

Overview of the EmcArts Innovation Rubric: Exploring the Capacity of Arts Organizations to Innovate

What is the Rubric and what is it for?

Each organization funded by the Irvine Foundation through the Artistic Innovation Fund is involved in developing and implementing a significant innovative strategy. These innovations have not emerged from nowhere – rather, they are examples of each organization’s capacity to adapt effectively and imaginatively to changing circumstances: the “adaptive capacity” that underlies innovation.

One of the Foundation’s interests in working with EmcArts, beyond capturing the lessons to be learned from the innovations, is to explore with the AIF grantees how the capacity to innovate is expressed in each organization. By exploring the ongoing development over time of each AIF grantee’s capacity to innovate, new knowledge will be generated that EmcArts will reflect back as learning for each AIF grantee, and share with the larger arts field.

However, there is no established tradition of assessing adaptive capacity in the nonprofit arts field. To accomplish the goals above, EmcArts therefore had to create a new instrument that measures different levels of adaptive capacity across the organization. We call this instrument the *EmcArts Rubric of Innovative Capacity*; it was created and reviewed during 2007 and is now being actively tested and refined with AIF grantees.

The Rubric had to be broadly applicable to large arts organizations in both the performing and visual arts, it had to cover essential capacity areas throughout the organization (but not attempt to be comprehensively inclusive, as this would have led to an overly protracted assessment process), and it needed to be capable of serving as a real-time self-assessment tool in facilitated meetings with the leaders of arts organizations.

The Rubric identifies a set of behaviors or practices in different areas of the organization that illuminate how developed the organization’s capacities are in that area. Participants check boxes that correspond with their understanding of typical behavior in the organization in each area being assessed (from Low to High levels of innovative capacity). A total of 42 different practices are assessed, grouped into four buckets:

1. Leading Innovation
2. Engaging Stakeholders in Innovation
3. Relating to the External Environment
4. Managing the Implementation of Innovation

Summary of EmcArts Innovation Rubric, shows all 42 practice areas that the Rubric assesses.

How is the Rubric administered?

EmcArts administers the Rubric by facilitating annual two- to three-hour on-site meetings with the project leaders of AIF-funded innovation projects (including trustees, staff and artists as appropriate to each project). The intention of the meeting is to explore and better understand what the capacity to innovate means in an arts organization, how it shows itself in successful organizations like each AIF grantee, and how it can be further developed.

While the Rubric serves as a means to organize and clarify thinking among participants, its principal purpose is to stimulate a new kind of conversation among organizational leaders, and to capture that conversation in order to inform the development of each organization's practice in future. A report that summarizes the Rubric ratings by all participants is sent to each organization after the annual meeting. The report shows the average ratings across the participant groups, notes any significant divergences in ratings, highlights capacities where the group rated the organization particularly high or low, and offers some observations about capacities on which the organization might choose to focus the development of stronger "innovation muscles."

EmcArts Rubric of Innovative Capacity for the Irvine AIF: Summary of the four Focus Areas of the Rubric

The full Rubric tracks different levels of capacity for each of the 42 indicators relating to the 13 capacities listed

LEADING INNOVATION

- 1: Our capacity to champion innovation in the organization
 - ◆ Attitude of leaders to change
 - ◆ Sources of innovative ideas
 - ◆ Questioning of organizational performance
- 2: Our capacity to develop and maintain teams around innovation
 - ◆ Working across functions
 - ◆ Team membership for innovation
 - ◆ Support for innovation teams
- 3: Our capacity to manage differing perspectives on new thinking
 - ◆ Latitude given to different points of view
 - ◆ Attitude of leaders to divergent points of view
 - ◆ Space given to critical reflection
- 4: Our capacity to resolve conflicts around new thinking
 - ◆ Decision-making processes for conflicts
 - ◆ Approach to conflict resolution
 - ◆ Leaders' actions to resolve conflicts
 - ◆ Use of data to resolve conflicts
- 5: Our capacity to manage the organizational culture to support innovation
 - ◆ Review of core assumptions and values
 - ◆ Vision for change
 - ◆ Reward systems [compensation, training, recognition, etc.]
 - ◆ Tolerance for uncertainty around innovation

ENGAGING STAKEHOLDERS

- 6: The board's capacity to support new thinking and its results
 - ◆ Board expectations around innovation
 - ◆ Board's fiscal support for innovation
- 7: Our capacity to engage stakeholders in new thinking and innovation
 - ◆ Input from artists to innovation
 - ◆ Senior staff's expectations about innovation

- ◆ Input from audiences/participants to innovation

RELATING TO THE EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

8: Our capacity to scan and learn from external trends and behaviors

- ◆ Awareness of the operating environment [local and national, as well as the field]
- ◆ Engagement with others' innovations
- ◆ Feedback from primary constituencies
- ◆ Influence of the environment on planning

9: Our capacity to communicate new initiatives effectively to external stakeholders

- ◆ Focus of communications
- ◆ Relationship with stakeholders' interests

MANAGING IMPLEMENTATION

10: Our capacity to implement actions effectively in new circumstances

- ◆ Implementing innovative initiatives
- ◆ Documenting how to innovate
- ◆ Managing timelines for innovative projects
- ◆ Feedback procedures on innovative projects

11: Our capacity to make human resources and processes available for the development and execution of innovative initiatives

- ◆ Procedures to make human resources available
- ◆ Effort needed to carry out innovative projects
- ◆ Leaders' actions to acquire expertise for innovation

12: Our capacity to make financial resources available for the development and execution of innovative initiatives

- ◆ Budgeting for innovation
- ◆ Allocation of financial resources for innovation
- ◆ Developing capital resources for innovation

13: Our capacity to establish metrics to define success and measure progress

- ◆ Measuring the progress and success of innovation projects
- ◆ Uses of measurement
- ◆ Appropriate design of measures of success
- ◆ Rigor and validity of the design of measures