

FOSTERING THE CREATIVE CITY: CHICAGO

A Report to the Joyce Foundation on the “Research Agenda for the Arts” Project
Cultural Policy Center, Harris School of Public Policy, the University of Chicago, February 2015

I. BACKGROUND: THE ARTS in CHICAGO TODAY

The 2012 Chicago Cultural Plan set out an ambitious program to help guide the city’s cultural and economic growth in the near future. Now, three years after the Plan was launched, the Stewardship Committee, *Accelerate Culture Chicago*, has identified ten priority actions within the Plan’s four principal categories:

- ❖ **PEOPLE:** developing the creative workforce; K-12 arts education; and lifelong learning
- ❖ **PLACES:** supporting neighborhood cultural planning
- ❖ **POLICIES:** simplifying government processes; designing tools for navigating city regulations; increasing public & private funding for arts and culture
- ❖ **PLANNING CULTURALLY:** designating cultural liaisons; aligning Cultural Plan priorities with other City departments and agencies; increasing cultural sector representation on advisory boards and commissions across departments and agencies.¹

The 2012 Chicago Cultural Plan and the policy recommendations of *Accelerate Culture Chicago* have been widely admired and emulated for the inclusive planning processes they generated and the clear guidelines they developed for cultural programs and initiatives in the city. In addition to serving as a model city for cultural planning, Chicago has also been a leader among U.S. cities in supporting the kind of empirical research that can provide an objective baseline for understanding the current strengths and challenges of the local arts and cultural landscape. In 2014, the Cultural Policy Center (CPC) at the University of Chicago was commissioned by Arts Alliance Illinois to draw on existing public data sources to compare Chicago with other U.S. cities on such issues as the size and strength of the city’s creative sector, the city’s success in attracting and retaining artists and creative professionals, and the extent of public grant funding made available to the city’s artists and arts organizations over the decade from 2002 to 2012. Among the findings from these reports:

- ❖ Chicago has a higher concentration of artists in its labor force than in the U.S. as a whole; but the city ranks in the middle on most other measures of its creative economy when compared with 8 other peer cities.²
- ❖ Chicago is second only to New York City in its success in retaining arts students (a majority of them drawn from out of state) as residents of the city within five years of leaving school or graduating—evidence of an important pipeline of creative workers for the city’s economy.³
- ❖ Overall, Chicago’s artists and arts organizations received substantial public grant funding in terms of total dollar amounts compared to 12 other peer regions, but very little of that

¹ <http://accelerateculture.org/>

² Jennifer Novak-Leonard, “Measuring Chicago’s (Artistically) Creative Economy”: <http://culturalpolicy.uchicago.edu/sites/culturalpolicy.uchicago.edu/files/creative-economy.pdf>

³ Jennifer Novak-Leonard and Patience Baach, “The Retention of Chicago’s Arts Students in Comparative Perspective”: <http://culturalpolicy.uchicago.edu/sites/culturalpolicy.uchicago.edu/files/chicagos-arts-students.pdf>

public funding came from our local arts agency, the city's Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events (DCASE). Whereas San Francisco's local arts agency awarded \$12.95 per capita in local arts grants in 2012, DCASE awarded just \$0.44 per capita.⁴

These studies represent an important first step in tracking the city's cultural assets, deficits, challenges, and opportunities from a comparative perspective. They do not result in a simple narrative about the role of arts and culture in Chicago or any other city, but instead offer multiple lenses for analysis of the role that the arts play in shaping a city's economy and social life.

II. THE PROJECT: THE RESEARCH AGENDA for the ARTS in CHICAGO

In many cities today, urban cultural policy is beginning to extend far beyond the projects of developing one-to-five year cultural plans and policy initiatives, with a more futuristic focus on what it will take to become the kind of global cultural city that can foster growth, innovation, and a wealth of creative experiences for its residents and visitors. World (or global) cities are understood to be nodes in the linked global economic system of finance and trade. But, increasingly, they are also recognized as **cultural hubs**—places that provide a wide array of cultural products and activities both formal and informal; that foster cultural consumption and widespread participation; that attract diverse audiences for culture, both among residents and visitors; and that cultivate local cultural attributes that add to the city's distinctive sense of place and vitality.⁵

Chicago: A Global Cultural City of the 22nd Century?

In early 2014, The Joyce Foundation and DCASE charged the Cultural Policy Center with the task of helping to develop **a research agenda for the arts in Chicago**, as framed by the question: “*what new information do we need to know now to ensure that Chicago is recognized as a preeminent global cultural city of the future?*” To this end, the Cultural Policy Center hosted three public meetings at the Chicago Cultural Center on February 6, February 18, and March 6, 2014 with over 100 participants from the city's arts community—including individuals, representatives of organizations, and arts funders. The CPC staff subsequently conducted individual interviews with business leaders, aldermen, and representatives from the commercial arts sector under a separate, supplemental grant from the Foundation; the insights from those interviews have been included in this summary.

Because the goal of these public meetings was to engage in visionary, futuristic, yet pragmatic thinking, the conversations were framed in terms of several important but challenging trends projected for the U.S. in 2050:

- ❖ the demographic shift in the population to a “majority minority society,” which refers to the shrinking of the historically-dominant group of non-Hispanic whites to less than 50 percent of the U.S. population and formerly minority groups becoming the collective majority;
- ❖ the aging of the US population, with Americans aged 60+ projected to be 25.5 percent of the total population and the “oldest old” (85+) projected to be 18.2 percent;

⁴ Jennifer L. Novak-Leonard and Patience E. Baach, “Public Funding for Art: Chicago Compared with 12 Peer Regions”: <http://culturalpolicy.uchicago.edu/sites/culturalpolicy.uchicago.edu/files/public-funding.pdf>

⁵ “World Cities Culture Report 2013”: <http://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/WCCR2013.pdf>

- ❖ the growing urbanization and population density of US “mega-regions,” including the Great Lakes Region;
- ❖ the expansion of “creative sector” jobs in the economy, projected to be the basis of future international competitiveness, yet defined by their sporadic, temporary nature and relative economic precariousness.
- ❖ The growing economic and social gap between highly-skilled, educated workers in the creative economy and low-skilled, less-educated service workers.

Participants in these sessions were encouraged to “think big,” envisioning the characteristics that would help define Chicago as a global cultural city of the future, even beyond the ideas and initiatives promoted by 2012 Chicago Cultural Plan. Discussion groups were organized around:

- **the creative economy** (e.g., cultivating artists and other creative workers as the workforce of an innovative city)
- **the livable city** (creative places and events where art and daily life intersect)
- **cultural organizations** (e.g., their value and future in a global cultural city)
- **thriving communities/city** (e.g., culture and innovation as the drivers of urban prosperity).

III. RESULTS

Asked to think broadly and futuristically, our participants did. In summary, two sets of assumptions and questions emerged from the discussions about enhancing Chicago’s profile as a global cultural city:

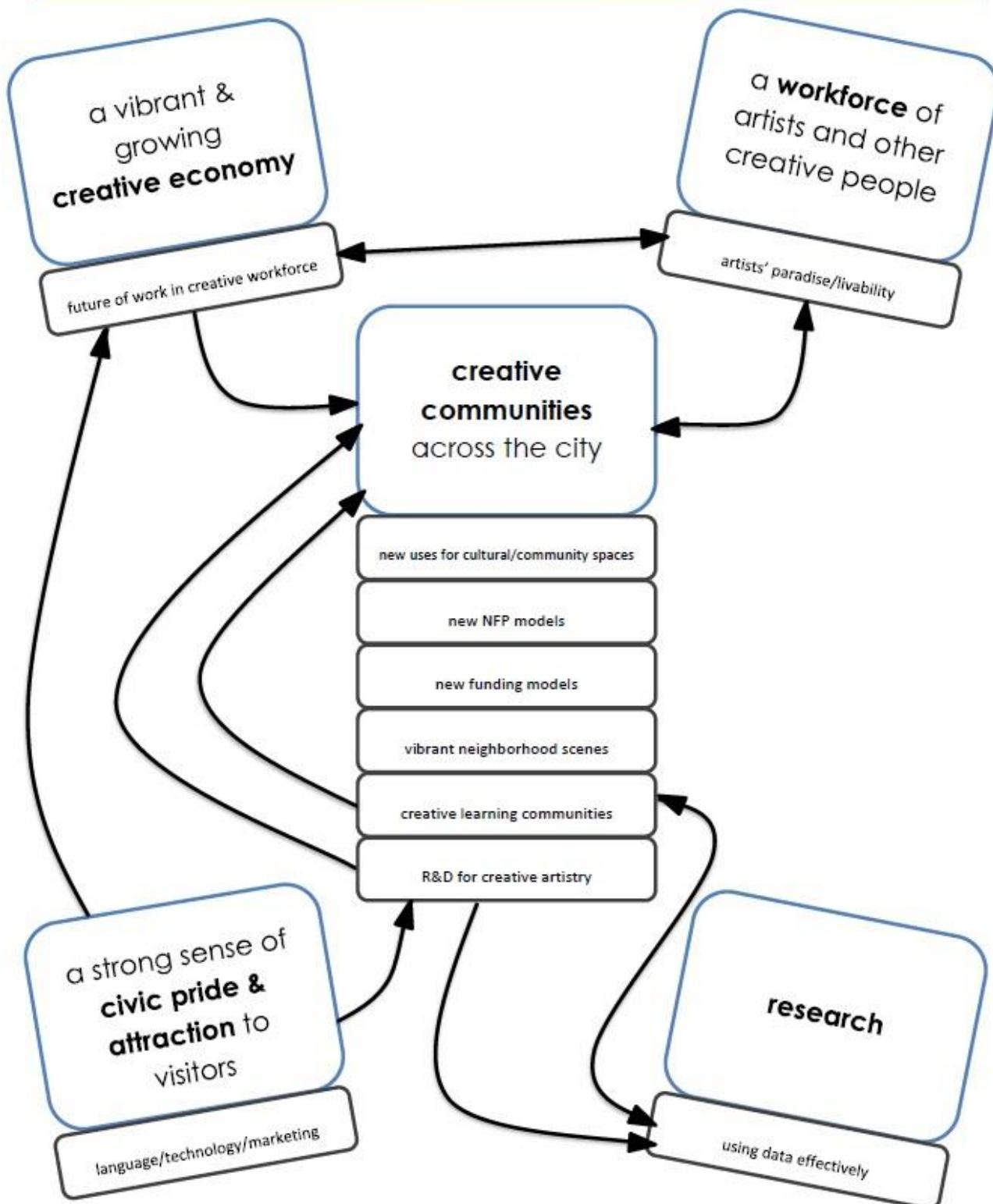
- ❖ Assuming that artists and creative workers provide the foundation for a creative, innovative, vibrant city, how can we best cultivate, attract, and retain these workers in Chicago?
- ❖ Assuming that “creative expression is everywhere” (i.e., in the commercial arts sector, the nonprofit arts sector, and in the kinds of informal activities of “making and doing” that people engage in everyday), how can cultural organizations and communities encourage widespread expression, participation, and engagement of all kinds?

Two additional summary concepts help capture what participants in the discussions identified as essential characteristics that will be distinctive features of a global cultural Chicago of the future: Chicago as a city that **incubates, cultivates, and supports** artists, creative workers, creativity and innovation; and Chicago as a city of **creative enclaves** (neighborhoods, creative community clusters, and creative cultural organizations) that harness opportunities for all kinds of cultural engagement (doing, making, attending, curating, sharing artistic experiences).

Depicted graphically, the following chart summarizes many of the ideas we heard about what Chicago needs in order to flourish as a global cultural city:

- ❖ become an “artists’ paradise” rooted in a creative workforce and economy;
- ❖ sustain a network of interconnected creative communities spread across the entire city that supports the arts and creative expression both inside and outside of cultural organizations;
- ❖ cater to its local citizens as well as attract visitors with multiple opportunities for inclusive creative experiences;
- ❖ gather and use data effectively to monitor, experiment with, and build on the city’s cultural resources and assets.

FOR THE ARTS TO FLOURISH IN CHICAGO, WE NEED...



IV. THE TOP 10: RESEARCH AGENDA QUESTIONS

The following represents the Cultural Policy Center's summary of the many visionary ideas and insights generated in the course of this project, translated here as the ten most pressing research questions that need to be answered to ensure Chicago's position as a global cultural city of the future. Each of the ten questions requires a much more detailed and systematic research design for data collection, methodology, analysis, and implementation.

Research Agenda for the Arts in Chicago

In order to be a global cultural city of the future, Chicago needs to know:

I. The role that the arts play in building and sustaining an economically thriving city

- ❖ How can Chicago most effectively grow and sustain its creative economy?
- ❖ What will ensure that Chicago remains attractive and livable to artists and creative workers, and that it is recognized as a cultural mecca? (What mix of affordable housing, available work space, training and resources, etc. will make the city an “artists’ paradise”?)
- ❖ How can artists and other creative workers be most effectively engaged across different occupations to harness the creative process?

II. The role that arts and culture play in enhancing the quality of life

- ❖ What is the optimal mix of social, economic, and political conditions that allow community cultural vitality to flourish?; what factors inhibit cultural vitality?
- ❖ How can the arts play a role in strengthening the bonds within and bridges across neighborhoods and communities?
- ❖ How can arts participation, arts making, and creative expression be made more accessible to all?
- ❖ What conditions, activities, spaces will deepen the links between informal and professional arts experiences?

III. How to map and support a sustainable arts ecology

- ❖ What is the state of the arts ecology in Chicago across the commercial, nonprofit, and informal arts? How is it changing?; What factors are most critical in making it healthy and sustainable?
- ❖ What are the most and least effective policy tools for supporting creative cities?
- ❖ What infrastructural needs (transportation networks, gentrification controls, funding resources, incentives, etc.) are most critical to attracting creative workers and visitors?

V. *IMPLICATIONS and NEXT STEPS*

This project has focused on Chicago, but the research agenda identifies broad areas of inquiry that any global cultural city will need to address in the future. Increasingly, we live in a data-driven world, with a call for greater rigor and transparency about the evidence of “what works” or doesn’t. All those who care about the arts, culture, and creativity need easier access to reliable data, along with the ability to process and manage information and to make evidence-based interpretation of what the data reveal. This is needed at the level of arts organizations, as well as at the more systemic level of the cultural sector as a whole. Cities that are prepared to address their arts and culture assets and deficits objectively through carefully designed, systematic, ongoing research that complements their existing cultural plans and policy priorities will have a distinct advantage in terms of gaining a deeper understanding of how arts and culture can be fused with urban policy to shape the ethos of their city.

Chicago is poised to be a leader in this effort: it has the foundation of a strong cultural plan and succinct policy priorities in place that were developed with engaged community support; a vibrant and tightly-connected arts community; a well-articulated, crowd-sourced vision of a broad research agenda for the future; and a robust network of researchers, practitioners, funders, and policymakers as the stakeholders for building, nurturing, and sustaining this dynamic creative city into the next century.

Recommendations for using the research agenda/Next steps

The Research Agenda project was primarily an experiment in crowd-sourcing ideas for a vision of Chicago as a global cultural city of the future. For it to be most useful, it needs to be seen as:

- **a first step in a process.** The ideas generated in these discussions need to be part of an ongoing dialogue with broad public engagement—open to all, amenable to critique, and subject to revision and addition.
- **a publicly accessible document/platform.** Just as the 2012 Chicago Cultural Plan was built through multiple community meetings and an online platform for public engagement, a research agenda based on ideas about “*what we need to know now*” requires an accessible platform, where ideas can be contributed and research transparently tracked in terms of goals and outcomes.
- **having visible city and community champions.** Who is responsible for the research agenda? We believe that it must be a combination of the arts leaders in the city government, arts organizations, foundations and corporations who have a stake in promoting Chicago as a leading, artistically vibrant city; the researchers committed to developing better evidence-based studies on the arts and cultural sector; and the engaged citizens who care about the role of the arts in their communities and city.

Chicagoans have demonstrated their passion for and commitment to the arts through all stages of developing the 2012 Cultural Plan and subsequent policy priorities. We believe that the *Research Agenda for the Arts in Chicago* could help sustain the momentum of that engagement. The *Agenda* could also become a platform for sharing ideas and engaging in serious debate about the role of the arts in public life. To do so would require supporting a program of rigorous data collection and analysis of the arts for the city and making goals and outcomes around arts and

cultural initiatives transparent. These are approaches that would set Chicago apart as an urban leader that supports a dynamic and engaging arts and culture ecosystem at the heart of the city.

*APPENDIX 1: WORD CLOUD of
PARTICIPANTS' DESCRIPTIONS
of the ARTS in CHICAGO*

Prior to the sessions, we asked participants to identify three words that they felt captured the current state of the arts in Chicago. This word cloud, including the number of times the word was mentioned by respondents, is the result.



APPENDIX 2: LIST of PARTICIPANTS

- Lane Alexander, *Chicago Human Rhythm Project*
Sandra Aponte, *Chicago Community Trust*
Brett Batterson, *Auditorium Theatre*
Anuradha Behari, *Eye on India*
Patsy Benveniste, *Chicago Botanic Garden*
Sophia W. Boccio, *Redmoon Theater*
Seth Boustead, *Access Contemporary Music*
Natalie Butler, *The People's Music School*
Orysia Cardoso, *Ukrainian Institute of Modern Art*
Barbara Carney, *Garfield Park Conservatory*
Shannon Carpenter, *Chicago Park District*
Melissa Cherry, *Choose Chicago*
Antonia Contro, *Marwen*
Anna Cooksey, *Fifth House Ensemble*
Kevin Coval, *Young Chicago Authors*
Ernest Dawkins, *Live the Spirit Residency*
Alexandra Day, *Lyric Opera of Chicago*
Mimi de Castro, *Choose Chicago*
Matt de la Pena, *Harris Theater*
Jean de St. Aubin, *Gene Siskel Film Center*
Carole Deeter, *Fifth House Ensemble*
Kelly Degenhart, *Harris Theater*
Juan Dies, *Sones de Mexico Ensemble*
Ann Douglas, *Loyola University*
Natalie Drogos, *Harris Theater*
Julie Eskind, *Harris Theater*
Nilda Esparza, *Latinos Progresando*
Jennifer Farrington, *Chicago Children's Museum*
David Feiner, *Albany Park Theater Project*
Brooke Flanagan, *Chicago Shakespeare Theater*
Maggie Fouché, *Chicago Jazz Philharmonic*
Suzanne Franklin, *Chicago Cultural Alliance*
Joanie Friedman, *Southside Arts & Humanities*
Kevin Giglinto, *Chicago Symphony Orchestra*
Bau Graves, *Old Town School of Folk Music*
Christian Greer, *Chicago Architecture Foundation*
Esther Grimm, *3Arts*
Katie Grogan, *Chicago Shakespeare Theater*
Elizabeth Halajian, *Harris Theater*
Monica Haslip, *Little Black Pearl*
Jim Hirsch, *Chicago Sinfonietta*

Rebecca Hunter, *Young Chicago Authors*
Brian Inman, *Arts Alliance Illinois*
Ra Joy, *Arts Alliance Illinois*
Kara Kane, *Classical Kids Music Education*
Michael Kelly, *Chicago Park District*
Richard Lariviere, *Field Museum*
Manwah Lee, *Street-Level Youth Media*
Jason Lesniewicz, *Choose Chicago*
Kate Lorenz, *Hyde Park Art Center*
Kenda Lovecchio, *Chicago Children's Choir*
Meghan McNamara, *Harris Theater*
Michael McStraw, *Giordano Dance Chicago*
Patricia Morris, *Redmoon Theater*
Anthony Moseley, *Collaboraction Theatre*
Sara Murphy, *Rush Hour Concerts*
Justine Nagan, *Kartemquin Films*
Mike Nourse, *Hyde Park Art Center*
Caroline O'Boyle
Lynn Osmond, *Chicago Architecture Fdn.*
Stephen Ostrander, *Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning*
Todd Palmer, *National Public Housing Museum*
Troy Peters, *Chicago Cultural Alliance*
Jon Pounds, *Chicago Public Art Group*
Kathleen Rapp, *Expo Chicago*
Kennon Reinard, *Arts Alliance Illinois*
Elizabeth Ress, *Harris Theater*
Adam Rose, *Antibody Corporation*
Eunita Rushing, *Garfield Park Conservatory*
Nari Safavi, *Pasfarda Arts & Cultural Exchange*
Roell Schmidt, *Links Hall*
Susanne Schnell, *Archeworks*
Roche Schulfer, *Goodman Theatre*
Eva Silverman, *Arts Alliance Illinois*
Melissa Snoza, *Fifth House Ensemble*
Paul Sznewajs, *Ingenuity*
Pepe Vargas, *Int'l Latino Cultural Center*
Ellen Wadey, *Donnelley Foundation*
Catherine Wagner, *Harris Theater*
Sarah Ward, *South Chicago Art Center*
Cynthia Weiss, *Marwen*

ADDITIONAL THANKS

Chicago Arts Funders

Jennifer Armstrong, *Illinois Arts Council*
Frank Baiocchi, *Polk Bros. Foundation*
Suzanne Connor, *Chicago Community Trust*
Gretchen Crosby Sims, *Joyce Foundation*
Gillian Darlow, *Polk Bros. Foundation*
Allyson Esposito, *City of Chicago DCASE*
Marcia Festen, *Arts Work Fund*
Cate Fox, *MacArthur Foundation*
Peter Handler, *Driehaus Foundation*
Agnes Meneses, *Alphawood Foundation*
Rose Parisi, *Illinois Arts Council*
Ellen Placey Wadey, *Donnelley Foundation*
Angelique Power, *Joyce Foundation*
Laura Samson, *Boeing Company*
Encarnacion Teruel, *Illinois Arts Council*
Brad White, *Alphawood Foundation*
Benna Wilde, *Prince Charitable Trusts*

Interviewees

John Arena, *Alderman, Chicago 45th Ward*
and Cyd Smillie, *art liaison*
Phillip Bahar, *Chicago Humanities Festival*
David Chavez and Dylan Rice, *DCASE/Creative Industries, Music*
Rey Colón, *Alderman, Chicago 35th Ward*
and Susan Fox, *arts outreach consultant*
Brian Fabes, *Civic Consulting Alliance*
Esther Grimm, *3 Arts*
Jamil Khoury, *Silk Road Rising*
Barbara Koenen, *DCASE*
Monique Meloche and Allison Glenn, *Monique Meloche Gallery*
Adelheid Mers, *SAIC*
Alaka Wali, *Field Museum*

Hosting Organizations

The Joyce Foundation
Angelique Power, *Senior Program Officer, Culture*

The City of Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events

Michelle Boone, *Commissioner*
Julie Burros, *former Director of Cultural Planning*

The Cultural Policy Center at the University of Chicago

Betty Farrell, *Executive Director*
Jennifer Novak-Leonard, *Research Manager*
Will Anderson, *former Asst. Director*
with
Julia Perkins, *MBMD Consultants*
Alison Zehr, *Business of the Arts*