

Culture + Community in a Time of Crisis

A special COVID edition of

CULTURE
TRACK[®]

Information for cultural organizations interested in participating

What are the goals of this research?

To support the cultural sector and help strengthen communities around the U.S. during and after this crisis, Slover Linett Audience Research and LaPlaca Cohen are collaborating on a national research and strategy initiative, which also involves Advisory Board for the Arts, Wilkening Consulting, and a range of advisors, funders, and stakeholders. By conducting survey research and qualitative research among both arts audiences and the wider U.S. public, we hope quickly answer a range of urgent, complex questions about the place of the arts and culture in the hearts, minds, families, and social and emotional lives of Americans during these painful times — and, crucially, help make strategic sense of those answers via forward-looking, inclusive dialogue that leads to adaptation, resilience, and relevance.

We want this study to deepen our understanding of how arts & culture organizations can help their communities during these times...and how communities can support their arts and cultural organizations.

The survey questions are currently under development, but we anticipate investigating topic areas such as a COVID-situation snapshot for respondents (impacts, anxieties, needs); digital engagement with culture (what are people doing/using, what value are they getting from it, what needs are not yet being filled); what people most miss and value about on-site cultural experiences; perceived relevance and trust in cultural organizations during such a crisis; and inclinations to give, support, and (when possible) return to cultural organizations.

What kinds of organizations are eligible to participate?

Arts & culture organizations across the sector that maintain email lists of their users, visitors, attendees, subscribers, members, etc. — as long as those email addresses are predominantly for people 18 years or older. We aspire to reach a large, diverse cross-section of art-and-culture audiences around the country, from museum visitors to arts attendees to people who participate informally or personally in creativity and culture. (We will also be surveying a representative sample of the U.S. population, so we can learn about both cultural participators and the broader community.) We welcome participation by organizations of all sizes and foci — including community-serving, culturally specific, and socially engaged organizations — from art museums, history museums & historic sites, science centers & natural history museums, and botanic gardens to theaters, orchestras, dance companies, opera companies, film festivals, folk festivals, libraries, and the like.

What is my organization going to get out of this survey?

You're probably interested in this study because you want to understand your audience's and community's needs at this crucial time, and because you want to be able to earn their continued engagement and support. We're working to develop an online interface that will let you log in to view your audience-members' survey responses and download that data for your own use (with no visibility into the data of other organizations' survey respondents). We're hoping that that tool will also let you compare your data to the U.S. population averages and to the aggregate of other cultural audiences nationally. Of course, we'll also be creating a series of special-edition Culture Track reports and web materials based on our analysis of all the data, which will be freely available online.

How will the survey be distributed? Will contact information be collected?

If your organization wants to participate, we will send you a unique survey link (coded to your organization) along with invitation language you can email to your audience list — or, if your list is large, only a random subset of your list (see below). You'll be welcome to tailor the invitation language to your unique community. As an incentive for participation, we will enter all survey respondents into a drawing to win one of 25 Visa gift cards of \$100 each. (In order to provide these incentives, we'll need to ask respondents to submit their name and email address if they would like to be included in the drawing; but the emails won't be associated with their answers to the survey.)

We're also planning to ask respondents if they'd be interested in participating in upcoming qualitative (i.e., conversation-based) research, such as a videoconference interview or a multi-day online discussion panel. Please let us know if you have any concerns about this connection between the online survey and the parallel qualitative research.

Whom should we send the survey to?

We encourage you to send to a *random sample* of your lists of ticket-buyers, visitors, participants, event attendees, etc. We know that many organizations' lists are skewed toward people who are highly affiliated with the organization (members, subscribers, donors), so we encourage you to be sure to include people who may be *less affiliated*, e.g. one-time program participants, single-ticket-buyers, e-news subscribers, even Wi-Fi users if you require a sign-in). We'll be available to coach you through these list-management questions, don't worry!

How many people should we send the survey to?

This is important and somewhat complicated. Because we want to be able to track changes in responses during the crisis and recovery period, there will be two "waves" of this online survey: first in late April and second in either late June or July, depending on how the COVID situation evolves. (There may also be a third wave in late summer of fall, if necessary.) If you're participating in Wave 1, you're also welcome to participate in the second and possible third wave, as well. So it will be important to "save" some of your lists for those follow-up waves, so you can send the invitation email to *different people* in your audience. (You'll need to keep track of which ones you've sent the first-wave invitation to.)

So **if your lists are smaller than 7,500, please send the invitation to one-third of your list** for this first wave of the survey. **If your lists are larger than 7,500, please send the invitation to at least 2,500 but no more than 5,000 people for this first wave of the survey.** Again, we'll be available to help if you need us.

When should I send out the survey-invitation emails?

We're working very quickly to develop and test the online survey, and we hope to be able to email you your individual institution's link and language by Wednesday, April 22. We'll ask you to email the invitations to your audience **on Monday morning, April 27th**. Because the COVID context is always changing, we'd like all respondents to take the survey during the same week. But we may have some flexibility, so let us know if you're unable to send the link to your lists on Monday, April 27.

Will it there be a cost to my organization?

No. **The Wallace Foundation** is serving as lead funder for this initiative, and we're in discussions with other foundations about supporting additional components. The intention here is to aid the nonprofit cultural sector by offering a shared empirical and strategic picture that guides resilient planning, practice, and policy.

Should I share this information with my colleagues and professional networks? Is there a website I can point them to?

Yes, please do — especially and colleagues and networks involved with smaller cultural organizations, those outside of large urban areas, and those serving communities of color. We'll be developing a project microsite at culturetrack.org/COVIDstudy; please stay tuned for more information there.

Who will be my contact for this project?

Your main contact for questions about the survey or the resulting data will be Matthew Jenetopulos, a researcher at Slover Linett. He can be reached at matthew@sloverlinett.com or by phone at **(773) 348-9200 x107**.

What are the next steps if we want to participate?

Please send Matthew Jenetopulos an email (address above) letting him know that you're interested. Since we want to ensure that cultural organizations of all types, sizes, and regions are participating in this research, **please include the following information about your organization:**

- approximate annual operating budget
- approximate number of employees
- approximate number of attenders/visitors to your organization in a given *normal* year

Ballpark estimates are fine—you don't have to do any digging! And if it's not obvious, please tell us what area of culture your organization works in (e.g., creative writing courses, using music in healthcare, etc.). And don't forget to include your individual contact info and any questions you have for us.

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Thanks for your collaborative spirit, trust, and energy. We hope this audience and community research helps guide a stronger recovery for your organization, your community, and the wider cultural sector.