

## Talking Points for the Greater Richmond Cultural Census

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**What is the Cultural Census?** It is a survey of community residents to better understand patterns of cultural participation in the Richmond area (including the City of Richmond and Henrico, Chesterfield and Hanover counties). Together with other research, results from the Cultural Census provide a foundation of information upon which to build a regional Cultural Action Plan – an assessment of the state of arts and culture in the Greater Richmond Region and a roadmap to better support, promote and encourage arts and culture activities in the future.

**Who took the survey?** Over 2,800 adults from the region completed the survey during September and October of this year.

**How did they find out about it?** The bulk of respondents (over 2,000) took the survey online. An invitation to take the survey was broadly distributed through e-mail blasts to local arts and culture, civic, and social service e-mail lists. It was also promoted through local media and featured on several local blogs.

**What about those without access to the Internet?** To reach those without web access, over 700 paper surveys were collected at various sites throughout the region, including churches, libraries, senior centers, and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Street Festival.

**Do the results represent the activities and opinions of the entire population?** No, they do not, because technically-speaking this was not a random sample. Area residents “self-selected” into the online survey, which introduces two elements of bias: 1) over-representation of those with Internet access, and 2) over-representation of those with an interest in arts and culture. Significant efforts were made to offset the first bias by conducting on-the-ground intercept work to reach those without access to the Internet. To offset the second bias, statistical weights were applied to the final results so that survey results would better reflect the community’s demographics in terms of age, race and education.

**If we can’t generalize to the entire population, how can we reliably use these findings?** The primary value of the data lies in comparing sub-groups of respondents. Because the sample is relatively large, such comparisons are statistically valid and provide a wealth of interesting findings. Thus, the report focuses on distinctions between lower, moderate, and higher frequency attenders of cultural activities. It also looks at differences in engagement levels by age cohort and by racial/ethnic group.

**What is an example of how this data can be used?** The study finds that respondents with lower levels of educational attainment tend to engage more in participatory arts practice (e.g., singing, dancing, making crafts), and tend to engage less in ticketed cultural programs in theatres and museums. The survey also illustrates significant taste differences across the age cohorts, which is useful in understanding what types of music, dance and theatre programs are likely to attract younger audiences.

**How is this research going to be used?** The Cultural Census is just one of several major research tasks of the cultural planning process. Understanding cultural participation, both frequency and interest in different arts and culture activities, provides important context to our discussion of the challenges and opportunities facing our community. In order to generate solutions, we need to start



asking difficult and important questions. Research, such as the Cultural Census, offers insight into what questions we should be addressing. For example, results of the Cultural Census lead us to consider:

- How can cultural providers make connections to residents in a wider range of settings, including the home?
- What support structures exist for participatory arts practice, given that so many residents engage with culture in this way?
- What programs and activities would help community members to explore their family history, chronicle their lives and tell their stories?
- How can the cultural community tap into the surge of interest in dance?
- How can we value and support faith-based cultural activity, given the critical role that places of worship play in the cultural system?
- What programs would help residents derive more satisfaction and meaning from curatorial participation (i.e., downloading music, collecting art and decorations for the home)?
- What collaborative efforts might be undertaken to overcome barriers to increased engagement, such as “too busy” or “too expensive”?

To maximize the return on investment in the Cultural Census, we need to ask these and other questions in conversations with colleagues, friends, board members, staff, artists, and public officials.

**Where can I find out more about this research and the cultural planning process in general?**

The full report on the Cultural Census is available online at [www.wolfbrown.com/richmond](http://www.wolfbrown.com/richmond).

WolfBrown will be hosting a webinar to discuss the cultural census findings and implications on December 9<sup>th</sup> at 12:00 p.m. (EST). To learn more about the process in general or to get details about the webinar, send a message to [richmondculturalactionplan@gmail.com](mailto:richmondculturalactionplan@gmail.com).