A Profile of Creating Partnerships:
Drawing Lessons from
Scholar - Practitioner Collaborations

by

Sue Anne Lafferty
Therese Filicko

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Arts Policy and Administration Program
The Ohio State University
258 Hopkins Hall, 128 North Oval Mall
Columbus, OH 43210
ph: 614-688-4346
fax: 614-688-8217
email: lafferty.16@osu.edu
          filicko.1@osu.edu

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Introduction

The National and Local Profiles of Cultural Support project is a multi-year, multi-site study of support for the cultural sector, conducted by the Arts Policy and Administration Program (The Ohio State University) and Americans for the Arts, funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts. The project examines financial support for arts and cultural organizations in ten communities and nationally. It is a collaborative effort among researchers/ scholars and practitioners in the ten communities, with a national team directing the project and conducting the national component of the project. As such, it presents a unique opportunity for exploring a particular type of partnerships: research partnerships.

Beyond the investigation of support for cultural institutions, the Profiles Project established "local capacity building" as a goal from the outset. For the purposes of this discussion, "capacity building" refers to the establishment and/ or improvement of the ability of local practitioners, in arts agencies or similar organizations, to conduct research that is of high quality, accessible to their constituents, and resonant with the cultural policy community.

Local arts agencies perform many roles n their communities. According to Americans for the Arts (Cohen, 1993), primary functions include cultural programming, facilities management, cultural planning, grant-making, and services for artists and arts organizations. While conducting research is also an important function, arts agencies often do not have the staff or resources to do so efficiently and effectively. The response to this often is to hire consultants, often at high prices; in addition, consultants may retain proprietary rights to the research products.

On the other side of potential partnerships, arts policy researchers have long bemoaned the lack of high quality data (see Kaple and DiMaggio), and have noted the difficulty of getting information from cultural organizations. The Profiles Project brings together these different sets of interests and resources, with a common goal: to improve the quality of data available.

Scholars and practitioners often have very different senses of how to conduct research in their communities. They may have different goals, and they draw on different resources. The Profiles Project provides a particularly good opportunity to investigate types of research collaborations across our 10 communities and with the national project team. (In addition, the national team has partnership relationships with the local research teams.) Exploring the character of these collaborations also allows one to explore how local arts agencies (or their proxies) provide a particular type of support to their constituents; i.e., the products of research on the local cultural community.

This paper provides a framework for assessing the process and impact of the partnerships in the Profiles Project. This analysis will offer guidelines on how to build and sustain researcher/scholar and practitioner partnerships in our field, further building the cultural support network. We begin with a review of the current literature on partnerships in the nonprofit sector, with a particular emphasis on strategic partnerships and partnerships in education. Particular attention is paid to the research-practice-research model.

Putting Cultural Policy Research Partnerships in Context

The three discourses on which we draw for this discussion are cultural policy, strategic partnerships, and partnerships in the arts, with an emphasis on arts in education. Current cultural policy discussions indicate a desire to explore partnership relationships in general, as well as a desire for the products of effective *research* partnerships: high quality, user-friendly information (i.e., data, analysis, findings). The strategic partnership literature provides a framework for discussing the nature of partnerships, the contributions and the benefits for the partners. The literature on education partnerships indicates a focus on short-term goals and the use of resources to build infrastructure. The Profiles Partnerships will highlight ways to adapt models from the strategic partnership literature for cultural policy research partnerships, as well as for other types of partnerships within the cultural policy arena and research partnerships across policy fields.

Cultural Policy
Arthurs, Hodsoll, and Lavine (1998) drew on discussions from the 1997 American Assembly proceedings on cultural policy (*The Arts and the Public Purpose*, May 29 - June 1) to discuss the need for more research on partnerships in the arts. In addition to noting the need for partners to recognize (and pay for) creative talent in such ventures/partnerships, they note that the arts sector must address both a need to reorganizing infrastructure across the sector and the need for research on building successful partnerships in the arts. This highlights our concern that the cultural sector has some notable obstacles when it comes to research partnerships. Whether due to a lack of resources on the part of arts agencies and organizations, a perceived lack of legitimacy in some academic circles for the subject, or other reasons, it seems clear that many potential partners in the arena believe that the rewards are few (i.e. payment and/ or recognition is low) and the cost in time and effort is high (i.e. navigating through a difficult – if it exists – infrastructure). Such partnerships are usually dealing with lack of mutual vision and goals, as well as focus on the process, versus outcome, thus resulting in dysfunctional teams

Strategic Partnerships
The literature suggests that partnerships require that partners be conscious of differences in the values, goals, resources, and roles of their partners. Letona (1999) notes the importance of recognizing the existing institutional norms and values that organizations bring to partnerships. The educational institutions and local arts agencies in our project bring distinctly different norms to research. Letona also notes that success comes from open contractual relationships where collaboration benefits both consumers and communities, and where partnerships are established to solve problems such as inefficiency, diffuse public accountability, and a lack of responsiveness. Scholarly research which addresses these (or similar) problems may not come to conclusions about practical solutions. The research process and product may be ends unto themselves. Moreover, improving the knowledge base – for scholars and/ or practitioners – is still another goal, one which is not in the same category as inefficiency, accountability, or responsiveness. Again, understanding the different values and goals that partners bring is crucial. Furthermore, it is important to recognize the variety of roles that different partners may play in a collaboration (Boris, 1999).[1]

Previous work on partnerships highlights many of the advantages of forging such collaborations, as well as some of the pitfalls. Models of successful partnerships are argued to include the following basic elements:

1) trust & respect;
2) partners select each other due to common needs, goals and/or shared belief that more

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[1] See also previous work on practitioner-scholar partnerships in the nonprofit sector by Feeney (2000), Huberman (1990) and Macduff and Netting (2000).

productive/effective working together versus alone;
3) partners are equal but different: complementary traits, qualities, resources, etc.;
4) synergy between teams – overall involvement. (Boris and Steuerle, 1999;   Brazil and Lohfeld, 2000; Jacobs, 1999; and Sgroi, 1998)

While establishing the basis for a good partnership for doing research is crucial, Jacobs (1999) takes the argument further – seeming to invert it – to note that research is a critical aspect of establishing an effective partnership, particularly partnerships that aim to put research into practice. As he notes, "effective practice depends on rigorous research" and "…partnership research seeks to improve practice through research" (Jacobs, 1999, p. 874) . Underlying partnership research is the principle that practice will be enhanced when it is based on rigorous research, but that research should be linked back to the practice. The present research-to-practice model in cultural policy seems inadequate and incomplete. Data are gathered in organizational settings, but the research has little or no meaning for organization in practice. Instead, partnership research suggests a practice-to-research-to practice model. "The research comes from practice, and the results are directed back to practice…partnership research is not about any particular form of research, such as the paradigm, theory, or methods used" (Jacobs, 1999, p. 874).

Jacobs' practice-to-research-to-practice model highlights two aspects of the Profiling Partnership project. First and foremost, our discussion of partnerships assumes that Jacobs is correct, and that understanding the "research basis" of our research teams is one key to understanding how they function, as well as where the model of practice-to-research-to-practice fit in our teams. Second, though equally important, this research – both the findings from the Profiles Project and the findings from the Profiling Partnerships Project – is important to the extent that findings will suggest strategies and goals to be put into practice both by practitioners and researchers.[2]

Partnerships in the Arts (with an emphasis on the Arts in Education)
The literature on partnerships in the nonprofit arena includes discussion of partnerships *within* the cultural arena. These tend to fall into two general types: 1) two or more cultural institutions collaborate on creative projects (e.g. a ballet company and a jazz orchestra join together for a new production, a museum and an orchestra stage an event that combines visual arts and classical music); 2) two or more cultural organizations join together to share "non-creative" resources, such as technical support, facilities, administrative staff, and so forth. In the former case, collaborations are often one-time only events; no plans exist to create permanents relationships. In the latter case, partnerships tend to come from necessity; organizations lack the resources to manage successfully as individual organizations. In the former case, there seem to be no incentives to maintain partnerships; in the latter, partnerships often indicate the poor health of one or more of the partners (Remer, 1996; Sgroi, 1998)

In addition, arts and cultural organizations may partner with organizations outside of the nonprofit arts and cultural arena. The range of potential partners is quite broad. They partner with commercial arts/ entertainment organizations on collaborative creative efforts. Non-arts government agencies join with arts organizations to achieve public goals such as environmental awareness or security. Other nonprofits such as educational or religious institutions work with the arts sector to bring specific messages to particular audiences. One common type of partnership in the cultural arena is in the funding relationships between arts organizations and the philanthropic organizations and corporations which support them.

We do not know if these situations are specific to the arts, but they certainly seem to explain a large

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[2] Ostar (1991) talks about two-way communication in partnerships; Mintzberg et al (1996) gives insight into collaborations, in general; and the following give key ingredients for successful partnerships: Macduff and Netting (2000), McCullum (2000), Polo et al (1991), Sgroi (1998), Sparks (1999).

number of the cases in the arts. However, research partnerships are relatively new in the arts, and there is need to better understand what is going on in the field. Some data from the Profiles Project surveys will allow us to better understand the extent of partnerships in ten local communities. (This information is included in the surveys of financial support filled out by organizations in the Profiles Project.) In particular, while we asked respondents about partnerships with for-profit arts organizations, many of our respondents supplied information on their non-profit partners. In addition, we have gathered information on in-kind support from foundations and from other arts organizations.

Moreover, we are interested in examining the nature of *research* partnerships, as found in our ten sites. The Profiles Project joins local arts agencies with local scholars. Some of these relationships were in their infancy as the project began, while others had been around for years. Our partnerships take many forms, and the ways in which they vary should allow us to highlight aspects of the local cultural communities -- particularly aspects of the infrastructures as pertain to data collection and research dissemination. Improving research capabilities has been identified as a top priority for local arts agencies heading into the 21st century[3]. Previous research for arts organizations often focused on audience development or organizational/ arts community needs assessment. In both cases, this was research designed and used primarily by the arts organizations involved. Research design must explicitly recognize policy contexts, audience, and uses; however, much of the literature on partnerships fails to note how research as a focus may alter the partnership relationship.

Examples of Partnerships
The literature on arts partnerships also provides us with a set of questions to be addressed at the outset of a collaborative effort, such as outlining how partnerships "fit" the partners involved. In his discussion of art and technology, Bowers (2000) raises such questions, all focussed on the central issue of access[4] :

Access to/for whom?
- who is your audience? and do they have access and how do they access
- understanding of audiences tech capabilities -- high resolution, etc.
- arts community -- building tools; building infrastructure

Access to what?
- types of info/forms delivering
- representation, equity
- selection of arts presented

Access to what end?
- for research? entertainment? education outreach?
- building community? partnerships?
- revenue - profit; write off?
- wider audiences
- arts tool for organizations
- community resource

The Profiles Partnerships highlight ways in which we can adapt models from the strategic partnership literature for cultural policy research partnerships – and possibly to extend this to other types of research

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[3]. See proceedings from the June 2000 Americans for the Arts Annual convention (Los Angeles, CA).

[4] Bowers' discussion includes examples of successful art and technology partnerships the NINCH/National Initiative National Cultural Heritage clearinghouse; CIMI/Computer Interchange of Museum Info (sharing of standards for collaborations); IMLS (public access issues); Digital Futures (advocacy); Center for Democracy & Technology;

partnerships across policy fields and other types of partnerships with the cultural policy arena. This allows us to explore ways in which research partnerships compare and contrast with other types of partnerships, and ways in which partnering in the cultural arena may -- or may not – be unique.

Models of Partnerships
Definitions
The literature offers several basic models of partnerships. Yankey and Jones (1995) provide the following typology of partnerships in the nonprofit sector:

- Affiliation – participating nonprofits maintain independence
- Consortium – participating nonprofits maintain independence, but the relationship involves a formal agreement
- Joint Venture – each participant puts up a resource in order to build a new capacity (niche); this is a contractual agreement; financial results flow to both partners involved (not a partnerships)
- Divestiture – one nonprofit spins off a program
- Acquisition – one nonprofit acquires a program or service of another, usually in a friendly manner (known as unfriendly or hostile takeovers in the for-profit sector)
- Merger – one organization absorbs another; the acquiring organization maintains its identity
- Consolidation – two or more organizations form a new corporation. (74)

In their examination of partnerships among nonprofit social service and cultural organizations, Kohm et al (2000) offer a "Partnership Matrix" which lays out where different kinds of partnerships fall along two dimensions: 1) Primary Focus (Programmatic – Administrative) and 2) Degree of Autonomy/ Integration. See Figure 1: The Partnership Matrix.

Strategic Restructuring
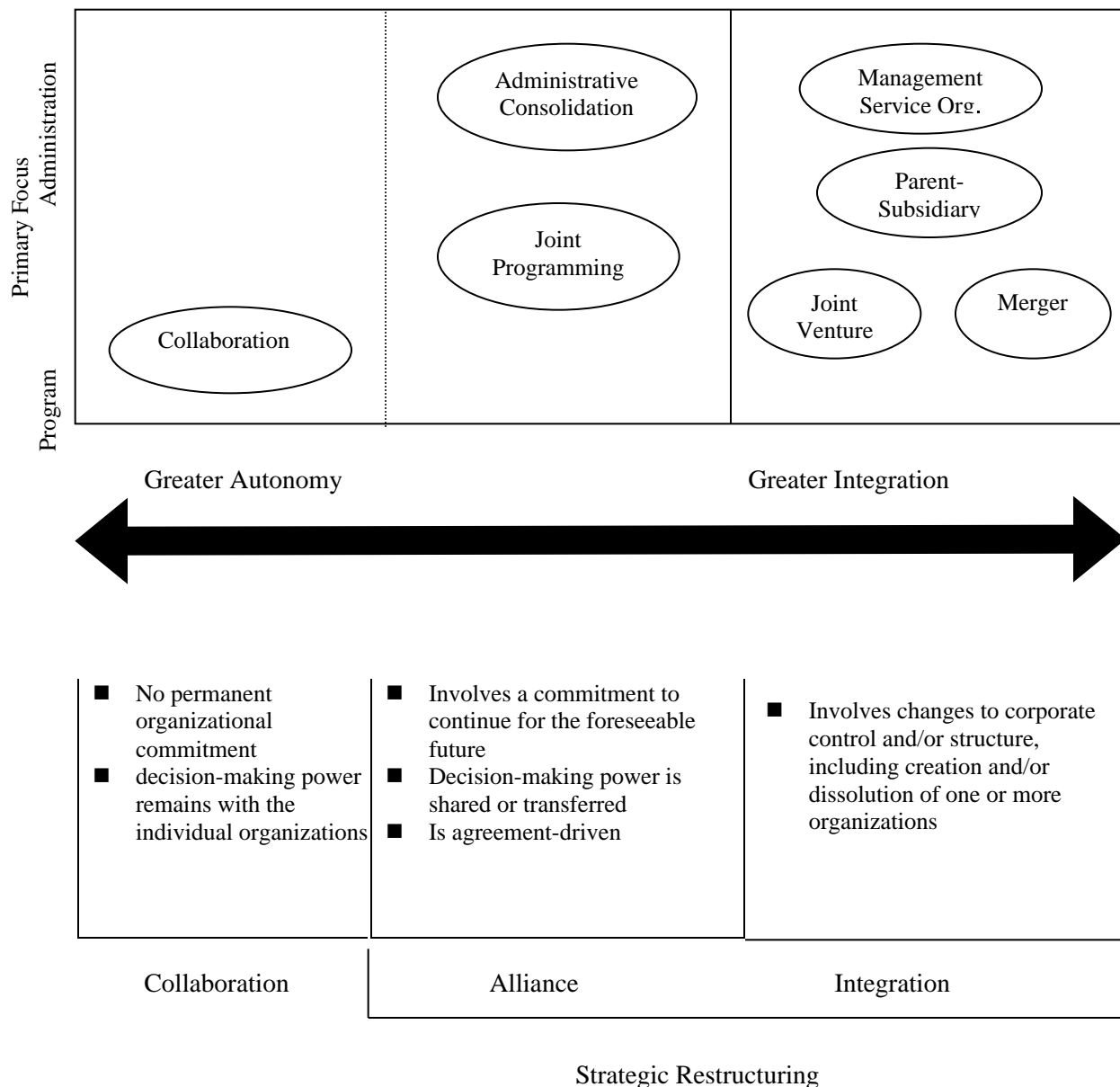
The Profiles Partnerships

At the outset of the Profiles Project, the project team put forth a rudimentary conception of the form that the research partnerships would take. It was assumed that each of the eleven research teams would consist of two principle partners – a primary scholar/ investigator based in an academic institution and a primary practitioner based at a local arts agency – with a project director who would be the "point person" for the project. It was anticipated that this point person might reside in either place, and that this role might be filled by the scholar or by the primary arts agency person. It was further assumed that support personnel were likely to be based in both kinds of organizations; that is, project support could be found in graduate students, university staff, arts agency staff, arts agency contracted agents, and so forth.

The project teams were given a "task list" during the early portions of the project (see Appendix), but there was no particular design to the task distribution. It was assumed that the project teams would know how talents and resources were distributed across their teams and that roles and tasks would be assigned accordingly.

As will become clear, we, the national project team, made two primary assumptions that were not necessarily valid.

> ***Assumption 1***: There is an ideal partnership model (for this project; perhaps for others), and effort should be made to ensure that all teams fit this model.
> ***Assumption 2:*** Talents, resources, and so forth of the local team members were known (by project team members) and roles/ tasks easily could be distributed accordingly.

The literature does tend to suggest that some models are better than others, but we believe that more detailed exploration of the Profiles Partnerships will show that this is not the case. That is, Assumption 1 above, which is supported by the literature, is not valid. Whether this is because we are dealing with a particular kind of partnership (i.e., "research" or "arts"), or because we must account for local variation, is a question we will explore in future research.

Assumption 2 presents a different problem, one we hope that this project (i.e. the exploration of partnerships) will help resolve. The consensus in the literature maintains that values, beliefs, norms, and so forth of potential partners must be recognized at the outset of any relationship. This seems obvious, but the corollary is not. Partners must explicitly recognize what they see the relationship to be – at the outset – in order to establish the relationship on solid foundations. It may be that many scholars are not predisposed to discuss the process of establishing partnerships, and so *research* partnerships may be disposed to a vagueness about roles. This is one more area that we will be exploring. We should note that most (if not all) of our research teams did seem to know each other's talents etc., and that this has not been an initial problem. However we believe it is a question that must be explored further and that will aid us in laying out a discussion of how to create productive and sustainable partnerships across arenas.

There are **5 steps** in our analysis of the Profiles Partnerships:
1) **Starting point:** The model of partnerships that we started with is very basic, primarily focussed on communication flow. We include a "task list" developed for our local partners as part of this conversation is about how tasks get distributed. Point 1: we had an "hour glass" model and a task list as a "how to" but that doesn't get us very far. (see Appendix)
2) **Descriptive:** We can talk about how to characterize who the partners are and what we think is significant about what they bring into the project. Our first focus is on description -- who the partners are, how they describe themselves and how they perceive their partners (resources, capabilities, etc). We have developed the following list as a starting point for our descriptive analysis:

> Background factors:
> A. Academic Partners:
> 1) absence or presence of academic partner at site
> 2) individual or organizational (presence of organization?)
> 3) discipline (organization and/ or individual?): arts management or administration; nonprofit management or organizations studies; social science (political science, economics, sociology, psychology); arts; other
> 4) length of tenure at site
> 5) past studies; arts-related?

    B. Arts Agency (or proxy)
        1) absence or presence of arts agency at site
        2) local arts agency or something else
        3) local or other (regional, state)
        4) public, private, nonprofit
        5) age of organization
        6) jurisdiction -- content (performing and visual arts, culture, literary, etc)
        7) functions -- grant-making, service and support provider, other

    C. Previous Partnerships
        1)   presence or absence;
        2)   collaboration, fee for service, contract, other?
        3)   content area (economic impact, performance review, artists, organizations, etc

Current (Profiles Project) Relationship
    A) Division of labor
    B) Resources
        1) Academic
            money, people
        2) Arts Agency
            money, people
        3) Other community resources
           previous research
           funders/ foundations

3) Understanding our partnerships **in context**: The strategic partnerships discussion provides a model of nonprofit partnerships. There's an assumption in those models about what a "good" or "desirable" partnership is – that we don't share. However the attributes of the relationships do get at the kinds of partnerships we're interested in.

As noted above, according to brief lit review, *successful partnerships* include:
- trust & respect: Sgroi (1998) notes that the "first element of the dynamic is developing trust; then comes the task of acquiring the tools needed to navigate the unknown territory through which every artist must travel in order to create original artwork. The third and fourth elements are the roles of the teachers and the roles of the learners in the partnership" (p. 26) . Trust is "the bedrock. Without it, no relationship exists. With it, people are transformed. . . Trust gives the partnership the foundation it needs to move ahead into new domains…and [the partnership] can move further into new territory" (p. 26)
- partners select each other, coming at this in different ways but leading up to common goals; selection of sites and recognition of previous connections, etc. constitute forms of selection.
- recognize the force behind partnership: power of ideas/dreams; mutual goals to achieve; shared belief that more productive/effective working together versus alone
- recognition that partners are equal but different: complementary personality traits, qualities, etc.
- importance of a synergy between teams – overall involvement, too (Jacobs, 1998; Sgroi, 1998; Owenby, 1998) [5]

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[5] See also McCullum on the 6 points of a partnership: 1) mutual goals and benefits [buy in, aware of turfs]; 2) trusting relationships; 3) open communication [building trust, dialogue]; 4) nurturing relationships [personal interactions and communications]; 5) effective leadership [vision, courage, & support]; 6) shared

Other Team Members
There is another partner -- or set of partners -- in the Profiles Project. The funding organization may play an important role in research project, as has been the case in the Profiles Project. While it is certainly true that the research in question is important in an of itself, and the project is one which might be conducted without the support of the specific funder, this project would not exist in its current shape without the active interest of the supporting foundation (The Pew Charitable Trusts). We encouraged our local partners to bring local foundations into the research project for three reasons:
  1) increasing financial support for the project
  2) evidence of local "buy-in"/ interest in the project from the broader community
  3) evidence of long-term interest in the type of work, indicating an investment in the cultural policy infrastructure in the community

4) building **a model of the Profiles Partnerships**: Where do we plot our partnerships onto that model?
5) incorporate the key **"new" dimensions** added by the Profiles Partners, which at first glance are
    – research partnerships: how does the nature of partnership change when the object of the partnership is the creation of research as a product
    – there's a second part of these partnerships: dissemination and putting things into practice
    – how do the differences in our partnerships highlight the different possible goals of a research partnership
    – does it matter that we're dealing with the arts – both the arts as a content area and the cultural policy arena as one in which much still is left to be developed.

Early Lessons --
"Across the board, it will be necessary for those involved with the delivery of effective partnerships to develop new skills and competencies and a sense of focus. Above all, they will need to be clear about the specific goals and purposes of particular partnerships and to ensure that these are expressed with clarity and are understood and shared by the other partners involved" (*Creating Learning Cultures*, 2000, Section 8, p. 1).

A few 'big issues' all partnerships and intending partners should consider include:
• It takes both time and commitment to build up successful partnerships and self-sustaining beneficial processes and outcomes. They mostly need an element of stable funding, constant membership and highly motivated champions to make them thrive productively. Too often timelines for the creation of effective partnerships are unrealistic.
• Effective partnerships require an acceptance of diminished individual autonomy in the particular field of collaboration, or at least a sacrifice of one's own immediate priorities in favour of the common good. Powerful and well-resourced partners in particular need to declare what they bring to the partnership as much as what benefits they expect to drive from it and to be generous in their dealing with smaller and less well-resourced contributors. (*Creating Learning Cultures*, 2000,Section 8, p. 1-2).

Within partnerships, contributors' involvement is a challenge. The specific roles and rational for participating in the partnership are crucial and should be agreed upon by all involved.

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Appendix

The Profiles Partners - Examples/ Cases:
    National

1) Americans for the Arts (Randy Cohen, Mark Hager) and Arts Policy & Administration at the Ohio State University (Margaret Wyszomirski, Terry Filicko, Sue Anne Lafferty)

    Practitioner - Scholar Local Partnership:

2) Miami-Dade County -- Miami-Dade County Cultural Affairs Council (Jillian Daniel, Michael Spring) and Maria Willumsen (Economics) at Florida International University
3) Montgomery County, MD -- Arts (Cultural Affairs) Council of Montgomery County (Theresa Cameron, Greg Finch) and Stefan Toepler (Institute for Policy Studies) at Johns Hopkins University
4) Nashville -- Metro Nashville Arts Commission (Tom Turk, Laura Nobles) and Reuben Kyle (Economics) at Middle Tennessee State University
5) New Orleans -- Arts Council of New Orleans (Shirley Trusty Corey) and Philip Dobard (Arts Administration Program) at University of New Orleans, along with Kevin Mulcahy at LSU
6) Philadelphia -- Greater Philadelphia Cultural Alliance (Adrienne Jenkins, Michele Schmidt) and Cecelia Fitzgibbon (Arts Administration Program) at Drexel University
7) Providence, RI -- Rhode Island Council on the Arts (Randy Rosenbaum) and Ann Galligan (Cooperative Education, Northeastern Arts Research Group) at Northeastern University, along with Greg Wassail and Neil Alper (both Economics at Northeastern)

    Other Forms of Partnerships

8) Amery, WI -- Northern Lakes Center for the Arts, LaMoine McLaughlin; No local academic partner
9) Cleveland, OH -- nominal involvement of the Community Partnership for Arts and Culture (Tom Schorgl, John Lucci, George Roth), Cleveland Foundation (Kathleen Cerveny), Karen Grouchau (formerly Arts Management Program at CWRU) and Joan Meggitt (contracted)
10) Los Angeles -- Arts, Inc. (Beth Fox); Nominal academic partner at UCLA in Archie Kleingartner.   Site Manager/ Project Director: David Pankratz academic researcher at Arts, Inc.
11) San Jose, CA -- San Jose Office of Cultural Affairs (Lynn Rogers) but no academic partner