodate projects with video and audio components. Oregon Humanities, Eugene Concert Choir, and other organizations re-built their entire websites based on these projects. Recording, documenting and archiving projects has also generally taken more dollars than originally budgeted. Again, these complex projects force organizations to build their technical and digital resources.



Exchange by Ethan Rose and Parallel Studio at Portland's Pioneer Courthouse Square, as part of HouseGuest.
Photo: Reina S.

“The biggest risk for us was traveling into the world of the automaton because of its technical challenges. This technical challenge was paramount in the artistic exploration of the piece.”

- Imago Theatre

› Outreach, Engagement, Media Coverage

Because you are extending yourself in new ways, outreach to new audiences and establishing a meaningful connection are normal and necessary parts of these projects. This will touch all elements of your organization including board, staff, artists/creatives, collaborators, and audience.

“Our artistic director has been preparing our audience for eight years.”

- Rogue Valley Symphony



Rasika's Jayanthi Raman and outreach event for *Duality* at Oregon Historical Society.

Portland Piano International wisely discussed “getting the audience to move beyond whether they liked or disliked the work to what they learned from the work.”

The creation and presentation of new work is often challenging to core audiences. Creative Heights grantees demonstrated a range of outreach and engagement strategies including pre- and post-performance artist talks and personal, individual follow-up with those who did not like the work. Oregon Center for the Photographic Arts, Integrated Arts, Portland Jazz Composers Ensemble, Oregon State University Spring Creek Project, and Oregon Children’s Theatre learned much about how to tour a show to rural communities. Rogue Valley Symphony noted the importance of mixing new work on the same show with more familiar work.

“Being nimble is important. Hold fast to goals, but process may be different than anticipated.”

- Profile Theatre

➤ Flexibility

Even with the best planning and preparation, you can expect the unexpected. Almost all projects have experienced some kind of unexpected event, from a natural disaster that destroyed a music director’s studio, to delays in receiving artist visas, to changes (even death) of collaborating artists. Grantees are learning the importance of having some flexibility in time and budget, and having a back-up plan ready (or at least being able to craft one quickly.) More than one grantee discussed how important it is to provide for artists quality lodging, food, and an environment conducive to creating new work. In the development of collaborative work, artists will not always know in advance what they need to reach excellence.



Creative Exchange Lab, Portland Institute for Creative Arts
Photo: Portland Institute for Contemporary Arts

“We learned that flexibility is key, along with the ability to craft a back-up plan (in our case, organizing and working with a group of advisors/co-curators).”

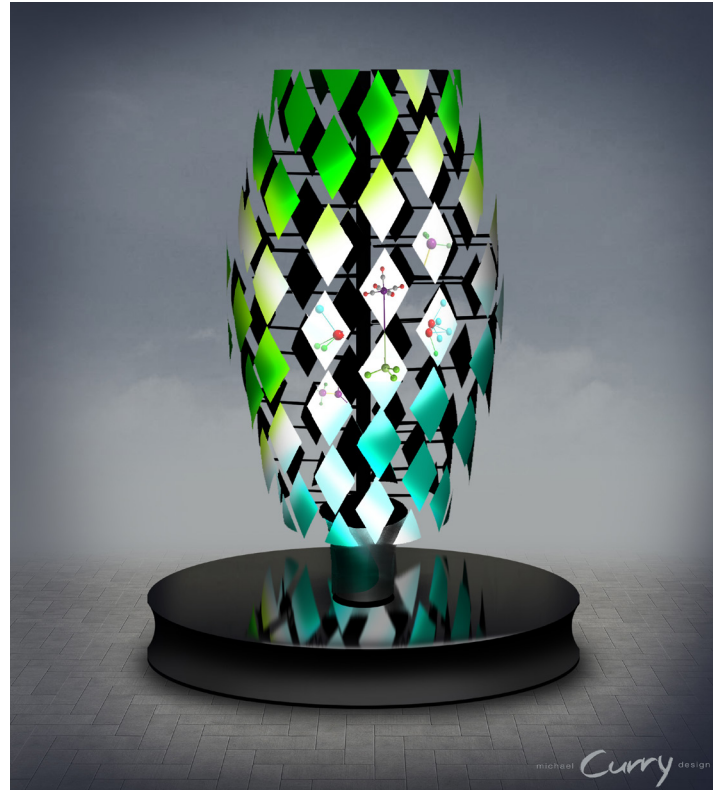
- Independent Publishing Resource Center

CREATIVE STRETCH IS WORTH IT, EVEN THOUGH IT TAKES A LOT OF TIME AND RESOURCES

The Creative Heights Initiative is definitely reaching OCF's original project objectives and 1) allowing artists and other cultural creatives to test new ideas and stretch their creative practices, 2) providing opportunities for Oregonians to experience innovative arts and culture, and 3) increasing Oregon's cultural visibility and vitality. Projects are also 1) fueling new partnerships, collaborations, and learning within and between cultural sectors, business, science, technology, higher education, and other areas of community life, and 2) building the confidence and capacity of artists, creatives, organizations to develop new work including work that tackles the most pressing issues of today.

***“Be ready for this project to take over
your life. Reward will be substantial.”***

- Eugene Concert Choir



Preliminary design (Michael Curry Design) for the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry—a large kinetic sculpture that provides diverse entry points into science through artistic interpretation.

PROJECT PROFILE

High Desert Museum

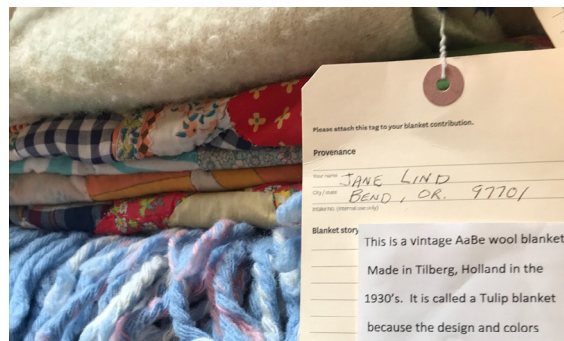
Commissioning
Contemporary Artwork

The High Desert Museum (Bend) received Creative Heights funding in 2014 to present an interdisciplinary exhibition exploring Works Progress Administration arts projects during the Great Depression, accompanied by commissioned work from Oregon artists Alan McCollum, David Willis, and Marie Watt. The Museum had never before commissioned new artwork and did not know how their audiences would respond.

A primary challenge to this project was maintaining communications with multiple community partners. Never before in central Oregon had so many agencies come together to present such a wide range of events on the same topic.

“More than a static exhibit, Art for a Nation, was a community project attracting new audiences, increasing awareness of Oregon’s heritage, and making a real impact in the community.”

- High Desert Museum



Artist Marie Watt's *Blanket Tower*, part of the exhibition *Art for a Nation* at the High Desert Museum (Bend)

Through partnerships, 25 multidisciplinary programs engaged the broader community in the art, culture, and history of the 1930's. The Central Oregon Symphony's winter concert series featured pieces commissioned by the WPA. The Deschutes Public Library produced a series of lectures entitled *Know 1930's*, and Atelier 6000 offered workshops on the styles and techniques of 1930's artists. The range of topics and activities appealed to new audiences and sparked conversations on topics important to communities in Central Oregon.

Through the project the Museum learned that strategic partnerships with local agencies are critical to success. They also learned that taking creative risks in striving for excellence has huge benefits. Their audience and community responded enthusiastically and have requested more innovative exhibits and programming. The project specifically provided opportunity for the Museum to learn how to incorporate contemporary art with exhibits and expand the arts focus of the museum.

The High Desert Museum was awarded a second Creative Heights grant in 2017 to create an interdisciplinary exhibition, *Water in the West*, that connects artists from multiple mediums, including visual arts, music and spoken word, with scientists to approach the critically important topic of water in Oregon. The exhibit opens in April, 2019. *Art for a Nation* definitely built the skills and confidence of Museum staff to take on *Water in the West*. The Museum is bringing together artists, scientists, and cultural experts and providing them with the resources for interdisciplinary collaboration and a platform for innovative exploration of water uses in Oregon. The unexpected is already happening as artists collaborate beyond what was originally envisioned.

"Visitors must be prepared for the unexpected through a balance of traditional and new. Interpretative materials that support and frame these unexpected connections are vital to community engagement. Through this project we were able to foster and strengthen partnerships across our community critical to the success of future endeavors."

Recommendations for Funders

Based on four years of project findings, we offer the following recommendations for funders looking to support artistic/creative stretch and the development of new work.

1. Successful projects should be artist led, but also have a strong non-profit sponsor with a strong connection to and understanding of the project vision. If not, disconnect may happen later. Both during the application process and when conducting evaluations later, it is important to insist that both the lead artist and non-profit are invested and present at key meetings.
2. It is difficult for artists, creatives, organizations to really believe that stretch... especially if it potentially means project failure... is ok with a funder. Organizations are trained to sell themselves, to at least break even every year, and not to be too risky. Funders must constantly assert in writing and in conversations that it is fine if things do not turn out as expected. Share stories of successful “failures” to illustrate the value placed on both process and product.
3. Some individual artists/creatives are not comfortable or experienced in working with a non-profit sponsor, and it may be difficult to reach them unless a grant is made directly to them. Be mindful of this and either find a way to reach artists/creatives directly or craft guidelines that are explicitly clear about artists/creatives leading projects.
4. It is difficult to reach smaller organizations or artists/organizations who are new to grant writing, yet some of the best and most exciting ideas could come from emerging artists and organizations. Consider designing your application process to even the playing field. You may also want to provide special outreach, technical assistance, or partner with other foundations to reach these groups.
5. Expect that even if you are funding artistic/creative product, outreach, community engagement, and audience development will most likely be elements of the project. Examine proposals to make sure that artists, creatives, and organizations are savvy about reaching and working with audiences.
6. Allow each grantee to define excellence in their own terms, then assist them in identifying indicators of excellence and success. Artistic/creative excellence is also closely related to the degree of support provided to the artists/creatives.
7. Remember that project funding does not take the place of operating support, and operating support does not take the place of project funding. A cultural organization with healthy streams of operating support should have the ability to commission new work; however, those projects may not stretch into the kinds of complex collaborations generated by Creative Heights. Make sure your funding organization is aware that project support can fill a gap or a special need, but it does not take the place of ongoing support.
8. Grantees can still benefit from technical assistance around other areas of project planning and management. In our case, communications and marketing rank high as areas of need.
9. There needs to be ample and flexible time for spending funds. Projects will most likely not hit the ground running, and that is why Creative Heights funding can be spent over two years.

“Undertaking a project of this magnitude and having it meet, and exceed, our expectations of success has been a real confidence-booster for all areas of the organization. We now know that we can produce work of this scope, laying the groundwork for more ambitious projects in the future.”

- Portland Center Stage

Appendix A

EVALUATION APPROACH

We (Bill Flood and George Thorn) have served as project evaluators since the beginning of the Creative Heights Initiative. We take a developmental evaluation approach—careful and strategic listening and documentation of what grantees are learning throughout their projects. Findings are used to help OCF improve its grant making and to support artists and creatives looking to stretch. Our process with each grantee focuses on:

- Supporting development of mid- and end-of-project indicators of project success;
- Conducting beginning, mid-, and end-of-project interviews;
- Attending as many grantee activities (workshops, discussions, rehearsals, performances) as possible.
- Ongoing communication with grantees, especially around key learning moments.

Key evaluation questions address artistic/creative stretch, excellence, challenges, impact, and resource development.

Most cultural organizations are accustomed to evaluation methods aimed at promoting the success of projects, instead of carefully documenting learning. This is a clear outgrowth of a funding structure which does not reward risk. It has been useful for Creative Heights project leaders (both creative and management) to think deeply about project goals, indicators of success, and what they are learning about creative stretch, excellence, resource development, and impact. It has also been very important for evaluators to experience the projects, not just receive written or verbal reports. With this knowledge and experience we have been able to consistently ask artists and grantees the difficult questions necessary to dig deep around learning. In many cases, contact with evaluators has helped grantees think through how to move through challenging points in the process of projects.

“Through this project and also working with OAC and Tamastslikt we have gained confidence in the Indian world. That means resources that will spread to other things too. This has enhanced our reputation and ability to be inclusive and push the local community. We are at the intersection of art and culture and education. Art isn’t just what is on the wall. Art is learning, teaching, cultural expression. Not just about economic impact. It’s about impacting and saving lives.”

- Josephy Center



Workshop with artists and scientists in Central Oregon, High Desert Museum *Water in the West* (2018)

Appendix B

2014–2017 CREATIVE HEIGHTS GRANTEES AND PROJECTS

(Descriptions are from original project proposals.)

Organization

Artists Repertory Theatre, Portland

to launch a new play commissioning initiative

Artists Repertory Theatre, Portland

to produce the World Premiere of E.M. Lewis' *Magellanica: A New and Accurate Map of the World*, a 5-part epic set in 1985 about eight scientists who travel to the South Pole to determine whether or not there really is a hole in the sky

August Wilson Red Door Project, Portland

to develop, write, & produce *Hands Up 2.0* (working title), six monologues about the culture of law enforcement in the United States inspired by the theatrical power, relevance and success of the original *Hands Up* production in Portland

Britt Music and Arts Festival, Medford

to commission a new orchestral work inspired by the Crater Lake National Park (CLNP) to be performed at CLNP and the Britt Festival Orchestra's 2016 summer festival

Britt Music and Arts Festival, Medford

to commission Oregon composer Kenji Bunch for a three-movement orchestra suite for the 2017 summer season

Caldera, Portland

to collaborate with the Fallen Fruit artist-collective to conduct community collaborations with Caldera artists and high school students

Cappella Romana, Portland

to work with master Byzantine chanter M. Boyer to deepen Oregon artists' skills, especially female singers, in performing Byzantine music and present a festival of this music in 2017

Cascade Educational Broadcast Service – XRAY.fm, Portland

to launch the XRAY Archive Project resulting in a digital multimedia library of remastered recordings for the late X-Ray Cafe including interviews with the artists and live sessions by contemporary bands

Chamber Music Northwest, Portland

to premier new commissions and perform classical and contemporary pieces by women at the 2017 Summer Festival

CoHO Productions, Portland

to culminate an experimental ensemble of clown performers and re-contextualize the value of clowning in the modern theatre landscape as three projects: *The Accidental Death of a Rap Artist*, *The Glass Menagerie*, *Feltrinelli: A Revolutionary Fractal*, with one developed as a full production

Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua, and Siuslaw Indians, Springfield

to design and weave 15 contemporary indigenous baskets based on historic documents and tribal language and transfer learning in participatory weaving practice and curatorial duties for the Tribes

Delgani String Quartet, Eugene

to commission, record and capture an original musical composition inspired by the Oregon Cascade Range which will be performed and videotaped at the Dee Wright Observatory on the summit of Mackenzie Pass

Eugene Concert Choir, Eugene

to commission choral-orchestral work by nationally recognized Oregon composer Joan Syzmko, and performed by Eugene Vocal Arts Ensemble, that focuses on experiences of those with memory loss and their caregivers

Hand2MouthTheatre, Portland

to devise and premier a new play inspired by Gus Van Sant's 1991 film *My Own Private Idaho*

High Desert Museum, Bend

to present an interdisciplinary exhibition exploring the arts and WPA projects during the Great Depression, accompanied by commissioned work by Oregon artists

High Desert Museum, Bend

to create an interdisciplinary exhibition, *Water in the West*, that will connect artists from multiple mediums, including visual arts, music and spoken word, with scientists to creatively approach the topic of water in Oregon and explore the relationship between art and science

Hollywood Theatre, Portland

to transform an outdated business center at the Portland International Airport into a multimedia arts space, facilitating experimentation, innovation, and critical pedagogy via inspired collaborations between regional, national, and international artists

Imago Theatre, Portland

to create and present *La Belle*, *The Lost Art of the Automaton*, incorporating puppetry, special effects, automata, and song to retell the classic fairytale all within the confines of a ship engine room

Independent Publishing Resource Center, Portland

to produce a tri-yearly multi-media cultural series combining live music with writers, book artists, and hands-on printing and art-making projects

Integrated Arts, Eugene

to produce and tour a new work based on the life and impact of Nikola Tesla, *Tesla: Light, Sound, Color* which will merge artistic disciplines with physics

Joseph Center for Arts and Culture, Joseph

to recognize the 140th anniversary of the Indian removal, JCAC will facilitate a Tribal artistic perspective on place and select original art by a Plateau Indian artist to integrate with Joseph's existing bronze streetscape

Lewis and Clark College, Portland

to create and mount *The Works*, a monumental installation of mechanical artwork, lighting, and sound by Bill Will that creates a dramatic experiential environment

Milgaro Theatre Group, Portland

to create *Corazon de Cuba*, a new musical based on the traditions of the 20th century Cuban zarzuela, which will illuminate the tremendous political shifts currently occurring in Cuba and its relationship to the United States

Newspace Center for Photography, Portland

to present *Exposing the Archive* in partnership with the Oregon Historical Society and an Oregon-based artist who will use OHS archival resources to explore ideas pertinent to Oregon

NW Dance Project, Portland

to premier a new contemporary dance reimagining Georges Bizet's opera *Carmen*

Oregon Ballet Theatre, Portland

to create a new, outdoor OBT summer performance Initiative, featuring world premiere work from three female choreographers and curated by a panel of local leaders in the arts/dance community

Oregon Center for the Photographic Arts, Portland

to produce *Spells*, a September 2015 exhibition at Blue Sky Gallery of a new, innovative photo/text project created by Portland author, Peter Rock, in collaboration with five photographers, and support the tour of this exhibition to select visual arts venues in Oregon

Oregon Children's Theatre, Portland

to produce the play *Tomás and the Library Lady* in an adaptation that will tour to rural communities and underserved neighborhoods supporting literacy and community engagement

Oregon Humanities, Portland

for *Your Land My Land*, a multimedia project that uses video, audio, words, and images to explore the policies and legislation that resulted in the historical loss of land and power by communities of color in Oregon

Oregon Museum of Science and Industry, Portland

to create interpretive framework, design, and fabrication plan for a large kinetic sculpture that uses visual storytelling to reframe Western science and technology and an exhibition which invites visitors to explore the dynamics between art and science

Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Ashland

to support an international artistic team to develop, design, rehearse and premiere the most popular play in China, *Secret Loves in Peach Blossom Land*

Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Ashland

to premiere an adaption of Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*, called, *Off the Rails*, written by Native American playwright Randy Reinholz and set on the American frontier exploring the topic of Indian boarding schools

Oregon State University Foundation, Corvallis

for the Spring Creek Project, to commission renowned DJ and composer Paul Miller (DJ Spooky) to compose music celebrating the art and science of iconic Oregon forests; debut and record a performance with the OSU Wind Ensemble; and create and tour a multimedia performance

Oregon Symphony Association, Portland

to present *Sound Sights*, a trio of cross-genre programs that combine orchestral music with visual art by Pacific Northwest artists Dale Chihuly, Rose Bond, and Michael Curry during the 2016-2017 season

Oregon Symphony Association, Portland

to present *Sounds of Home*, a symphonic exploration of critical social issues such as immigration, homelessness, and the environment, which combine classical master-works, commissions and visual art forms to spark dialogue on social themes

PHAME Academy, Portland

to commission a new musical from Laura Gibson and Debbie Lamedman to be performed by PHAME artists with and without disabilities

Pioneer Courthouse Square, Portland

for Houseguest, a platform for Oregon artists to experiment with new forms of interactive and socially engaged participatory art, building an innovative, replicable blueprint for creative engagement in the public sphere

Portland Center Stage, Portland

to develop and produce *ASTORIA*, an original stage play based on Peter Stark's acclaimed non-fiction book, *Astoria: John Jacob Astor and Thomas Jefferson's Lost Pacific Empire, A Story of Wealth, Ambition, and Survival*

Portland Center Stage, Portland

to develop and produce *ASTORIA: PART TWO*, a world premiere that will conclude Artistic Director Chris Coleman's original stage adaptation of Peter Stark's book, *Astoria: John Jacob Astor and Thomas Jefferson's Lost Pacific Empire, A Story of Wealth, Ambition, and Survival*

Portland Chamber Orchestra Association, Portland

to present *In a Landscape: Classical Music in the Wild* a traveling outdoor concert series featuring live classical music in forests, fields, deserts, caves, historic sites, and near public art installations throughout Oregon

Portland Experimental Theatre Ensemble, Portland

to research and create new English adaptations of Chekhov's major works through a collaborative process, resulting in new interpretations of four works for publication including one work to be fully staged in January 2018

Portland Gay Men's Chorus, Portland

to collaborate with the Beijing Queer Chorus, and composer Livia Gho, PGMC will produce *Pacific Overture*, a new production designed to increase cultural awareness and appreciation of diversity through the use of choral music and instrumentation

Portland Institute for Contemporary Arts, Portland

to connect Oregon artists in a variety of disciplines with their national and international colleagues through a creative laboratory and support for resulting collaborations

Portland Jazz Composers Ensemble, Portland

to produce three radio documentary pieces with original jazz music that tell the stories of unsung Oregonians for broadcast on the KOPB and KMHD networks and for live performance in Portland, Hood River, and Astoria

Portland Jazz Composers Ensemble, Portland

to create a community-guided music, text, and video piece that tells the story of two little-known Oregon towns with significant black and immigrant populations and the diverse residents that made them unique

Portland Opera Association, Portland

to present a double bill of two David Lang operas in May 2017, directed by Jerry Mouawad of Imago Theater, in collaboration with Chamber Music Northwest

Portland Piano Association, Portland

to commission and document a series of 12 new works for solo piano by Oregon composers, which will be premiered by up-and-coming pianists in locations around the state

Portland Playhouse, Portland

to develop, create and premier the musical, *SCARLET* by Portland composer and lyricist Michelle Horgen based on Nathaniel Hawthorne's novel, *The Scarlet Letter*

Portland Taiko, Portland

to compose a work for western instruments and taiko ensemble, with composer Kenji Bunch, interweaving Japanese percussion and Western instruments that bridges the gap between contemporary classical music and taiko

Portland Youth Philharmonic, Portland

to present, *Voices of Light*, a Portland premier with an orchestra, solo and choral voices accompanying the showing of Carl Dreyer's classic 1928 silent film, *The Passion of Joan of Arc*, shown in collaboration with the NW Film Center

Profile Theatre Project, Portland

for a residency and collaboration with National Medal of Arts awardee Ping Chong and Profile's featured playwright who, in dialogue, will create and produce a new theater piece exploring issues of identity with underrepresented Portland communities

RASIKA, India Arts and Culture Council, Portland

to create and premiere *DUALITY*, a dance theatre performance investigating the ever-deepening Indian immigrant dilemma of culture and identity—western and eastern, traditional and contemporary

Rogue Valley Symphony Association, Portland

to commission five new symphonic works premiering on each of five masterwork series concerts during the anniversary season

South Coast Folk Society, Portland

to collaborate with The Portland Collection: Contra Dance Music in the Pacific Northwest for a residency, education and outreach resulting in a dance and concert

Third Angle New Music, Portland

to develop, perform and document *Frozen Music: Light and Music in Aalto's Library*, a musical installation at the Mt. Angel Abbey Library

Third Angle New Music, Portland

to create, *A Fond Farewell*, a chamber music project that reimagines the music of singer-songwriter Elliott Smith as a suite of staged art-songs presented in collaboration with Hand2Mouth Theater

VOZ Workers' Rights Educational Project, Portland

to support a collaborative art project between day laborers associated with VOZ and Portland artist Patricia Vazquez, including the creation of a screen printing project and the establishment of a screen printing shop

Western Oregon University Foundation, Portland

to develop a new dance work utilizing motion-tracking technology to be performed at five rural Oregon venues
