NATIONAL INNOVATION SUMMIT
FOR ARTS + CULTURE
2013: LEAVING THE SHORE

EmcArts

Fueling Adaptive Capacity:
A Mosaic of Learning about Adaptive Change from the 2013 National Innovation Summit

What is the purpose of this document?

In our rapidly changing world, leaders in the arts and culture field are facing complex challenges in their quest for relevance and impact. They are questioning ingrained assumptions about how they work, letting go of established practices that are no longer working, and successfully creating new ways to deliver public value. To sustain these "next practices," they are exercising their organizations' **adaptive capacity**.

But across the field, there isn't a shared understanding of what adaptive capacity means and what it looks like in practice. That's why we've developed this document, which is meant to be a guide and resource for deeper questioning and clearer understanding around adaptive capacity – not in any sense a final set of recommended approaches to be replicated, but rather a starting-point to fuel conversation in the field.

How was it developed?

This document is a summary of insights into the key elements of adaptive capacity from leaders of more than 60 organizations in 11 communities across the country. It was developed with participants at the first National Innovation Summit for Arts & Culture in October 2013, supported by EmcArts as facilitator and editor.

What's in the document?

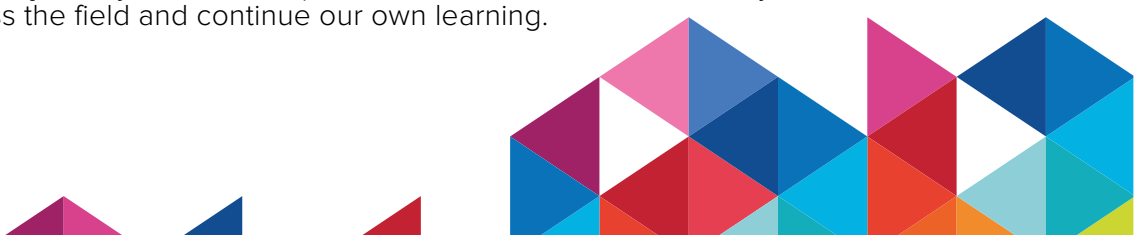
The document proposes:

- Five principles to guide adaptive change. They were developed in response to the questions: What might adaptive communities of the future look like? What values will drive how organizations approach their work?
- A series of questions about eight critical aspects of organizational life. They identify and probe the nature of adaptive capacity in each area.
- Examples of next practices (Appendix). This is a gathering of how Summit participants are responding with specific new behaviors or ways of thinking.

How might I use it?

We hope the principles put forth here and the guiding questions about organizational dynamics will be a useful provocation for artists, organizational administrators and trustees, funders and service providers. Your responses to these questions will allow you to explore how developed your adaptive "muscles" are, and perhaps, to identify opportunities to strengthen your adaptive capacity.

As you explore the tessellation of insights in this *Mosaic of Learning* you'll notice that the document offers points-of-view that are not necessarily all aligned. Diversity of thought and action – rather than following any single set of established "best practices" – is what drives adaptive change. These days, the pathways to resolving complex challenges are local ones, attuned to particular starting conditions, frequently collaborative, and always exploratory journeys of discovery. We hope sharing what many practitioners are learning about adaptive change will assist you on your own journey. Please keep in touch with us about what else you discover, so we can share it across the field and continue our own learning.



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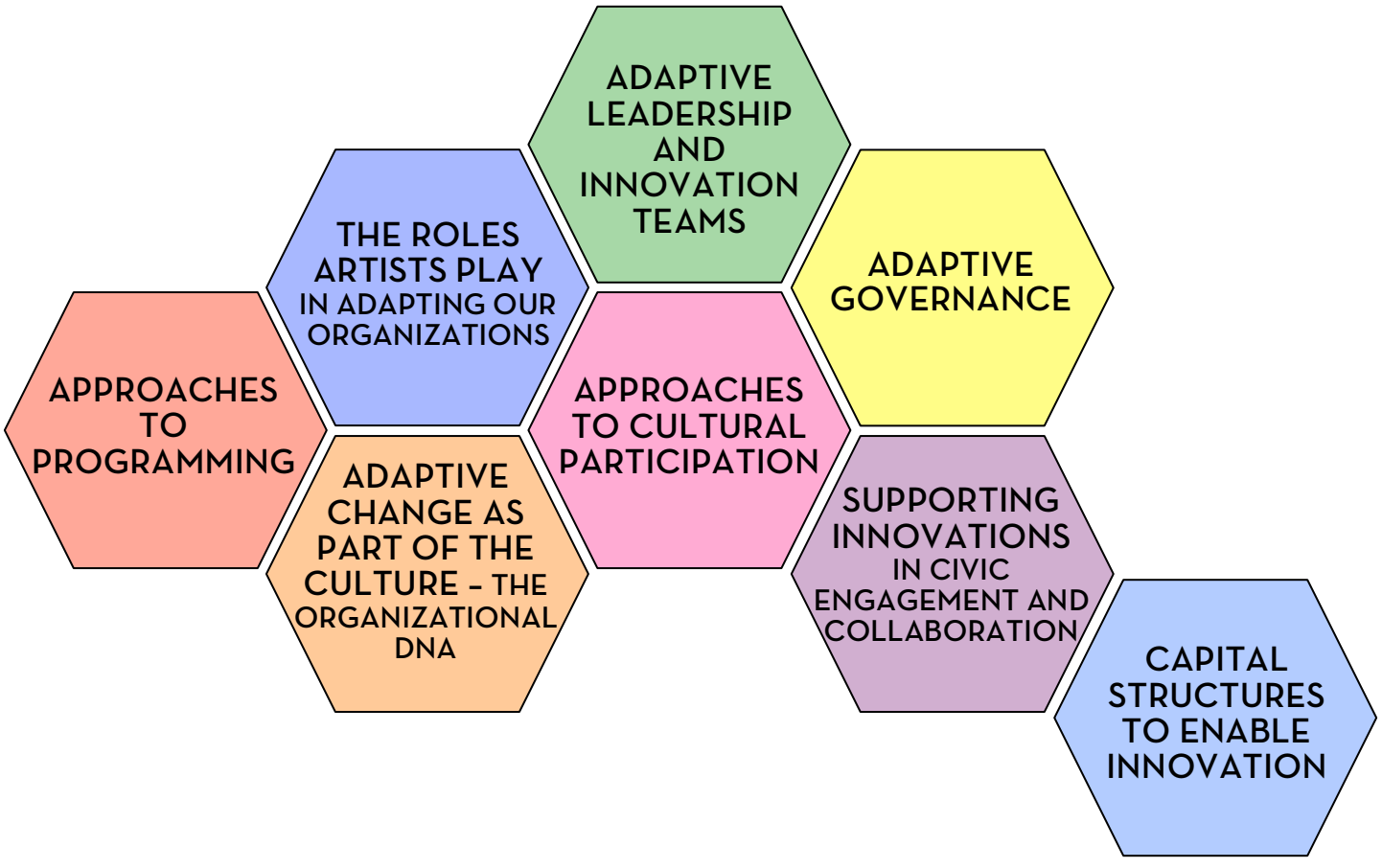
SUMMARY: A Mosaic of Learning about Adaptive Change

FIVE PROPOSED PRINCIPLES TO GUIDE ADAPTIVE CHANGE

- We value the interdependence of the ecosystem over our own organizational or individual self-interest
- We integrate the voices of citizens into our work as a means of culture-making
- We see reciprocal rather than transactional relationships as a path to enduring capacity for change
- Our organizations authentically value inquiry and use questions as a way to drive adaptive change
- Our organizational cultures value the creative potential inherent in ambiguity and complexity

EIGHT AREAS OF ORGANIZATIONAL LIFE



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QUESTIONS IN EACH OF EIGHT AREAS OF ORGANIZATIONAL LIFE

ADAPTIVE LEADERSHIP AND INNOVATION TEAMS

How can we inspire openness to the "new"?
How can we boldly embrace risk and experimentation?
What can the board do to support innovative efforts?
What can leaders do to expand their flexibility?
How do we create and lead a cohesive, balanced team?
What practices help us establish continuous learning?
Where do we seek new valuable allies?
How do we evolve our staff structure to meet our changing practices?

ADAPTIVE GOVERNANCE

How do we change the fundamental role and purpose of our boards?
What are the structures that facilitate engagement of board members?
How do we challenge and educate our boards to become comfortable with the unknown?
Do we need to rethink what it means to be a "qualified" board member?
How do we get our boards to redefine success?

THE ROLES ARTISTS PLAY IN ADAPTING OUR ORGANIZATIONS

Where is the space for artists to insert the creative process into our organization models?
How can we recognize artists as entrepreneurs and engage with the business sector?
How can we recognize the work of artists directly with, for, and in the community?
How can we embed artists into our administrative structures?
How can we revalue the structures artists themselves have created over time, and explore how they might serve as a guide to invention and reinvention, and a deep connection to the world?

APPROACHES TO PROGRAMMING

How are we embracing experimentation in service of our essential mission?
How are we balancing internal authority and external input?
How do we identify our public and establish frank dialogue?
What opportunities do our audiences have to participate in our work?

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APPROACHES TO CULTURAL PARTICIPATION

How do we make, present and produce art with, not for, audiences?

How do we recognize and celebrate folks for who they are?

How do we reflect upon and challenge our organizational culture?

How do we share resources to be mutually beneficial?

How do we catalyze the personal experience in all interactions inside and outside of a physical space?

SUPPORTING INNOVATIONS IN CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND COLLABORATION

How do we move from a “do-gooder” mentality to a “do it together” necessity?

How can we develop a culture of intentional and active listening within our organization?

How can we redefine current and/or traditional measurements of success to ones that value long-term social capital?

How do we build leadership in our organizations that reflect the diversity of the people we work with and aspire to work with?

How can we create shared convergent spaces that enable collective inquiry and engagement to advance art and community?

ADAPTIVE CHANGE AS PART OF THE CULTURE – THE ORGANIZATIONAL DNA

How can we recognize abundance?

How do we embrace failure and vulnerability?

How do we name and question our assumptions?

How do we deal with our own organizational un-co-operative practices?

How do we build the muscles to be comfortable with and manage conflict?

How can we be open and embrace the power of ideas from outside our organization?

What is the minimum viable product?

How do we seek out perspectives different from our own and let them influence us?

CAPITAL STRUCTURES TO ENABLE INNOVATION

What is our strategy to build a capital structure that allows for innovation?

How do we attract investment in risky endeavors?

How can we best measure the need for capital and related productivity of capital?

How can we improve our literacy about capital and innovation?

What do we need to give up to make room for innovation capital?