



Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art

“CEI has been one of the most important and transformative programs during my time as a Trustee”



Community Engagement Initiative

**Evaluation Report: Executive Summary
2012**

Submitted To:
Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art

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COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVE: OVERVIEW

The Community Engagement Initiative (CEI) was initiated in 2008, under the leadership of the museum’s director Susan Talbott. CEI was established to attract and sustain new and diverse audiences, in particular but not exclusively Hispanic/Latino, African American/Black, school, youth and family populations in and around Hartford. CEI also serves to strengthen relationships with the museum’s traditional audiences, to enhance visitor experiences, to make the museum more accessible and welcoming, and to improve the lives of the Greater Hartford community. Through CEI, museum culture is also expected to change to sustain engagement with the community. A Hartford Foundation for Public Giving (Foundation) grant helps to fund the museum’s efforts to initiate new programs with artists and local organizations that represent key communities; continue to identify and develop relationships with other cultural and community groups; and engage new and existing audiences through existing programs and self-guided bilingual materials.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVE (CEI) AT A GLANCE	
<u>Key CEI Programs</u>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Second Saturdays for Families* • Family Gallery Guides (Bilingual)* • Community Days • Children’s Latino Film Festival • School Tours • Museum on the Move – School Outreach* • Free Family Pass (free youth admission)* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher Discover Pass (free teacher admission)* • Youth Arts Institute (afterschool program)* • Hartford Youth Art Renaissance • Artist Residencies* • Summer Community Studio* • Summer Pre-Collegiate Program*
<u>Broadening Audiences</u>	<u>Special Initiatives</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Thursday • Connections Gallery* • Bilingual Highlights Audio Tour* • Spanish-language materials* • Library ART Pass • Wake up at the Wadsworth* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wayfinding Master Plan* • thewadsworth.org (website re-design)* • Customer Care Committee*
<i>* new programs developed for CEI</i>	

During the spring of 2012, concurrent with their ongoing CEI efforts, the Wadsworth was selected to participate in the Foundation’s Building Evaluation Capacity (BEC) project which is designed to provide comprehensive evaluation training.¹ As a result of their participation in BEC, the Wadsworth team realized the organization would benefit by commissioning external evaluation of CEI. Anita Baker of Evaluation Services, who also serves as the BEC trainer and facilitator, designed the participatory evaluation of CEI calendar year 2012 and 2013 programming. The workplan included an annual implementation study as well as additional review of key findings from other external evaluation reports. The evaluation was designed specifically to answer key questions about CEI (see following), to support feedback requirements regarding the Wadsworth’s grant with the Foundation and to provide results-based information to guide ongoing CEI decision-making.

¹ BEC is designed to increase both evaluation capacity and organization-wide use of evaluative thinking. Participating organizations receive 30+ hours of content presentation, activities and evaluation-related technical assistance.

CEI Evaluation Questions

1. How and to what extent has the Wadsworth met its goals to better engage target populations?
2. How and to what extent has the Wadsworth increased engagement in its school and family programs?
3. How and to what extent has the Wadsworth enhanced visitors' experiences of the museum?
4. How and to what extent has the Wadsworth broadened its reach across multiple audiences?
5. To what extent have there been cultural changes within the Wadsworth Atheneum?

KEY FINDINGS

During calendar year 2012, more than 101,000 people visited the Wadsworth. **The museum set and achieved or exceeded goals for overall attendance and through CEI worked to identify specific un- and under-served groups on which to focus outreach and engagement efforts.** Initial estimates to determine the characteristics of adult visitors ² showed that:

- About one-third of adult attendees were non-member, first-time visitors. About 70% of adults are returning visitors and they attended regularly throughout the year.
- Adult visitors from various racial/ethnic groups and age groups attended (e.g., a total of 4% of those who visited in 2011 were African American/Black, 4% were Latino/Hispanic, 5% were Asian/Asian American, 83% were Caucasian; 13% were between the ages of 21 and 30, 24% were between 31 and 45, 34% were between the ages of 45 and 60 and the rest were more than 60).
- About 43% of the adult visitors had family incomes less than \$75,000.
- A substantial majority (74%) of calendar year 2012 Connecticut visitors who reported zip codes came from Hartford county. City of Hartford residents were well-represented among those who visited (about 30% of Hartford County visitors were from Hartford).

The Wadsworth utilized multiple strategies to engage CEI target populations. This included special programming and events aimed specifically at Hispanic/Latino and African American/Black visitors (e.g., Second Saturdays for Families, Community Days, and First Thursdays) and special exhibits in the Connections Gallery. Additionally, during 2012, the museum made a concerted effort to translate many print materials into Spanish and launched two new audio tours – highlights of the permanent collection and a family tour – in English and Spanish.

As part of its regular and enhanced CEI programming, **the Wadsworth made multiple efforts to effectively engage school communities and families. This resulted in substantial participation by those targeted.**

- During calendar year 2012, a total of 257 school group tours were conducted involving more than 13,000 students and 146 individual schools. About half of these groups involved schools from Hartford.

² Source: Central Connecticut State University Department of Geography – Tourism Research, Dr. Richard W. Benfield, Project Director; Market Research 2011. Characteristics of adult visitors during the exhibition *Monet's Water Lilies: An Artist's Obsession* through a stratified sample of 449 adult visitors to the museum from May 20 through June 12, 2011.

- Many of the students who participated in school tours during 2012 were children who are members of under-served groups CEI was designed to attract and serve. It is estimated ³ that about 27% of students participating in school tours (as compared to only about 4% of adult visitors) were African American/Black; about 36% of students (compared to only 4% of adult visitors) were Hispanic/Latino.

The Wadsworth also conducted special summer and afterschool programming and provided multiple opportunities to increase access by school-aged youth through free/reduced admissions. The Summer Pre-Collegiate Program and the Summer Community Studio involved smaller numbers of youth in intensive programming that involved art-making. For example, the Summer Pre-Collegiate Program awarded four scholarships to Hartford students to participate in the University of Hartford's Summer High School Visual Arts program.

In addition to school-based efforts, Second Saturdays for Families programming also engaged targeted participants.

- Between January and October 2012, a total of 4,903 attendees visited during Second Saturdays, a little over one-third of whom were children. This attendance accounted for the majority (84%) of all visitors to the museum when Second Saturdays events were held.
- Families from the City of Hartford were the most prevalent among all visitors.

Efforts to engage school communities and families were well received and important insights and outcomes resulted.

- A substantial majority of teachers of students from all grade levels thought their students felt welcome, understood the content and had opportunities to participate through questions. Almost all teachers indicated the tours met their expectations.
- Tour feedback also showed that proportionately fewer teachers were sure their students understood the tour theme. This suggests some adjustments are needed.
- Museum on the Move - School Outreach involved more than 750 4th grade participants in classroom, art classroom and museum-based learning opportunities during 2012. Separate studies of the Museum on the Move program showed that participants improved their writing, especially in the use of art terminology.
- More than 90% of family member respondents to surveys about Second Saturdays for Families 2012, provided positive ratings for the hands-on art activities, family tours and special activities, and the live music.

³ Individual student demographics were estimated based on whole school population distributions for those schools with publicly available school-wide racial/ethnic population data. Adult visitor demographics were estimated through stratified random sampling of visitors during the Monet exhibition May 20 through June 12, 2011.

Available visitor feedback showed that CEI also focused on enhancing visitors' experiences.

- A substantial majority of respondents to Second Saturdays surveys indicated the program they participated in had helped them grow their own interest in art (86%), had helped strengthen their relationships with their children (78%), and had helped develop their children's interest in art (70%).
- About 80% of visitors to the MATRIX 164 exhibit indicated they were absorbed in their art experience. They also indicated the exhibit made them feel peaceful and inspired. Additionally, 96% of visitors indicated the exhibit left them at least a little curious and 80% indicated it left them feeling reflective. About 75% of visitors indicated the exhibit helped them gain a new insight or learning.

In addition to the many program and exhibition-focused efforts that comprised CEI, two non-program efforts: the re-designed website and wayfinding improvements also reflected important change during 2012 Evaluation of these showed the following.

- The re-designed website, available for the first complete year in 2012, included multiple improvements: a simplified layout, easier navigation, far greater visibility of the museum's exhibitions and programs, a sleek layout with a less busy appearance and faster load time.
- Review of current wayfinding needs showed that although there are many seating areas throughout the museum, there is a considerable lack of locating signage throughout the galleries. There is also limited wayfinding signage to amenities.

With CEI funding from the Foundation, the Wadsworth hired C&G Partners to develop a comprehensive wayfinding plan. Phase I of the plan is focused on interior signage, wayfinding, and donor recognition. It includes: five types of signs throughout the building that are neutral to allow the artwork to stand out, new visitor maps for general and barrier-free access, and use of iconic images to reduce reliance on reading. Funding for Phase I has been secured and implementation is scheduled to be completed in 2013.

CEI also focused on increasing outreach for multiple and, in many cases, new audiences. In 2012 this was accomplished through special programs, collaborative efforts and through partnership development.

- The Wadsworth continued an interactive space (Connections Gallery), hosted a film series with international appeal and presented special programs including First Thursday, Artist Residencies, and Wake up at the Wadsworth.
- Multiple partnerships were established or maintained in support of CEI. This included program collaborations with 11 different organizations with whom the content of programs were jointly determined; partnerships with 59 artists/musicians/performers; and partnerships with 11 different scholars, teachers or other experts.

The final area addressed by CEI is cultural change at the Wadsworth itself. During 2012, organizational change efforts included the following.

- Operation of a staff run, cross-departmental Customer Care Committee focused on the visitor experience.
- Implementation of the Summer Diversity Internship which provided a stipend to a single university student.
- Participation in the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving's Building Evaluation (BEC) Initiative. The BEC team is interdepartmental and is focusing its evaluation work on the Connections Gallery and the visitor experience.
- Administration of internal CEI surveys to determine overall internal response to CEI goals, strategies and outcomes.⁴

Trustees, staff and docents were surveyed regarding CEI and their responses show overall support for CEI programs, goals and outcomes. They also highlighted differences between specific CEI elements.

- When asked on a three point scale –*not important, somewhat important, important* - most Trustees, staff and docent respondents (66% or more) agreed that six of the ten CEI programs were *important*.
 - All Trustees, and almost all staff (93%) and docents (90%) respondents rated Second Saturdays for Families as *important*.
 - Additionally, most Trustees (86% or more), staff (79% or more) and docents (67% or more) also rated Community Days, *Museum on the Move*, Bilingual Audio Tours and Family Guides as *important*.
 - First Thursdays were identified as *important* to 81% of the docents and 79% of Trustees, but 69% of staff.
- Despite numerous reports and presentations about CEI, about one-third of Trustees indicated they needed more information about the Summer Community Studio and the Summer Pre-Collegiate program and about 19% of Trustees indicated they needed more information about Artist Residencies. These were also the programs identified by the fewest Trustees as *important* even among those with enough information to rate them.
- About one-quarter of the staff and docents, also indicated they needed more information about the Summer Community Studio and Summer Pre-Collegiate program.

⁴ The survey was answered by 63% of Trustees, 70% of staff and 56% of docents (total n=134). Respondents were broadly representative of all Trustees, staff and docents in terms of their roles at the museum and tenure.

- Most Trustees, staff and docents indicated their support for CEI efforts, and on a scale ranging from – *do not agree at all, agree somewhat, definitely agree* – they *definitely agreed* CEI has both benefitted and had an important impact *on the community and the museum*.
 - *All Trustee respondents*, as well as 84% of the staff and 81% of the docents indicated they *definitely agreed* with CEI goals.
 - Similarly, all Trustee respondents *definitely agreed* that CEI programs are valuable and help to reach CEI goals, as did 93% of staff and 82% of docents.
 - Almost all Trustees (94%) indicated they *definitely agreed* with the changes happening at the museum. This was true for 79% of docents and 75% of staff.
- Almost all Trustees indicated they *definitely* thought that CEI programs were benefitting underserved residents of the Hartford community. This was also true for most staff and docents, but the proportion *definitely agreeing* was notably smaller (94% of Trustees vs. 73% of staff and 76% of docents).
- Several themes emerged when Trustees were asked to specify in their own words what they thought were the most important results of CEI programming. Of the 32 Trustees who provided responses, the most common comments identified diversity, outreach to underserved audiences, visibility and partnerships. When staff and docents were asked the same question, most of those who answered also indicated that increased attendance and participation by a more diverse audience was a key result.

Through the survey, Trustees also provided multiple suggestions for how they could be more involved with CEI. All responding groups identified suggestions for potential future partners. Lastly, Trustees, staff and docents offered final comments that expressed their approval of current CEI efforts and stressed again the importance of outreach and community engagement and in securing funds to continue CEI work.

RECOMMENDED ACTION STEPS

A cross-departmental team of museum staff reviewed the evaluation report and together with the evaluator identified needed actions, many of which involve more intensive collection and use of information about CEI efforts. Recommendations focused on: refining goals and establishing targets; increasing understanding of visitor profiles including who they are and how they experience the Wadsworth; enhancing internal and external communication about CEI; increasing access to the museum; and continuing to foster internal culture change.

Review Goals and Targets

- Review existing feedback from staff, docents, and others to refine original goals and establish new goals if necessary.
- Develop a new logic model with outcomes, success indicators, and targets for CEI programming.
- Establish long-term evaluation strategy that lasts beyond a grant period.
- Coordinate with The Amistad Center to use the same evaluation instruments.

Identify Visitor Profile

- Building on the base line data gathered in 2012 conduct additional analyses of the 2011 Adult Visitor Study findings.
- Conduct a follow-up Adult Visitor Study for 2013. Expand evaluation to include more specific types of visitors, for example visitors with disabilities.
- Measure a greater variety of events and programs for a more accurate representation.

Analyze Visitor Experience

- Collect better feedback data from Second Saturdays and First Thursday participants.
- Conduct focus groups and other studies of visitor engagement with a variety of visitors, including teachers and target audiences.
- Evaluate demand for Spanish and/or multilingual materials and tours and respond accordingly.
- Analyze participation among visitors (i.e. art-making, interacting in Connections Gallery and other galleries).
- Expand evaluation to include feedback from program partners.
- Evaluate changes resulting from implementation of the Wayfinding Plan, Phase I.

Communication

- Increase awareness and communication of CEI and related programming:
 - Among staff (i.e. brief updates at all staff meetings)
 - To visitors and others (i.e. on the website)
- Increase recognition of partnership with The Amistad Center and other impactful partners.

Access

- Continue to offer free transportation and free admission to Hartford schools and carefully track and monitor locations of participating schools.
- Explore additional methods for increasing/enhancing access

Cultural Change at the Museum

- Continue efforts to effectively involve Trustees, staff and docents from all departments in CEI work:
 - Provide more information in the areas identified in the survey
 - Use other suggestions from the survey
 - Conduct follow-up surveys as needed