WHAT'S WORKING NOW
ENGAGING AUDIENCES IN 2021

SARA R. LEONARD, FOUNDER & PRINCIPAL
SARA LEONARD CONSULTING, LLC
LINKEDIN: SARA-R-LEONARD | INSTAGRAM: @ARTSADMINNERD
WHAT’S WORKING?

• Step 1: Know your organization.

• Step 2: Know your audiences – current and prospective.

• Step 3: Find the places where your interests and values connect.
CHALLENGES

I Expected Times Like This- but Never
Thought They’d Be So Bad, So Long, and So Frequent.
“CH...CH...CHANGES
TURN AND FACE THE STRANGE”
(WITH APOLOGIES TO DAVID BOWIE)
DATA IS THE NEW BACON
WHERE WE’VE BEEN
NEEDS, DESIRES, AND EXPECTATIONS

DATA FROM CULTURE TRACK VIA LAPLACA COHEN AND SLOVER LINETT AUDIENCE RESEARCH
People are having different reactions to the current situation. Compared to before the pandemic began, how are you feeling these days? Please select one answer for each feeling.

### The Emotional Toll

Respondents report rising feelings of worry, boredom, and disconnection.

- **Lonely**: 23% (Lonely), 48% (Sad or Depressed), 30% (Angry), 50% (Calm), 38% (Connected to others)
- **Bored**: 45% (Bored), 30% (Lonely), 30% (Sad or Depressed), 24% (Angry), 18% (Calm), 44% (Connected to others)
- **Worried or Afraid**: 23% (Worried or Afraid), 27% (Sad or Depressed), 27% (Angry), 27% (Calm), 27% (Connected to others)
- **Angry**: 48% (Angry), 48% (Sad or Depressed), 48% (Angry), 48% (Calm), 32% (Connected to others)
- **Calm**: 18% (Calm), 18% (Calm), 18% (Calm), 18% (Calm), 18% (Calm), 18% (Calm)
- **Connected to others**: 18% (Connected to others), 18% (Connected to others), 18% (Connected to others), 18% (Connected to others), 18% (Connected to others), 18% (Connected to others)

Five point scale: top two responses and bottom two responses are combined.
Arrows indicate where the percentage of respondents selecting “A Lot More” or “A Lot Less” exceeds “About the Same.”

©2020 Culture Track
After getting outside, respondents want more connection and fun in their lives—needs that align with what they miss most from cultural experiences.
NEEDS, DESIRES, AND EXPECTATIONS

DATA FROM CULTURE TRACK VIA LAPLACA COHEN AND SLOVER LINETT AUDIENCE RESEARCH
How would you ideally want arts & culture organizations to help your community during this crisis? Please check any that apply.

Many respondents want cultural organizations to help their communities decompress and stay connected during the COVID-19 crisis.

- **53%** Laugh and Relax
- **49%** Stay connected
- **47%** Educate children when schools are closed
- **46%** Offer distraction and escape during the crisis
A Meaningful Role to Play (continued)

Response patterns revealed four core community needs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Connection &amp; Processing</th>
<th>Practical Support</th>
<th>Emotional Support</th>
<th>Escape</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>49% Stay connected</td>
<td>41% Look ahead and plan for recovery</td>
<td>53% Laugh and relax</td>
<td>46% Offer distraction and escape during the crisis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47% Educate children while schools are closed</td>
<td>21% Deal with financial and economic problems</td>
<td>41% Have hope</td>
<td>36% Think or talk about important things other than COVID-19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34% Bring people of different backgrounds together</td>
<td>18% Meet our practical, everyday challenges</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29% Know what’s going on, with trusted information</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28% Express ourselves creatively</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27% Heal, grieve, and process our emotions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Response patterns were grouped into themes using factor analysis. Total exceeds 100% as respondents could check any that apply.
NEEDS, DESIRES, AND EXPECTATIONS
DATA FROM CULTURE TRACK VIA LAPLACA COHEN AND SLOVER LINETT AUDIENCE RESEARCH
The Change Respondents Want to See

In general, what kinds of changes would make arts and culture organizations better for you in the future? Please check all that apply.

**Inclusivity and Community**
- 24% Supporting local artists, organizers, etc.
- 24% Friendlier to all kinds of people
- 20% Treat their employees fairly and equitably
- 19% Engage more young people
- 18% More focus on our local community
- 18% More diverse voices and faces
- 15% Working with other nonprofits in our community

**Enjoyment**
- 28% More fun
- 17% Less formal
- 14% More child-friendly

**Reflection and Innovation**
- 18% Stories or content that connect to my life
- 16% More frequent new works or exhibits

Respondents indicate a variety of ways cultural organizations could change to be better in the future. 72% selected one or more of these changes.

28% selected “Nothing—I wouldn’t change them at all.”

Response patterns were grouped into themes using factor analysis. Total exceeds 100% as respondents could check any that apply.

©2020 Culture Track
WHERE WE ARE
WILL MY AUDIENCE EVER COME BACK?
ALAS...

\[ \text{INTENT} \neq \text{BEHAVIOR} \]
“What would make you feel safe and comfortable going to a museum, aquarium, theater, zoo, or concert again?”

Multiple choice, select all that apply, choices populated by lexical analysis, 2020

- Mandatory face coverings
- Availability of coronavirus vaccine
- Seeing others visit
- Ability to be outside/outdoors
- No significant changes necessary - I feel safe and comfortable
- Organizations choosing to reopen
- Availability of treatments/therapies
- Availability of hand sanitizer
- Exclusive hours for vulnerable populations
- Limits on crowds (e.g., limit attendance)
- Avoiding long lines of people
- Government lifting travel, movement, access restrictions
- Knowing facility cleaning procedures
- Onsite health monitoring (e.g., taking guest temperatures)
- Elimination of onsite food service
- Antibody testing/immunity passport program

WHAT WILL MAKE PEOPLE FEEL SAFE?

- Vaccines.
- Masks.
- Other people surviving.
- Outdoors.
COVID HAS NOT HAPPENED IN A VACUUM
A FEW HIGHLIGHTS…

• “Desire for change in arts and culture organizations is ubiquitous among Americans but even stronger among BIPOC audiences (72% overall wanted at least one of the changes we defined vs 76-89% of BIPOC respondents).

  – Using the patterns of people’s selections, the report identifies three chief areas of desired change that would make these organizations better in the future: (#1) more inclusive and community-centered, (#2) more casual and enjoyable, and (#3) providing relevant and innovative content reflective of their communities.”

SOURCE: A BIPOC ANALYSIS OF CULTURE AND COMMUNITY IN A TIME OF CRISIS, LAPLACA COHEN AND SLOVER LINETT
A FEW HIGHLIGHTS...

• “Most Americans miss the social element of cultural experiences, but Black/African Americans are more likely to miss how these activities helped them feel relaxed (48% vs 39% overall) while Native Americans miss celebrating their cultural heritage (37% vs 6% overall).”

• “A higher proportion of ‘digital only’ users of content offered by arts and culture organizations are Black/African American and Hispanic/Latinx than audiences who physically visited these organizations in-person in the past year.
  
  – Across genres of digital content, these experiences are serving an even wider, more diverse ‘audience’ than in-person culture may have in the past.”

SOURCE: A BIPOC ANALYSIS OF CULTURE AND COMMUNITY IN A TIME OF CRISIS, LAPLACA COHEN AND SLOVER LINETT
WHERE WE’RE GOING
Direct Path → Indirect Path
COLLABORATION

Internal

External
The plan is to have a plan before you need a plan.
CHANGE IS NOT A DIRTY WORD
SOME THINGS DON’T CHANGE
TOP 5 BEST PRACTICES TO RELY ON

• A shift from transactional to relational thinking.
• Audiences are made up of *GASP* people!
• Live your “why”
• Make new friends, but keep the old
• Honor your capacity