Evaluation of the Neighborhood Opportunity Network (NeON) Arts Program

NeONArts

A program of the NYC Department of Probation
in partnership with Carnegie Hall's Weill Music Institute

Table of Contents

Executive Summary

Independent evaluators, Westat and Metis Associates, conducted an implementation and outcomes study of NeON Arts, a free program of the Neighborhood Opportunity Network (NeON). NeON Arts offers young people in seven New York City communities the chance to explore the arts through a variety of creative projects aimed at helping them to establish positive peer relationships and to develop important social and career skills. The evaluation, which was conducted from December 2016 to June 2018, included the collection and analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data. This summary provides information about the history and context that led to the development of the NeONs and NeON Arts, a description of NeON Arts programming, an explanation of the evaluation design, a review of implementation and outcome findings, and recommendations for program improvement.

History and Context

Since 2011, the NYC Department of Probation (DOP) has undergone significant organizational cultural change, shifting from a punitive, deficit-based model to a more holistic, strengths-based model. Through the process of brainstorming ways to better deliver resources to their clients in the neighborhoods in which they reside, DOP mapped the neighborhoods in which their clients lived in order to determine where resources were needed. They found that there were seven NYC neighborhoods that had the highest concentrations of probation clients since the 1970s: Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn; Brownsville, Brooklyn; East New York, Brooklyn; Harlem, Manhattan; South Jamaica, Queens; North Shore, Staten Island; and the South Bronx. As these neighborhoods experienced high rates of incarceration, resources were often deployed to the communities in which the prisons were located, leaving these seven neighborhoods depleted of vital services. Based on this information,

the Neighborhood Opportunity Network (NeON) took shape, and NeONs were established as resource hubs in each of these seven communities, as shown in the map above.

In order to ensure that the NeONs are responsive to community needs, NeON stakeholder groups, comprised of local probation officers, community-based organization representatives, and other community members, were formed at each site to lead decision-making for the NeON in their neighborhoods. In addition to the array of new educational, employment, and health programs offered to communities through the NeONs, DOP was interested in creating opportunities for clients and other community members to participate in arts programming, which had been lacking in these neighborhoods. DOP was aware of a growing body of research demonstrating the positive effects of the arts for justice-involved youth (e.g., Clawson and Coolbaugh, 2001, Catterall, 2012)); though this research was still in the gestational phase,[1] DOP believed that their own clients could benefit from arts programming. DOP had built a

	Bedford–Stuyvesant	Brownsville	East New York	Harlem	Jamaica	South Bronx	Staten Island
Spring 2017	Fame Airbrush	Free Verse	Fame Airbrush	Building Beats	Fame Airbrush	Cobra Performing Arts, Inc.; Free Verse	The Chris S. Owens Foundation; Projectivity Group
Summer 2017	Fame Airbrush	Fame Airbrush	Fame Airbrush	The International Child Program	Building Beats	Free Verse	Green Earth Poets Cafe
Fall 2017/ Winter 2018	Fame Airbrush	Free Verse	Free Verse	Fame Airbrush	Building Beats	Free Verse; Cobra Performing Arts, Inc.; Thrive Collective	Projectivity Group

relationship with Carnegie Hall's Weill Music Institute through their collaborations on other arts programming, and they knew that Carnegie Hall was deeply committed to advancing social justice through a strengths-based approach to arts education; thus, Carnegie Hall proved an ideal partner for this new arts initiative.

Program Description

NeON Arts aims to support the social, emotional, and creative development of individuals in under-resourced communities. It also aims to support the communities themselves, by funding local artists and arts organizations to deliver high quality arts programming. Furthermore, this initiative strives to foster environments where youth and adults alike feel comfortable expressing themselves, taking creative risks, and developing deeper relationships with each other.

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[1] Since the inception of NeON Arts, other research has been published demonstrating the compelling benefits of the arts and cultural programming for whole communities (Stern & Seifert, 2017), and the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention has included a relevant literature review in their Model Programs Guide. However, more research is needed to determine the range of outcomes for youth participating in arts programming like NeON Arts.

While the target population for NeON Arts is youth ages 16-24, all community members are invited to participate in the arts programming. NeON Arts offers three cycles of projects each year, with each cycle lasting approximately eight to 12 weeks and serving approximately 15 young people and other community members. The process is overseen by the NeON stakeholder groups, ensuring that the projects selected are best suited to their communities. Since its inception in 2013, NeON Arts has offered projects related to visual arts, film, spoken and written poetry, music, and dance, as well as many other forms. Each cycle ends with an individual and/or a citywide final event. The figure on the previous page provides a graphic display of the projects that were offered in each of the seven NeON sites during the three project cycles that occurred over the course of the evaluation period.

Evaluation Methods

Westat and Metis Associates, two independent research and evaluation firms, were contracted to develop an evaluation that would assess the implementation of NeON Arts and the effects of the initiative on young people, the communities served by the program, and the government and other agencies involved in the program. The evaluation, which took place between December 2016 and June 2018, utilized a variety of methods to gain information and perspective from those involved in NeON Arts:

- Observations of seven workshops, five meetings, three final events, and one open house;
- Interviews with ten NeON Arts partners, seven artists, and two project staff;
- Two stakeholder focus groups and five youth focus groups; and
- Three types of youth participant surveys.

With the goal of ensuring youth voice throughout the evaluation design and execution, the evaluation team worked with a Youth Advisory Group (YAG) comprised of youth who were deeply familiar with NeON Arts and could offer their knowledge and perspective to the evaluation.

Implementation Findings

Overall, the evaluation found that NeON Arts has been successful in offering a diverse range of artistic experiences for young people who may not have had these types of learning opportunities available to them in the past. The program has also been intentional in ensuring that it is community led. Youth and stakeholder group voices guide the selection and implementation of projects during each cycle, ensuring that the programming meets the needs and interests of the community. Workshops were observed to be highly engaging, providing opportunities for participants to express themselves, learn new skills, and take creative risks in warm, collaborative, and safe spaces. Moreover, final events have allowed young people to engage with others from across the city, to share their work with their communities, and to experience the value of their voices as they perform in historic NYC venues.

Importantly, NeON Arts provides opportunities for young people and adults to work together on creative projects. For example, probation officers were observed participating in workshop activities across sites. In large part, their active involvement was highly supportive of the program's goals of

developing community, fostering deepened relationships between youth and adults, and reducing stigma surrounding justice-involved youth.

Notwithstanding the key successes described above, the evaluation identified challenges to implementation of NeON Arts. Perhaps most importantly, some NeON Arts projects have struggled to recruit and maintain young people in the target population. While some projects have met their recruitment and attendance targets easily, other projects have had trouble recruiting participants and/or maintaining their regular attendance. Along these lines, recruitment responsibilities across sites were found to vary. Some stakeholders expressed that not all stakeholders are involved in outreach, and some artists felt overburdened by the responsibility to both run their projects and recruit youth.

Other challenges in implementing workshops that were reported and observed through the evaluation include the limitation of a short cycle length; difficulty securing, transporting, and storing equipment; and occasional communication and organization issues. Moreover, it was found that several of the projects have been repeated across multiple sites and over multiple cycles. This has presented some clear advantages (such as the opportunity to offer popular projects to more young people and to deepen and expand the work each cycle); however, it also may reduce the options available to young people with other interests. This challenge is closely related to potential capacity limitations of smaller, local organizations to carry out the work of NeON Arts. The projects offered through NeON Arts are often delivered by organizations based outside of the neighborhoods instead of by local organizations.

Outcome Findings

This evaluation identified three key outcome themes that were evident across all participant groups: *Engagement*, *Relationships*, and *Internal Change.*

Engagement

Though some youth were initially skeptical about participating in NeON Arts, many grew to truly appreciate the experience, the environment, and the relationships they built through the program. They noted enjoying performing, visiting new places, and completing projects, and they explained that these opportunities are rarely available to them outside of NeON Arts. These projects also helped youth identify talents that were previously untapped. While attendance remains a challenge, some youth are deeply committed to their projects, even visiting the DOP office on days they are not required to report. This level of arts engagement requires youth to take creative risks and be willing to make mistakes, and NeON Arts has provided a safe atmosphere which allows for creative risk-taking. In addition to creating meaningful art, youth have gained marketable skills, such as time management, communication skills, discipline, self-control, leadership skills, and teamwork.

Community members, DOP, and other organizations have also demonstrated commitment to NeON Arts. Stakeholders and NeON Arts partners each meet regularly and are generally dedicated to ensuring high quality arts programming that meets the needs of their communities. Importantly, adults from these organizations participate in workshops alongside youth, necessitating their own creative risk-taking and vulnerability, and adults are therefore able to model these behaviors for youth. This

willingness to actively engage with youth through NeON Arts demonstrates to youth that these adults care about them as people and acknowledge their value. Similarly, the evaluation team participated in some workshop activities and utilized research methods that were novel for the evaluation team and partner organizations, such as the use of a YAG, and this, too, required risk-taking.

Relationships

Youth participants reported that they have not only met new people across the city through final events and project activities, but they have built strong bonds with the other youth at their sites. Some young people even described their peers involved in their project as "family," and young people and stakeholders described sensitive situations in which the participants had demonstrated high levels of support for each other. Young people indicated that they appreciated their interactions with people of varying personalities and backgrounds, and they recognized that getting along with different kinds of people is an important life skill. Similarly, youth participants have built new or deepened relationships with adults—particularly with their probation officers, with whom they are now able to interact in a unique context. While some youth expected to be judged by others at NeON Arts, they soon discovered that NeON Arts offers a supportive and nonjudgmental atmosphere where they can feel comfortable expressing themselves.

Similarly, probation officers and other community members have benefited from these deepened relationships with youth, as they have positively altered their perceptions of youth. Probation officers in particular are able to build more positive professional relationships with their clients by creating art together in a more relaxed setting than the context in which they typically interact. Other adults visiting NeON Arts workshops don't necessarily know who is on probation and who is not, allowing them to see youth for who they are without attaching a stigma. Additionally, NeON Arts has helped community members, partner organizations, and the evaluation team to make connections with each other, building a web of resources that can be drawn from in serving communities.

Internal Change

The evaluation gathered data on the myriad ways in which youth had emotionally benefited from their participation in NeON Arts. Young people learned more about themselves, and became more confident in expressing their thoughts and emotions, both verbally and creatively. As they grew to understand the value they could contribute to the world, they felt more hopeful for their futures and began considering careers they could create that would capitalize on their passions. Through NeON Arts, some young people identified talents they had not known they had, and they learned to take initiative in reaching their goals. Importantly, stakeholders explained that NeON Arts provided a platform for participants to freely express themselves and consider new possibilities for their lives.

As community members and DOP staff were able to build new relationships through NeON Arts, they expressed gaining broadened perspective regarding probation clients and other young people in the community. According to data gathered through this evaluation, this new perspective has changed the way they relate to youth, allowing them to more effectively meet their needs. Moreover, the evaluation found that interactions between community members and DOP through NeON Arts has changed the

way community members perceive DOP, and community members now feel more comfortable visiting the NeONs to access resources.

In turn, NeON Arts partners have continued to modify their approaches to serving NYC's communities. As they have observed positive effects of NeON Arts for the people they serve, DOP reports inspiration to create other kinds of programs that will further their efforts to bring community members together. Carnegie Hall program staff and administrators reported that NeON Arts has helped generate conversations regarding their own organizational culture, and they are considering ways they can continue to create opportunities for young people to grow. Moreover, the evaluation team has gained new perspective on the potential of active and intensive YAGs to strengthen evaluation design.

Summary and Recommendations

Overall, the evaluation found that NeON Arts is a powerful program with strong potential to impact young people. Data collected through the evaluation point toward the program's positive effects on participants' engagement levels, the strength of their relationships, and their development as individuals. Moreover, the evaluation found that NeON Arts had parallel impacts on all participant groups involved, including community members, staff from arts organizations, and staff from the primary partner agencies and organizations, including evaluators. At its heart, NeON Arts brings people together through the collaborative and creative artistic process. Moreover, it provides a strong model for how the arts can be used to reduce stigma and increase understanding between individuals, organizations, and agencies.

Recommendations

- In order to foster greater participation of smaller, local arts organizations, the program should consider **partnering smaller arts organizations with larger, more experienced ones.**
- Additionally, the program may consider **making artist presentations** a required part of the applications, as programs that do not participate in these tend not to be selected.
- In order to better ensure variety of arts offerings at sites, consider **instituting a framework that encourages sites implement all major art forms** over the course of a 1-2 year period.
- **Clarify the roles for adults** in workshops to ensure the quality and nature of their engagement.
- Provide **additional opportunities for cross-site collaboratio**n, both during final culminating events, as well as outside of them.
- **Examine reasons why young people choose not to participate** or not to continue in the program.
- Conduct **deeper investigation into projects that successfully recruit and retain** their youth and allow opportunity for them to share their best practices with other artists and organizations.

"We love to grow. So what you gotta do is just give us an opportunity to step foot into growth.

-YAG member

History and Context

NeON Arts programming was developed in the context of major changes in the organizational culture of the New York City Department of Probation (DOP), in conjunction with a body of research demonstrating the positive outcomes of youth and communities steeped in arts education. This section provides background information to better understand the program in the context in which it emerged.

Department of Probation (DOP)

In 2011, under the leadership of a newly appointed Commissioner, DOP began to undergo major strategic changes that have now spanned two New York City Mayoral Administrations. In a climate where 16-year-olds in New York were tried as adults, and DOP staff were armed with firearms and arrest power, DOP was not viewed favorably in many communities. The agency recognized a need to modify some of its practices and redefine the purpose of the organization. While DOP had always tried to connect clients with resources, DOP now undertook a large-scale organizational cultural change moving from its perceived role as a punitive arm of law enforcement to a role that included a more social work-like approach of helping to empower people on probation as they sought to change their lives. As one of the steps in creating this cultural change, staff from outside of DOP who brought unique perspectives and background in providing direct services to justice-involved youth, involvement in policy work, and national work on racial disparities across the country were brought on board to work together with DOP veteran employees.

> **"We redefined our role to one [in which] we were there to help prevent people from going any farther into the system by providing them with supports and services and skills and opportunities. That was a major culture shift for the department."**
>
> **-NeON Arts Partner**

According to staff at DOP, discussions at the agency at this time focused on cultural changes, which ranged from redefining agency goals to more subtle but powerful shifts, such as referring to the individuals on probation whom they served as "clients," rather than "offenders" or "probationers." Their work focused on building relationships with the individuals and communities they serviced, as well as justice reinvestment, the notion that some funding should be diverted away from incarceration and policing costs and used instead to improve communities.

DOP began shifting its focus to the reduction of stigma surrounding probation and utilizing a strengths-based, rather than deficits-based, approach. To that end, DOP renovated its existing DOP offices to make them feel less like government offices and more like welcoming resource hubs, reflecting their appreciation of probation clients as individuals with promise. Waiting room seats that had previously been bolted to the floors were replaced with colorful benches, and each office's staff chose bright colors to paint the walls. Changes in the office design were representative of a larger DOP cultural shift toward empowering clients and restoring relationships in the communities they served.

Development of the NeONs

During the 1970s, a group of prisoners at Greenhaven Prison in New York formed a "Think Tank," where prisoners met to brainstorm prison policy reform (Clines, 1992). The Think Tank, led by then-prisoner Eddie Ellis, uncovered that three-quarters of New York's prison population hailed from seven NYC neighborhoods: Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn; Brownsville, Brooklyn; East New York, Brooklyn; Harlem, Manhattan; South Jamaica, Queens; North Shore, Staten Island[2]; and the South Bronx.

> **The Three Pillars of NeONs**
> - Network of quality opportunities
> - Client-probation interaction
> - Community engagement

> **"Communities are greater than the worst of their statistics, and therefore it was important for us to contribute to the well-being of a community, rather than just address this individual."**
>
> **-NeON Arts Partner**

Forty years later, in order to identify the communities with the greatest need for resources, DOP mapped out the home addresses of their probation clients and identified the seven NYC neighborhoods with the highest concentrations of people on probation. Notably, these seven neighborhoods were the same ones that had been experiencing this phenomenon since the 1970s. DOP believed that a major factor contributing to this issue was that clients were sometimes incarcerated at detention centers outside of their neighborhoods and the resources were thus located in these neighborhoods, leaving their home communities depleted and perpetuating the high rates of justice involvement. As DOP was aware of where most of their clients lived, they brainstormed strategies for delivering imperative services to the communities so they could serve clients where they reside. DOP staff attended local community board meetings in order to hear the needs that community members were expressing, which provided insight to DOP as they considered resources that they could offer these communities. Through this process, the concept of the Neighborhood Opportunity Network (NeON) was developed.

> **"We set up these spaces not just as probation offices in the neighborhoods, but as a space where people could come locally and connect right there to services, resources, and opportunities that previously Probation wasn't really providing."**
>
> **-NeON Arts Partner**

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[2] The Clines (1992) article lists the Lower East Side rather than Staten Island.

NeON offices aim to create opportunities in neighborhoods and to build safety nets of partnerships and resources that individuals can continue to access after their probation ends. The NeONs are structured such that the person on probation is at the center of a web of strengths- and skills-based resources, such as mentoring, service learning, and skill-building opportunities. As such, beginning in 2011, DOP instituted NeONs in the seven neighborhoods they had previously identified (see Figure 1). While all NeONs are co-located with community-based organizations, three NeONs are housed in dedicated DOP offices, and four are in separate spaces co-located with community-

Figure 1: NeON Sites

based organizations. As NeONs were meant to be seen as a philosophical approach rather than as discrete physical locations, part-time satellite offices were set up to allow clients who live outside of the main catchment areas to meet with their probation officers more easily. These locations made it easy for local community members to access resources and for probation clients to report to their probation officers without having to travel to a courthouse. The physical presence of the NeONs within communities was imperative for DOP to gain a deeper familiarity with the community and to begin to develop relationships with local service providers. In order to ensure that community members felt a sense of ownership and respect throughout the implementation of the NeONs, a stakeholder group of community members was formed at each NeON to lead decision-making at their respective sites and collaborate in serving the community (see p. 12 for more information). Ultimately, DOP hoped to shift the power dynamics and to create more client-centered relationships.
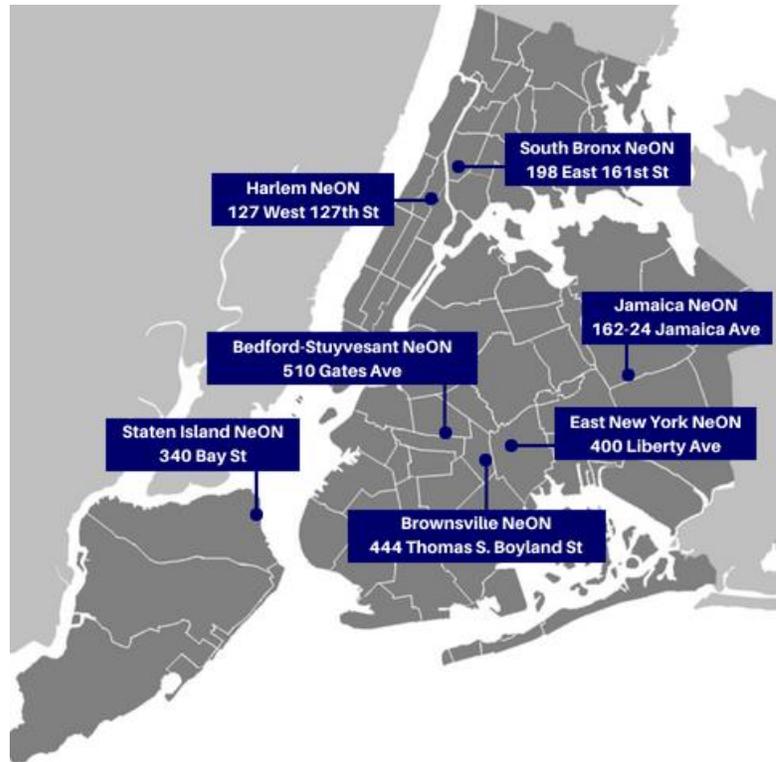
In the interest of wholly supporting these seven communities, DOP felt it was important to ensure the access of NeON resources to all community members, rather than just probation clients. While fiscal resources were initially limited, DOP was able to build the NeONs by leveraging existing relationships and building new partnerships. Their receipt of program funding from the Young Men's Initiative[3] drastically improved their ability to develop a range of new educational, employment, and health programs for probation clients and communities.

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[3] The Young Men's Initiative (YMI) was launched in 2011 as a public-private partnership with the goal of increasing opportunities for young black and Latino men and reducing the disparities among young men of color. YMI takes a holistic approach to youth development, focusing on bolstering success in domains ranging from health to justice.

Development of NeON Arts

As part of its revised strategic approach, DOP was committed to bringing arts experiences to its young people. The agency had previously implemented an arts program for youth who had been arrested for graffiti called Paint Straight and were interested in further utilizing the arts as a form of therapy for their younger clients. Further, they saw the value in partnering with an arts organization to most effectively roll out a new arts initiative. DOP had already established a strong relationship with Carnegie Hall's Weill Music Institute (WMI) through a song-writing workshops in the Bronx and Harlem NeONs from 2011-2013. Thus, DOP knew of Carnegie Hall's commitment to utilizing the arts as a conduit to advance social justice and as a vehicle for creative youth development using a strength-based approach. Carnegie Hall's visionary education and social impact programs reach more than half a million people each year in NYC and through national and international partnerships. Carnegie Hall's programs are driven by the values of artistry, community, and equity, extending artistic opportunities as broadly as possible—particularly where there are personal or systemic obstacles that create barriers to the development of self-expression. Carnegie Hall has demonstrated commitment to serving justice-involved individuals through its programs. In addition to songwriting workshops with young people on probation, Carnegie Hall had worked with young people in the Administration for Children's Services juvenile detention and placement facilities, and had implemented the Lullaby Project at Rikers Island and a music residency at Sing Sing Correctional Facility.

> "There was this idea percolating that more could be done in alignment with what we were trying to accomplish with NeONs in the arena of arts and culture."
>
> -NeON Arts Partner

To support advocacy on behalf of the arts in justice settings, Carnegie Hall also commissioned research by experts in the field. In 2012, Carnegie Hall partnered with the Vera Institute of Justice to explore how youth in the justice system are connecting to the abundance of arts resources in NYC and published a literature review with arts education research firm WolfBrown. In 2014, Carnegie Hall produced a report funded by the National Endowment for the Arts on the potential of music programs for young people in justice settings.

At the same time DOP was thinking about expanding arts programming in the NeONs, Carnegie Hall and other NYC arts organizations were meeting to discuss collective impact strategies for arts and juvenile justice work across the city. DOP saw value in partnering with Carnegie Hall to leverage the organization's experience and capacity to launch and administer a new arts initiative citywide. Moreover, Carnegie Hall and DOP were interested in implementing a model that was not already established in the field—funding for citywide arts programming distributed to many individual artists and arts organizations, overseen by a partnership between a city law enforcement agency and a cultural institution. NeON Arts was thus launched in 2013, supported in part by funding from the Open Society Foundations through YMI.

Benefits of the Arts

The development of NeON Arts was built on more than an assumption that the arts could prove deeply beneficial for young people and their communities; research in this area has shown that arts education has positive effects on risk-taking, collaboration, opportunities for success, academic test scores, crime rates, and several other outcomes. The following section provides a brief summary of this research.

Youth Development and the Arts

The arts have long been used as powerful tools to connect and engage with young people (Catterall, 2012; Martin, et al., 2013). Researchers have pointed out several aspects of the arts that demonstrate their conduciveness to positive growth and development, particularly among youth, who are actively forging their identities and understandings of their places in society (Taylor, 2005; Catterall, 2012). NeON Arts was based on the following characteristics of arts programming as demonstrated in a research study commissioned by Carnegie Hall (Wolf & Wolf, 2012):

- ***Collaborative.*** Engaging in the arts, particularly those that involve performance, is fundamentally social in nature. Youth have an opportunity to experience the powerful feeling of group membership and are presented with opportunities to develop peer relationships. Moreover, the arts provide a key model of the power that their individual decisions can have on overall group outcomes (Wolf & Wolf, 2012).
- ***Creative risk-taking.*** Past research has emphasized the importance of risk in human development. As Matarasso (1997) points out, *"*Risk is fundamental to the human condition and learning to live with it is a pre-requisite for growth and development" (p. 59). The arts provide individuals with opportunities to try things they may never have engaged in before. Moreover, they require individuals to take risks emotionally, as they allow themselves to be exposed and vulnerable. This has the potential to be particularly impactful when others around them are similarly vulnerable, and has been considered a key reason why the arts are beneficial for developing strong relationships (Wolf & Wolf, 2012).
- ***Opportunities to be successful.*** By their nature, the arts encourage expression and are accepting of differences. They have been highlighted for their potential to allow opportunity for individuals to escape prior experiences of failure or exclusion (Wolf & Wolf, 2012). Individuals are given opportunity to make their own decisions, take ownership, and to link their feelings of success with a purposeful activity (Wolf & Wolf, 2012). This may allow individuals to identify skills or talents that they did not know they had, having never been given the chance to try them. Importantly, some programs, such as NeON Arts, allow youth to design their own exhibitions and performances—a component that is considered best practice in arts programming, as this ownership helps develop youth's critical thinking skills (Carroll, 2007) and demonstrates the importance of art in the community (Ruiz, 2010).
- ***Skill development.*** Engagement in the arts may allow youth to acquire new skills in an art form. Moreover, when the development of new skills is coupled with both high expectations and a supportive environment, the experience may not only increase their focus and self-confidence

levels but also provide them with marketable skills (Wolf & Wolf, 2012). Indeed, research identifying best practices in arts programming has shown that hands-on arts instruction facilitates a more personal connection with the activity, which supports skill development (Carroll, 2007).

- ***Positive adult relationships.*** The arts have been credited with creating "spaces for us to see each other differently" (Wolf & Wolf, 2012, p. 41). They provide opportunities for youth and the adults who work with them to see and experience each other in new ways. Adults may notice talents and characteristics in youth that they would not have believed to exist previously. Likewise, youth may perceive adults in a less authoritative and more vulnerable manner. Effectively, individuals—regardless of their age—are humanized (Arts Council England, 2006; Clawson and Coolbaugh, 2001).

Given these key characteristics of arts programming, it is perhaps not surprising that they have been associated with such skills as better collaboration, cooperation, and communication (Groves & Huber, 2003; Taylor, 2005); higher self-confidence and self-esteem (Caterall, Chapleau, & Iwanaga, 1999; Martin, et al., 2013; Rickard, et al., 2013); improved concentration and task completion (Posner & Patoine, 2009); increased coping skills and reduced anger (Groves & Huber, 2003); and better attitudes toward and relationships with adults (Elpus, 2013). This field of research has continued to grow since the establishment of NeON Arts, and recent studies have corroborated previous findings demonstrating the benefits of art for young people overall (Kim, 2015; Rhodes, Schechter, 2014; Shernoff, Csikszentmihalyi, Schneider, & Shernoff, 2014). Moreover, while these outcomes have been observed for all youth, there may be particular benefits to youth at risk of justice-involvement.

Art as a Conduit to Serve Justice-Involved Youth

Youth in justice settings are in the process of developing, just as any other adolescent, and therefore would be expected to experience the same benefits as those outside the justice system. Research on

arts programs in criminal justice has found that arts projects—particularly those that involve trust, reflection, and tapping into alternative learning styles—have positive effects on participants' engagement, self-regulation, self-concepts, and academic achievement (Miles and Clarke, 2006; Catterall, 2012). Other research has focused on the benefits of the arts to justice-involved youth's self-esteem (Anderson & Overy, 2010; Djurichkovic, 2011; Ezell & Levy, 2003; Hughes, 2005). One evaluation of several arts-based prevention programs found that a higher percentage of youth exhibited self-regulation skills such as task completion and anger expression after program participation, leading the evaluators to conclude that these arts programs may have provided protective factors for young people at risk of offending (Clawson & Coolbaugh, 2001). Reviews of arts-based juvenile justice programs across the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand found similar outcomes in self-regulation skills, particularly in inhibiting aggression and anger (Djurichkovic, 2011; Hughes, 2005). Further studies have found that justice-involved youth and those at risk of justice involvement increase their educational attainment after participation (Anderson & Overy, 2010; Hughes, 2005) and improve their relationships with their guardians (Hughes, 2005). Importantly, further research following the implementation of

> **Economically poorer neighborhoods that are rich in cultural resources experience:**
>
> - **"14 percent reduction in indicated investigations of child abuse and neglect.**
> - **5 percent reduction in obesity.**
> - **18 percent increase in kids scoring in the top stratum on English Language Arts and Math exams, and**
> - **18 percent reduction in the serious crime rate"** (Stern & Seifert, 2017, p. 3).

NeON Arts has found that the number of arts organizations that are serving youth in juvenile justice settings is on the rise, and arts programming has been shown to reduce antisocial behaviors in justice-involved youth (Wolf & Holochwost, 2016). Notably, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) has included a literature review on the benefits of arts programming for at-risk youth in their Model Programs Guide, signifying the acknowledgement within the criminal justice field of the value of the arts. It should be noted, however, that arts programming for justice-involved youth is still in its gestational phase, and more research, such as the current study on NeON Arts, is needed to further elucidate the potential benefits of these initiatives.

Culture and Social Well-Being in NYC

A major goal of NeON Arts is to positively affect whole communities by offering arts programming at no cost to participants. Indeed, recent research has demonstrated the benefits of the arts for communities

> **"When you invite young people to the table, be prepared for some serious truth telling."**
>
> **(Mele, 2017)**

in NYC. In 2017, researchers at the University of Pennsylvania completed a two-year study that documented the cultural ecosystems of NYC's neighborhoods, examined the social well-being of individuals within NYC, and explored the connections between culture and well-being through a series of neighborhood studies (Stern & Seifert, 2017). Perhaps not surprisingly, the authors found vast discrepancies in the cultural resources across neighborhoods. More affluent neighborhoods,

such as those in Manhattan and western Brooklyn, had rich cultural resources, including concentrated and varied non-profits, artists, and cultural participants. Moreover, the authors found that when controlling for factors such as economic standing, race, and ethnicity, the presence of cultural resources had significant positive impacts on the health of the neighborhood.

These findings are critically important because they underscore the importance of cultural resources to all individuals, and particularly those in lower income neighborhoods, as the strongest connections between cultural resources and social well-being are found here. The authors are careful to note that these connections should not be considered causal, nor should culture be considered a "magic wand." Still, it is important to understand the importance of cultural resources in a neighborhood as part of the "ecology of institutions, social networks, and resources that together improve the lives of residents" (p. 4).

Moreover, the authors point out encouraging news: there are more clusters of community-based and grassroots cultural organizations in low and moderate income neighborhoods than initially might meet the eye. Due to their informal nature, they are often undetected when calculating the saturation of community-based organizations in neighborhoods. Therefore, these important resources should be nurtured and fostered so they may serve more individuals from the communities in which they reside, as well as potentially less resourced neighboring communities.

Program Description

This section describes the overall NeON Arts model. Due to its unique responsiveness to community needs, NeON Arts programming varies slightly from site to site. These differences, as well as information about the strengths and challenges of the model, are included in the Implementation Findings section.

Program Model

Target Population

NeON Arts was designed to primarily serve youth aged 16 to 24 who reside in the neighborhoods in which the NeONs are located. However, the initiative is open to youth—both those who are justice involved and those who are not—and adults in the NeON communities, as well as from other locations around NYC. Many participants learn about the programming through their probation officers or through postings at the NeON sites, most of which are located in probation offices. Most NeON Arts workshops are comprised of a mix of participants who are probation clients and those who are not.

Staffing

NeON Arts projects are delivered by individual artists and arts organizations from the greater NYC area. NeON Arts is led by partners at DOP and Carnegie Hall's Social Impact Programs department. DOP is responsible for general oversight of the program activities and ensuring that the needs of probation clients and their communities are served. DOP has several staff members who are integral in delivering the program, from the probation officers, who refer their clients to the program, to the Deputy Commissioner, who oversees the financial aspects of the program. Carnegie Hall serves as the fiscal agent and oversees administrative aspects of the initiative, providing technical assistance on a regular basis. A full-time project manager is dedicated to managing the day-to-day logistics of NeON Arts. As the program has grown over time, a full-time NeON Arts Associate and a part-time Assistant have been added to the staff. These dedicated NeON Arts staff are housed at Carnegie Hall, but they function on behalf of both Carnegie Hall and DOP, ensuring smooth operation of NeON Arts overall. Carnegie Hall's PR, Marketing, IT, and Development staff also contribute to the infrastructure and support the program.

Projects and Cycles

NeON Arts offers three project cycles during the summer, fall/winter, and spring of each year, each lasting approximately eight to twelve weeks. Individual artists, arts organizations, and partnerships of art organizations are eligible to apply for grants ranging from $8,000 to $15,000, which are intended to cover most expenses for the duration of the cycle. Each NeON site has a stakeholder group (see Program Highlight on p. 12 for more information on these groups). Carnegie Hall manages the grant application

process, including outreach efforts to promote the grant opportunity to artists and arts organizations, hosting webinars, and providing technical infrastructure for an online grant management platform. With support from Carnegie Hall, NeON stakeholder groups govern the selection of grantees at their local NeON sites, including reviewing applications; participating in "meet and greet" presentations, during which applicants have an opportunity to present their proposed projects to the stakeholder groups; and scoring each applicant on criteria such as budget, quality of project design, and relevance to community needs. Once grantees are selected, NeON stakeholders remain involved in the project throughout the cycle by recruiting participants and checking in with artists to ensure program success. Staff members from both Carnegie Hall and DOP provide technical assistance to the site, supporting project planning, monitoring project implementation, and conducting project reflection meetings following project completion. Carnegie Hall offers capacity building and professional development workshops for the grantee arts organizations/artists throughout each workshop cycle.

Each NeON site holds different capacities for projects and can currently host between one and three arts projects at a time, with a citywide maximum of nine projects per cycle and 20-25 projects per year. Arts projects range across multiple disciplines, including visual arts, film, spoken and written poetry, music, and dance, among other forms. Each project serves approximately 15 young people, though some serve considerably more than that and some serve fewer. During workshops, artists generally teach young people artistic skills that contribute to their culminating final project, and youth and adults work together to practice these techniques and create artwork. In order to support their participation, youth are provided with incentives such as MetroCards, dinner, and even stipends, though these incentives vary across projects. Each project cycle concludes with individual final events at each site and/or one citywide final event, during which participants can showcase their artwork to family, friends, and community members. Several of the end-of-cycle events have been held at Carnegie Hall.

Community Leadership

An important feature of the NeON Arts program is that it is community led. While other DOP programs have been led by DOP, NeON Arts is designed so that community members are the decision-makers. The stakeholder groups, which are comprised of probation officers, staff from local CBOs, and community members, vote on the projects to be implemented in their neighborhoods and participate in all aspects of project fulfillment from planning to execution to reflection.

Youth Leadership

As the program has developed, and community leadership has fully taken shape, youth participants, as critical members of the community, have increased their leadership in the program. As the program matured, and more youth had experienced NeON Arts, their voices were more greatly reflected in programmatic decisions. For example, some youth serve as members of NeON stakeholder groups, while other sites select a group of youth each cycle who contribute to the voting process.

Program Highlight: *Stakeholder Groups*

Composition

Each NeON site has a stakeholder group that guides and oversees programming at the site. Stakeholder groups are composed of a diverse range of individuals, ensuring that a variety of perspectives is represented and an array of community needs are met:

- approximately **55% of stakeholders are from the DOP**, the majority of whom are probation officers;
- **25% are from CBOs**, with a few stakeholders representing youth development organizations, such as Good Shepherd and CAMBA;
- **15% are other community members**, such as parents and business owners.

"They have been so intricately involved and they are so critical to the process that the process could not happen without the stakeholders because the whole way that it's set up is kind of centered around this group of people that help determine what art happens, how it sort of flows through their community, and they come with a level of credibility and understanding about the community that, no matter how well-intended we are, we just don't always have."

-NeON Arts Partner

Roles

- Approach and involve community-based organizations that are deeply committed to the community.
- Recruit other individuals who are interested in improving the community and can provide resources, such as local business owners and clergy.
- Collaborate with DOP to ensure that NeON is serving probation clients to the best of its ability.
- Raise awareness of NeON Arts within the community.
- Attend NeON events and workshops.
- Review applications, select projects, and plan cycles.

Strengths

Over time, stakeholder groups have become highly effective and collaborative groups, where most members are deeply committed to maximizing the quality of NeON programming. The strengths of these groups include:

- **Stakeholders are able and eager to work together to meet the needs of the community.** Stakeholders reported discussing individual needs during their meetings, and offering up services and connections to ensure that these needs are met. For example, one stakeholder might know a youth who is interested in a specific career path, and another stakeholder might know a professional in that career who might be willing to help direct the youth. To that end, stakeholders have worked hard to effectively build relationships with CBOs that will help them meet youth's needs.
- **Stakeholders are thorough in the grant selection process.** They take seriously their responsibility to select high quality programming for the youth and to make wise choices for a limited budget. This commitment is evident in the specific questions they ask during meet and greet meetings.
- **All stakeholders actively participate in decision-making.** While stakeholder groups have co-chairs who lead the groups, stakeholders noted feeling that all members of the group have equal weight in decision-making, and that everyone is encouraged to share their opinions.
- **Over time, stakeholders have been able to work through challenges to create effective systems for decision-making**. In the initial days of NeON Arts, Carnegie Hall worked closely with stakeholder groups to help them develop processes for grant selection and other decisions. Now, stakeholders generally work independently and effectively with less technical assistance from Carnegie Hall.

Challenges

While stakeholder groups have required less technical assistance over time and have been able to devise creative solutions to challenges they've experienced, stakeholders shared some challenges they are still working to overcome:

- **Some stakeholders indicated that goals differ within the stakeholder group**, such as serving probation clients or bringing in other community members, which may lead to recruitment challenges.
- **Scheduling of stakeholder meetings can be difficult**, as stakeholders do not all work during the same hours and some stakeholders may need to leave work during the day to attend meetings.
- **Co-chairs or other stakeholder group members sometimes end up with more decision-making power**. While all stakeholders are encouraged to share opinions and actively participate in decision-making, some stakeholders tend to defer to those who they feel are in charge of the group.

Program Goals

NeON Arts aims to bolster the social, emotional, and creative development of young people throughout the city, particularly in under-resourced neighborhoods. By funding local artists and arts organizations, NeON Arts not only works to support the artistic community of NYC, but it also strives to connect youth to experiences to which they may not otherwise have access. Further, through supportive workshop environments, NeON Arts seeks to nurture youth's development of positive relationships with both their peers and adults, offer safe platforms for youth to express their emotions in effective and appropriate ways, and foster the development of both soft and hard skills that may translate to future employment opportunities.

In order to outline the path by which NeON Arts affects the engagement, relationships, and emotional growth of youth and their communities, the evaluation team collaborated with NeON Arts partners and the Youth Advisory Group (YAG; for more information) to develop a logic model (), which graphically depicts the logic behind expected programmatic change. This model was specifically designed to capture the program as it is perceived by those involved in NeON Arts and to be understandable to a wide range of audiences.

Neighborhood Opportunity Network (NeON) Arts
Change Model

About NeON Arts	Participants	Activities	Right Away	Later On	In the Future

Goal of NeON Arts:

To empower youth and to make communities better

Resources:

- Seven NeON sites
- DOP staff
- CH staff
- Local artists and arts organizations
- Community partners
- Stakeholder groups
- Youth Advisory Group
- Performance/ exhibits
- Incentives (e.g., MetroCards, meals)
- Westat/Metis evaluation
- Support from funders

NeON Arts Projects:

- Three rounds of arts projects (including dance, music, visual arts, theater, poetry, and digital media) per year across seven sites
- 8-12 week sessions
- Free performances/ exhibits in the local community
- Citywide events at the end of each round

NeON Arts Community:

- Participation of probation officers
- Youth Advisory Group feedback
- Stakeholder group guidance
- Artist and community involvement

Participants

Youth and young adults, including probation clients

DOP staff, local artists, and community members

Activities

Artistic Activities:

- Offer opportunities for participants to express themselves
- Use familiar and new styles of art and music
- Encourage teamwork
- Reflect local culture

Environment:

- Judgment-free
- Supportive
- Respectful

Right Away

Youth

Engagement:

- Commitment to project
- New skills and experiences
- Positive after-school activities

Relationships:

- Teamwork skills
- New friendships

Emotional Growth:

- Try things outside of comfort zone
- Learn new ways to express emotions
- Feel in charge of own future

Community

- Adults and youth work together on meaningful projects
- Community members share in making program decisions
- Local artists have work opportunities

Later On

Youth

Engagement:

- Feel more confident
- Create new self, new stories
- Sense of having contributed to the world

Relationships:

- Relate better to other people
- Know adults who care

Emotional Growth:

- Know more about self
- More hope for future
- Know more about arts careers
- Feel less anger, more positivity

In the Future

Youth

- Committed to achieving goals
- Succeed in school or career
- Continue involvement in the arts

Community

- Artist partnerships are created
- View of justice-involved youth is improved
- DOP becomes more creative
- Communities become stronger and safer
- Neighborhoods have more creative jobs
- Model spreads to other cities

Evaluation Methods

The DOP and the New York City Mayor's Office for Economic Opportunity (NYC Opportunity), contracted with Westat and Metis Associates (hereafter referred to as "the evaluation team"), two independent research and evaluation firms, to develop an evaluation design to examine: 1) the implementation of the program across seven sites, and 2) the effects of the program on youth, DOP staff, and the communities in which project sites are based. The evaluation activities described in this report commenced in December 2016 and concluded in June 2018. The study was made possible through funding from Stavros Niarchos Foundation, NYC Opportunity, and YMI.

Evaluation Questions:

1. What is the nature and quality of the NeON Arts implementation?
2. What are participants' and stakeholders' perceptions of NeON Arts?
3. What effect does NeON Arts have on participant outcomes?
4. What broader effects does NeON Arts have on systems and communities?
5. To what extent can NeON Arts assessment practices be improved in order to gather more valid and reliable data?

Evaluation Background

The evaluation team developed a set of questions that would guide the evaluation. These include questions that examined both program implementation, as well as participant outcomes. The five major questions are provided to the left (see Appendix A for the full set of questions and sub-questions). These evaluation questions provided the basis for the development of the NeON Arts logic model.

Evaluation Activities

In order to gain a deeper understanding of the context of NeON Arts and to gather information to address the evaluation questions from the perspectives of youth, stakeholders, artists, and NeON Arts partners, a range of evaluation activities were conducted. Data were gathered through observations of program meetings and project workshops, interviews with artists and NeON Arts partners, youth surveys, and focus groups with youth and stakeholders. Additionally, the evaluation team conducted an analysis of spring 2017 workshop attendance and a needs assessment in order to make recommendations for future NeON Arts decision-making. These activities are listed below and described in more detail in Appendix A.

Observations

Between April and October 2017, the evaluation team observed five different types of NeON Arts meetings (see Table A1 in the Appendix for details on these observations), seven NeON Arts project workshops, one open house, and three final events (see Table A2 in the Appendix for more details).

Interviews and Focus Groups

Between June 2017 and February 2018, the evaluation team conducted interviews and focus groups with youth, stakeholders, artists, and NeON Arts partners. These methods and protocols are listed below and described in greater detail in Appendix A.

NeON Arts partner interviews. The evaluation team conducted six interviews with 10 NeON Arts partners from three different organizations in order to learn more about their perspectives on the successes and challenges of both the NeON Arts partnership and the NeON Arts program overall (see Table A3 in the Appendix for more details on these interviews).

Artist interviews. The evaluation team conducted individual interviews with seven artists in order to learn more about their experiences as NeON Arts grantees and their perspectives on the successes and challenges of the program (see Table A4 in the Appendix for more details about these interviews).

Stakeholder group focus groups. The evaluation team facilitated two focus groups in June 2017 comprised of three and eight participants, respectively, in order to learn more about NeON stakeholders experiences in the stakeholder groups and their perceptions of program effectiveness (see Table A5 in the Appendix for more details on the focus groups).

Youth focus groups. The evaluation team conducted five focus groups during the summer 2017 cycle in order to gain insight into youth's experiences in NeON Arts and to gather their feedback for program improvement (see Table A6 in the Appendix for more details about these focus gruops).

Other interviews. In addition to interviewing the Fame Airbrush artist, the evaluation team conducted brief, impromptu interviews with two Fame Airbrush staff.

Needs Assessment

To learn more about NeON Arts implementation, the evaluation team conducted a needs assessment of the spring 2017 round in order to more fully document implementation, identify areas for improvement, and make recommendations for future cycles (see Appendix A for more details about the needs assessment).

Attendance Analysis

In order to gain insight into trends in workshop attendance, the evaluation team conducted an attendance analysis using participant program attendance data from the spring 2017 cycle (see Appendix B for data from these analyses).

Youth Surveys

In collaboration with NeON Arts partners and the YAG, the evaluation team designed and distributed three separate youth surveys. These surveys are listed below and described in greater detail in Appendix A.

Youth check-in survey. The youth check-in survey was designed to be collected at the start of each workshop in order to gather data regarding youth's perceptions about the workshop they were about to attend (see Table A7 in the Appendix for details on sessions surveyed and numbers of responses).

Youth check-out survey. The youth check-out survey was designed to be collected at the end of each workshop in order to gather data regarding youth's perceptions of the workshop they had just attended (see Table A8 in the Appendix for sessions surveyed and numbers of responses).

Youth end-of-cycle survey. The youth end-of-cycle survey was designed to be collected at the end of the project cycle in order to gather data regarding youth's perceptions of the project they recently completed, the benefits they feel they have gleaned from participation, and their desire to continue creating art in the future (see Table A9 in the Appendix for numbers of responses).
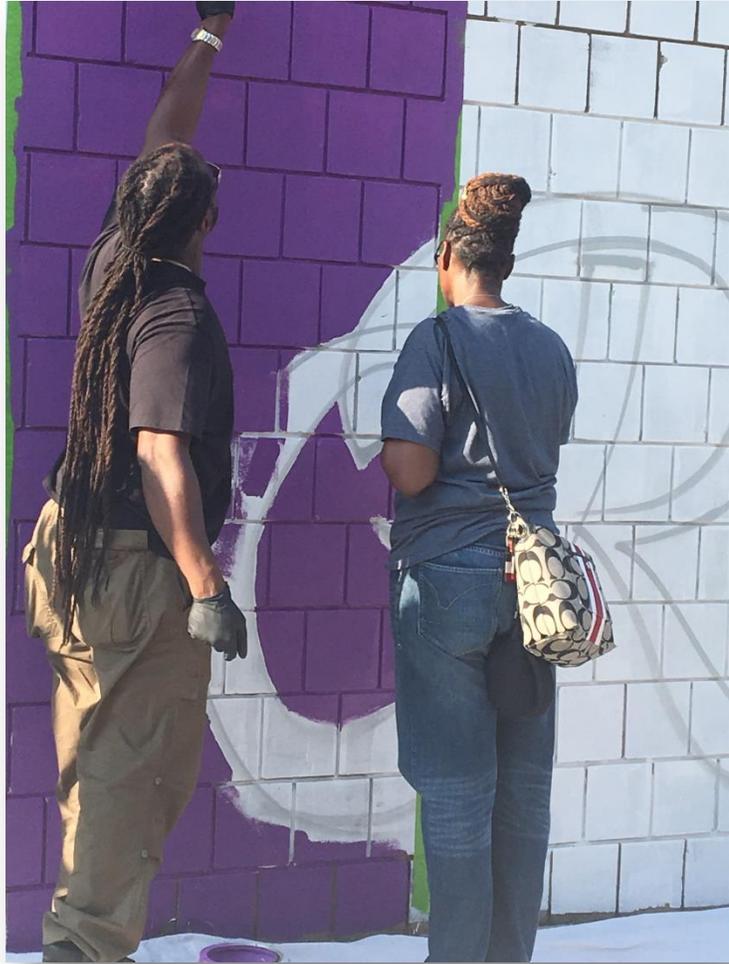
Analysis

Most interviews and focus groups were audio-recorded, and recordings were later summarized and analyzed across participant groups to identify themes. Quantitative survey data were analyzed using descriptive analyses (see Appendix A for more detail).

Evaluation Highlight: *Youth Advisory Group*

Roles

The Youth Advisory Group (YAG) was developed to bring youth voice to the planning and implementation of the NeON Arts evaluation. Youth age 18-24 with a strong background in NeON Arts and an interest in learning about evaluation design and methods were invited to serve on the YAG through the completion of the evaluation. YAG members met with evaluation and partner staff four times throughout the course of the evaluation. Two YAG members attended all four meetings, four members each attended two meetings, and two members attended only one meeting each. YAG members contributed in the following ways:

- Attended an initial orientation;
- Reviewed, pilot tested, and provided feedback on evaluation instruments, including surveys, focus group protocols, and the logic model;
- Suggested appropriate incentives for youth evaluation participation;
- Advised on ideal methods for ensuring high participant survey return rates; and
- Provided general feedback on evaluation design and methods.

Variations over time

In return for their participation, YAG members received an initial training in research methods and were given MetroCards and Visa gift cards for each meeting attended.

Though YAG member responsibilities overall stayed true to the goal of the group, there were some deviations from the original job description. For example, it was initially expected that YAG members would assist in recruiting for and conducting youth focus groups. However, as it became clearer that this task would not be logistically possible, time allotted for these field visits was instead spent on additional revisions to evaluation instruments.

Strengths

YAG members provided invaluable insight to the evaluation design and implementation:

- All members provided meaningful feedback to the evaluation design:
  - The original version of the logic model was reimagined based on outcomes that YAG members hoped to see in youth, community, and government. This process helped to ensure that the logic model captured the program as its participants view it and that the logic model is understandable to all involved.
  - Members assisted the evaluation team in revising survey and focus group questions to ensure comprehensibility and provided insight regarding the length of the protocols, incentives, and tips to help youth feel comfortable sharing their feedback during focus groups.
- Two members consistently participated throughout the evaluation.
  - Members have gained a deeper understanding of research methods, such as survey design, and are able to contribute to methodological conversations.

In addition to the intended contributions, YAG members provided valuable insights through spontaneous conversations around their experiences living in NeON neighborhoods, describing the realities of racial prejudice, limited opportunities, and justice involvement. These discussions helped facilitate deepened understanding and rapport among YAG members and evaluation partners, not only providing context for the research, but creating an environment where everyone's voice held equal weight.

Challenges

The YAG, as it was implemented in NeON Arts, represented a new innovation for Metis, DOP, and Carnegie Hall. DOP and Carnegie Hall had never employed a YAG for evaluation purposes before, and Metis had never done so with the level of intensity and activity in which it was implemented for NeON Arts. As such, there were some challenges to work through in order to maximize the value of the members' time:

- The initial evaluation training was delivered via PowerPoint presentation, and the YAG members reported that this format was too dense and could have been briefer and more conversational.
- Metis and Carnegie Hall therefor worked together to ensure a more dynamic, participatory approach to all future meetings. This included creating activities to foster discussion and break up meetings that typically lasted two to three hours. Planning activities took quite a bit of extra time, as Metis had little experience in this meeting format. However, these activities were effective in helping youth to feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and fostering rapport between everyone in attendance. These methods can be applied to other evaluation activities moving forward.
- While two members participated in the YAG throughout the course of the evaluation, attendance was not consistent across meetings. Members were incentivized for each meeting, rather than being required to attend all meetings in order to receive their incentives. Scheduling conflicts related to work and school may have contributed to low retention rates.

Implementation Findings

This section describes implementation of NeON Arts across the NeON sites during the evaluation period. Included are successes and challenges of each of the program's major implementation components, including project selection, participant recruitment, workshops, final events, attendance/participation, and stakeholder group involvement.

Project Selection

The process for selecting NeON Arts projects has evolved over time. While it has always been a collaborative and community-led process, it has been modified to ensure that there is more youth participant input, more opportunities for stakeholders to interact with artists, and a more streamlined process for artists to complete the online application process. Though the selection process continues to be tweaked and does vary slightly from cycle to cycle, it consistently includes the following features: the release of a Request for Proposals (RFP) for local arts organizations to apply online to implement the arts projects; "Meet and Greet" meetings, during which interested artists can engage with stakeholders and youth participants from the NeON sites and respond to their questions; and stakeholder voting and selection meetings, which may involve youth participants as well.

The evaluation team observed a Meet and Greet meeting in spring 2017, which was held to plan for the summer 2017 cycle. The meeting began by providing grant applicants with a video introduction to NeON Arts and reviewing the cycle schedule for stakeholders. Three grant applicants presented their proposed projects to the six Harlem NeON stakeholders in attendance. While friendly and inviting, the atmosphere was also focused and professional. Stakeholders asked applicants pointed and relevant clarifying questions related to topics such as incentives, youth recruitment and engagement methods, the ideal number of youth the artists envisioned participating, workshop location and resource requirements, time commitments expected, products produced by the end of the cycle, job connections for youth, and the skills that will be built via the workshops. Applicants had the opportunity to expand on what was written in their proposals and to ask their own questions about NeON Arts. Overall, Metis observed that NeON stakeholders were prepared with detailed questions in order to ensure that high quality projects were selected and implemented at their sites.

NeON Arts seeks to offer a range of diverse artistic experiences for local youth who may not have these types of learning opportunities available to them. Following are descriptions of the projects offered during the past three NeON Arts project cycles:

Free Verse was born during the rebranding of the DOP offices. As the DOP was working to create more welcoming, comfortable waiting rooms, Dave Johnson, who had previously contracted with the DOP and was teaching at Yale University, was approached to develop poetry programming in the DOP offices. In September 2012, Dave began asking clients what they were waiting for and drafting poems based on their responses. When he first began hosting an open mic in the waiting room, he was often the only one to share a poem, but, according to Dave *"once it got going, and once they saw that there was this space where they could get up and say something, it took on a life of its own."*

Now, Dave meets with probation clients and community members every Thursday for a poetry workshop and open mic, and the group has published five magazines comprised of their work. They have visited museums and the Poets House together, but the group's favorite experience is their collaboration with an Italian theater group, which visits every year and works with Free Verse participants to translate their poetry, raps, and stories into Italian. In addition to enhancing writing skills, Free Verse strives to help participants learn to interact with others, secure employment, and avoid rearrests. Funding has allowed Dave to offer Free Verse internships, which have sometimes led to other job opportunities. For example, one intern was hired by the DOP as a greeter, and then became certified as a Probation Officer Assistant. According to Dave, this participant's *"life has really turned around in amazing ways, and she's really an amazing person."*

Dave described NeON Arts as a "godsend" because it has allowed him to maintain the programming for the past five years: *"To be able to sustain this, it just wouldn't be possible without NeON Arts, without their support of helping us publish the magazine, helping us keep this whole thing rolling. It's just been a very good partnership between DOP and NeON Arts Free Verse. It's been absolutely wonderful and they have been incredibly supportive."*

Dave cited Free Verse as some of the best work he has ever done, and explained that, as a child himself, *"I kept saying 'I wanna be part of the revolution' and I didn't really know what it was. But I truly believe that a revolution is going on right here, right now, with this kind of work."*

The Chris S. Owens Foundation: This foundation was founded by Chris Foye in memory of his son, Chris Owens, who was killed by a stray bullet in 2009 at the age of 13. The Foundation partners with CBOs to offer internship training in film and video production with the mission of creating new pathways for inner-city youth.

Projectivity Group: Founded by Executive Director Christian Penn, Projectivity connects youth with professional artists in order to equip them with the skills and experience to craft their own careers in the arts. Projectivity offers a range of multimedia workshops, with projects varying each cycle.

Cobra Marching Band: Terrell Stowers serves as the Executive Director of the Cobra Marching Band throughout NYC and Hartford, CT. With the help of his team, Terrell teaches youth drumming, dancing, team work, and life skills.

Free Verse: Manhattan-based Dave Johnson has been implementing Free Verse in the South Bronx for several years, and has also implemented the project at a couple of other sites. Free Verse recruits youth from DOP waiting rooms and engages them in poetry writing workshops, weekly open mics, and the publication of their own

magazine (see sidebar for more details on Free Verse).

Building Beats: Created and directed by Phi Pham, Building Beats offers digital music production workshops to youth throughout NYC. Teaching artists lead youth as they create beats, learn to DJ, and build general arts development skills (see sidebar for more information on Building Beats).

Fame Airbrush: Danny Cross of Long Island teaches youth to utilize airbrush guns and stencils to create customized t-shirts, hats, and tote bags. In addition, he has worked with youth to beautify their neighborhoods by painting murals on local schools. For more information on Fame Airbrush, see sidebar on p. 23.

The International Child Program: Through their Pocket Flicks project, founder Electra Weston teaches youth to create short films on their phones, edit them, and submit them to film festivals and other competitions.

Green Earth Poets Café: Founded by Brooklyn-based Curtis Harris in response to local and national gun violence, Green Earth Poets Café offers poetry writing workshops to local youth and adults at multiple detention centers.

Thrive Collective: Based in Manhattan and led by Executive Director Jeremy Del Rio, Esq., Thrive Collective offers a variety of programs to youth throughout the city. Through a range of independent work and collaborations with CBOs, Thrive Collective delivers programming in murals, music, media, and mentoring.

Building Beats began with an idea founder Phi Pham had in 2009 to teach kids around the world about music production. His first project was implemented in Brazil during 2010-2011, where he founded a DJ school. Based in NYC, Phi found it challenging to continue to sustain this program abroad, so he began focusing his efforts on developing workshops in NYC. Today, Building Beats places teaching artists in after-school programs and community centers, where local youth can learn digital music production, DJing, and arts development. The first part of each hour-long session begins with an activity designed to stimulate a creativity mindset. The teaching artist will then deliver a 10-15 minute lesson on a topic such as drum programming or sound engineering. The remainder of the workshop allows participants to work on tablets to make music on their own, with the teaching artist circulating the room and assisting participants as needed. The workshop culminates in the opportunity for participants to share their work with the group. At the end of each cycle, the program hosts a listening party, during which participants are given a certificate of completion and are able to showcase their music for their family and friends.

Importantly, Phi wants youth to learn about accessible ways to produce music outside of a studio. During an interview, Phi noted that these workshops blend life leadership development and entrepreneurial skills in a unique way. Building Beats has been a popular NeON Arts project: it has been implemented during four NeON Arts cycles across three sites. Phi indicated that the partnership between NeON Arts and Building Beats has been rewarding: *"We look forward to being involved with NeON Arts. We really believe in the mission and the work it's trying to help create, and we're very grateful to be a part of it and we're always striving to get better and improve our work."*

Figure 2 on the following page provides a graphic display of the projects that were offered in each of the seven NeON sites during the three project cycles that occurred over the course of the evaluation period. Each project is color coded in order to show the variety of projects that were offered across time periods and sites.

Figure 2. NeON Arts Project Offerings During Three Cycles

	Bedford–Stuyvesant	Brownsville	East New York	Harlem	Jamaica	South Bronx	Staten Island
Spring 2017	Fame Airbrush	Free Verse	Fame Airbrush	Building Beats	Fame Airbrush	Cobra Performing Arts, Inc. / Free Verse	The Chris S. Owens Foundation / Projectivity Group
Summer 2017	Fame Airbrush	Fame Airbrush	Fame Airbrush	The International Child Program	Building Beats	Free Verse	Green Earth Poets Cafe
Fall 2017/ Winter 2018	Fame Airbrush	Free Verse	Free Verse	Fame Airbrush	Building Beats	Free Verse / Cobra Performing Arts, Inc. / Thrive Collective	Projectivity Group

Project Selection Strengths

Diversity of opportunities. One of the main goals of NeON Arts is to expose young people to a range of new opportunities that they may not typically have access to in their communities. Indeed, in focus groups, many youth participants explained that their schools offer limited arts and sports activities, so they have had to seek them out elsewhere. Over the years, through NeON Arts, young people have had opportunities to participate in projects related to film, photography, poetry, marching band, cotillion, animation, dance, hip hop, among others.

Fame Airbrush founder Danny Cross grew up creating art in his "art studio," which happened to be his bedroom closet, as there were few opportunities in his community to feed his growing interest in art. Though he got into some trouble as a young person and ended up on probation, he started airbrushing clothes and credits this artwork for steering him away from negative situations. He airbrushed t-shirts in malls for ten years before he learned that he could apply for grant funding in order to teach this skill to youth. He implemented his first workshops during 2016 through NeON Arts, where he teaches participants everything he knows about airbrushing in order to *"hopefully save their lives if they're heading down the wrong path or they just want to do something different. [If] they're talented and they don't know what to do with these talents, we can kind of guide them in a direction to help them be creative."* Since Fame Airbrush has been offered in multiple sites, Danny creates lesson plans each week to align with the interests and backgrounds of youth at each site. Participants work on different skills each week, such as painting straight lines and letter styles, and Danny takes photos of their work in order to track their progress over time. In addition to airbrushing clothes, Danny has helped youth to paint murals in the community, such as on elementary school walls.

Though the program has only been in existence for two years, Danny is already able to offer internships to some of his participants. According to him: "*You don't have to be the best artist—you don't even have to be an 'artist', but if you have the right attitude and you show up on time and you're dedicated and you participate in the group—that's how I look for interns."* Interns can then serve as role models for younger participants from the community. Danny values the opportunity to help youth create gifts for their friends and family members or make money by interning or selling their artwork, and he noted that two of his participants have started their own t-shirt companies: *"The main strengths would be showing the kids that you can be anything you want to be. I know everybody hears that in school, I never really paid that much mind to it, but you can create a job doing anything. So, along with art, I show them entrepreneurship, and I give them examples."*

Community-led. Stakeholder groups take the lead in selecting artists throughout the systematic and organized selection process. This ensures that a range of community voices are included, as stakeholders represent differing perspectives due to their varied roles in the community. Stakeholders reported, and evaluators observed, that the stakeholder groups are very active, with all or nearly all members sharing their opinions and asking pointed and critical questions. The stakeholder groups are led by co-chairs, which ensures the process is organized, andMetis observed that the environment is an egalitarian one, in which all members are invited to share their thoughts and ask questions. Additionally, some stakeholders noted that nearly all members of the group attend voting meetings, demonstrating their commitment to selecting high quality projects and the value they place on sharing their own opinions.

Youth participation. In the same vein, young people participate in many of the stakeholder groups, ensuring that their voice is included in decisions that ultimately affect them. Inclusion of young people highlights themes that permeate the NeON Arts program—ones of inclusion, the value of all voices, and the egalitarian nature of the efforts. Youth are often included in the project selection process, and at some sites, youth have been responsible for choosing the project that is ultimately implemented at their sites.

Project Selection Challenges

Project variety. While there are clearly strongly positive aspects of the variety of the projects offered, there may still be more opportunity to grow with regard to ensuring diversity in offerings. As shown in Figure 2 on page 24, some artists have been selected for all three of the most recent project cycles, and there have been several cases where artists implement their projects at multiple sites during a single project cycle. On the positive side, projects are often selected multiple times because the young people respond so well to them. Additionally, artists may add more to each project cycle they implement, such as youth entrepreneurial skill components and internship opportunities. However, this should be balanced with the need for variety to meet the interests of potential participating youth.

Involving local artists. Another goal of NeON Arts is to provide more job opportunities for local artists. However, as arts organizations of any size are invited to apply for NeON Arts grants, grants are awarded to large organizations and independent artists alike, and these organizations are not always based in the local communities. Several stakeholders explained that they would like grants to go to local organizations in an effort to support the neighborhood economy and development. Unfortunately, according to some stakeholders, sometimes these small organizations are "just not where they need to be" to deliver a full NeON Arts cycle.

Application system. Along these lines, some artists are challenged in completing the online applications. Despite the fact that the system has been streamlined over time, the evaluation found that some artists are still having trouble completing the application. Stakeholders noted that some artists do not seem to fully understand the questions, and project budgets are frequently missing from submissions. From the artists' perspective, the changes that have been made to the application system each cycle may ultimately simplify the process but have been confusing to some. Additionally, at least one artist felt that the application questions are too broad and vague, making them challenging to address. Moreover, one artist explained that because NeON Arts projects require so much flexibility, it is difficult for new applicants to specify the project before becoming familiar with the population and context.

Participant Recruitment

Following the selection of projects, the recruitment of individuals to participate begins. Recruitment is a joint responsibility at the sites. Flyers are provided at the NeON sites and around the neighborhoods. Stakeholders are expected to publicize the projects with the young people with whom they interact, through probation or their own community-based organizations, and probation officers often share the opportunity of NeON Arts with their probation clients. Over time, young people themselves have taken more of a leadership role in providing outreach to their peers. Each project is intended to serve approximately 15 participants. Some easily meet this number, while others struggle to recruit and/or maintain this number. Below are descriptions of successful recruitment strategies, as well as challenges that have emerged with regard to recruitment.

Recruitment Successes

Capitalizing on location. Most NeON Arts workshops are held at NeONs, many of which are located in DOP sites. Therefore, including flyers and electronic displays in waiting rooms allows the projects to recruit young people. Additionally, youth who visit the office for probation may see others participating in the program and may even directly observe the engaging activities and warm environment. Some locations have large windows facing the street, allowing community members to see the workshop and join in if it sparks their interest. Moreover, in cases where NeON Arts projects are co-located in community centers with other youth development organizations, the center staff have helped to recruit participants.

Social media. While flyers are an easy and convenient method for spreading the word about projects, two sites reported using social media (e.g., Facebook ads) to most effectively reach youth. Indeed, some youth who participated in focus groups indicated that they had heard about the program through social media.

Recruitment Challenges

Shared recruitment responsibility. While most stakeholders reported that they are involved in recruitment, some expressed feeling that not everyone was doing their part to reach out to potential participants. In the words of one stakeholder, "Everyone says that they're on board, but they don't put out the effort to make sure that their young people and the community participants are there."

Capacity. Some artists felt that the large majority of the burden of recruitment fell to them and they did not have the capacity or the local relationships to carry it out. As one artist explained, "I think it's a very heavy lift without a system in place." Further, recruitment efforts have to be repeated at the start of each short cycle.

Reaching those who can most benefit. The great majority of participants to whom evaluators spoke reported that NeON Arts was incredibly transformative for them. However, many wished to have participated prior to their involvement in the justice system. Moreover, many of the individuals who may benefit most from programming do not participate or are not retained in the program. One artist corroborated this challenge, noting that the target population is particularly difficult to reach and retain, so recruitment efforts often yield small participant groups.

Workshops

Once selected, artists begin implementing the workshops with participants. Workshops may be held at the NeON sites or in nearby community locations, such as schools and community centers. Typically, eight to 12 workshops are held throughout the cycle, though this varies by project and cycle. During the workshops, participants engage in the creative process, making or performing their art. Most projects involve collaborative work, enabling participants to engage with each other. In order to more deeply understand the activities, environment, and relations occurring during NeON Arts workshops, Metis

observed—and sometimes participated in—seven different workshops during spring and summer 2017. Below is a description of the key strengths and challenges of the workshops as gleaned through the observations.

Workshop Successes

Interactive. Most artists provided some instruction and direction to the participants, but allowed youth the freedom to work together and with other adults to explore their creativity and develop their own styles. For example, some artists demonstrated techniques and provided supplies for young people, but the youth created the artwork themselves.

Warm and safe. Overall, the environments in which the workshops took place were incirinf and friendly. Individuals of all ages and backgrounds were welcomed. Representative of this atmosphere, it was noted that the evaluation team was warmly accepted into the space and invited to engage in the workshop activities. Participants helped their peers and any new individuals (including the evaluators) to learn about the activity and provided them with encouraging feedback. Artists were frequently observed encouraging—but not pushing—young people to take positive creative risks in this safe space.

Cross-generational participation. In addition to the artists, there were frequently other adults present at workshops. These other adults included probation officers and staff from other community-based organizations. The adults often knew the young people from other contexts, supporting the goals of developing community, fostering deepened relationships between youth and adults, and reducing stigma surrounding justice-involved youth.

Positive rapport. Along these same lines, participants were observed to have developed positive rapport with each other. In observations of workshops that included both youth and adults, they seemed to get along easily with each other, sharing jokes and having fun together.

Modeling of positive behaviors. Artists and other adults were observed modeling the constructive and affirming behaviors they expected to see in the young people. For example, rather than simply asking youth to create art, artists usually demonstrated the activity by creating their own art and sharing it with the youth. Youth appeared interested in learning more about the artists and appreciated their talent. In return, many of the young people were willing to share their own personal experiences and vulnerabilities.

Flexibility. While artists may come to their workshops with a set of planned activities, they reported tailoring their projects to match the needs and interests of the participants served each cycle. Artists explained that participants may offer input into the design of the workshops, and this has led them to extend beyond the arts sometimes. For example, while Free Verse focuses on poetry writing, they have also helped participants with résumés or other writing.

Workshop Challenges

Varying level of engagement. While most youth were observed to be highly engaged and excited about the activities, some were noted to be quiet and not participating. In most cases, artists simply continued to foster a warm and encouraging environment, rather than trying to force participation. In other cases, the lack of engagement may have been related to the workshop being more instructional than interactive. In one workshop observed, the first half was lecture style, with the remainder being dedicated to hands-on activities. Students in this workshop appeared to be disengaged during the first part of the workshop, evidenced by their use of personal cell phones and lack of interaction with the artist. However, they became much more engaged in the activity once they were able to actively participate and utilize materials themselves.

Cycle length. Several artists expressed feeling that while the short cycles allow youth to be exposed to new projects every few months, they prove to be challenging in important ways. As one artist explained: "You're only there a couple months; you start to build a rapport, and then you're gone." Another artist emphasized that transformation takes time, so the eight-to-twelve-week project cycle limits their ability to help youth change their lives. One artist shared frustration that over the course of the cycle, she has seen the potential of what the project could do in the lives of participants, but it's not enough time to see this potential come to fruition. Some artists noted that it has been difficult to explain to participants that the program is only funded for a short period of time, and that they are uncertain about what will happen at the end of the cycle: "that kind of thing devastates the [DOP] staff and the clients, because this population have been let down so many times in their lives." Artists often lose contact with youth following the program cycle, and there is not currently a system for keeping in touch.

> **"It's wide but it's not deep. And I like deep. You know, I would rather serve a hundred kids really well— really well. Get them to the finish line."**
>
> **- Artist**

> **"The challenges allow us to be figuring out how we can innovate our classroom and be as flexible as possible."**
>
> **-Artist**

Securing equipment. Some sites either do not offer Wi-Fi or their Wi-Fi connection is slow, so one program mentioned having to purchase a hotspot in order to carry out their program activities. This artist also indicated that they need to purchase their own equipment for the NeON Arts cycles, while other grantors they have worked with provide equipment. However, once equipment has been purchased for NeON Arts projects, it remains at the NeONs and can be borrowed by different projects each cycle; the availability of this equipment may not be known to all grantees.

Transporting and storing equipment. Since project locations are temporary and typically last only as long as the cycle, artists noted that transporting and storing equipment has been a challenge. While some projects require little more than paper and pens, other projects utilize a great deal of equipment each week. This is particularly difficult for some artists who offer their program outside of NeONs or at multiple sites and must bring their equipment everywhere they go.

Communication and organization. Artists reported that they sometimes feel bombarded with emails and other communications coming from multiple people within NeON Arts. In addition to the administrative forms artists must fill out each cycle, the paperwork and various communications can become burdensome for small arts organizations; one artist indicated feeling like he spends most of the cycle finishing the paperwork until it's time to apply for the next cycle.

Attendance/Participation

As described earlier, engagement in workshop activities was observed to be high overall. However, attendance in many of the workshops and the number of youth at each project varied. For example, one workshop the evaluation team observed included around 50 youth participants, while another site had just one young person in attendance. The attendance analysis mirrors this observation. Overall, youth attended 31 percent of sessions offered, with three projects showing youth attending over 50 percent workshops offered. Table 1 provides an overall attendance summary, and the Appendix provides detailed attendance by project.

Table 1. Attendance of Youth Participants

Project	Total number of youth participants	Total number of workshops offered (including Open House and Final Event)	Highest number of workshops attended by youth participants	Lowest number of workshops attended by youth participants	Average number of workshops attended by youth participants[4]	Average percent of workshops attended by youth participants[5]
Building Beats	30	19	14	1	6	31%
Chris Owen	19	13	11	1	2.6	20%
Cobra Marching Band	43	29	24	10	16.6	57%
Fame Airbrush Bedford	33	13	11	1	2.4	18%
Fame Airbrush East New York	23	13	10	1	1.9	15%
Fame Airbrush Jamaica	29	12	6	1	1.8	15%
Free Verse Brownsville	44	32	21	1	4.3	13%
Free Verse South Bronx	35	18	18	1	9.7	54%

[4] Average number of workshops was calculated by adding all the workshops attended by youth participants divided by the total number of youth participants.

[5] Average percent of workshops was calculated using average number of workshops attended by youth participants divided by total number of workshops offered.

Project	Total number of youth participants	Total number of workshops offered (including Open House and Final Event)	Highest number of workshops attended by youth participants	Lowest number of workshops attended by youth participants	Average number of workshops attended by youth participants[4]	Average percent of workshops attended by youth participants[5]
Projectivity	12	12	10	1	7	58%
All Sites (Average)	29.8	17.9	13.9	2	5.8	31%

Attendance Strengths

Strong youth attendance in some programs. As noted above, some programs have had extremely high, regular attendance throughout the cycles. The strength of their attendance may be partially due to the type of activity and how long the project has been operating. Some projects, such as Cobra Marching Band, have developed a core group of participants who engage in the activity over a long time period.

Probation officer attendance. In several of the observations, probation officers were observed working alongside young people. Participants across multiple groups reported that this has helped build rapport between probation officers and their clients, as the workshops stand in contrast to the supervisory setting in which probation officers and youth usually interact. For example, one project prints the poetry of both young people and their probation officers in one unified publication.

Other community member attendance. While roles of community members appeared to differ across sites, at some sites, adults were observed participating in the activities alongside the young people.

Attendance Challenges

Varying probation officer/adult participation. While the adult participation that was observed was strong overall, according to artists and other participants, it tends to vary in both quantity and quality. Some artists attributed reduced probation officer participation to their busy schedules. Others expressed concerns that the support that probation officers and other adults often provided was disciplinary, rather than participatory, which they attributed to possible confusion in participation expectations.

Low youth participation or engagement. In interviews, artists discussed the challenges around attendance. They expressed some frustration with regard to identifying productive strategies to address the issue. One artist noted that some youth are sometimes required to attend the program by their Arches mentors, and while this helps maintain attendance rates, it can lead to tensions, making it challenging to deliver lessons. A few artists noted that maintaining high attendance is particularly challenging in the summer.

Final Events

Some projects hold their own individual final events, during which local community members are invited to these culminating performances or exhibits of participants' work. In addition to these individual final events, NeON Arts holds citywide final events at the end of some cycles. The citywide final events offer the opportunity for participants of all NeON Arts projects to come together, to learn about what other projects are doing, and to share their artwork with each other and the broader NYC community. Metis attended and observed one individual final event and two citywide NeON Arts final events (see text box to the right for a description of one of the citywide events and see text box on the following page for youth's perceptions of the final event).

Final Event Strengths

Strong community attendance. In each of the events that were observed, including the site-based culminating event, the attendance was extremely strong. Spaces were filled with young people, family members, stakeholders, partners, and community members at large.

The **citywide summer 2017 final event** was held at Carnegie Hall on August 28, 2017. The event was attended by youth, artists, stakeholders, NeON Arts staff, NeON Arts partners, and other community members. In order to ensure that community members were able to attend the event, NeON Arts sent buses to each of the seven neighborhoods to transport people to and from the event. This final event, which was very well attended, began with an unstructured period, during which attendees could wander throughout the Resnick Education Wing of Carnegie Hall, stopping by the different exhibits presented by each project. Some exhibits were arranged like workshops, where attendees could work alongside each other, trying their hand at the skills developed through that project. Other exhibits were set up like booths, affording the opportunity for attendees to buy artwork created by the youth. Attendees then came together in one room for other project presentations, such as a short movie filmed and edited by young people and the project's artist. The evening concluded with a cocktail reception, including short speeches and an opportunity to enjoy Carnegie's spectacular outdoor terrace. This event had a very warm, supportive, youthful feel, as adults demonstrated excitement about the work that the youth had been doing and the art they had created together.

High profile locations. Citywide final events have been held in well-known venues, such as Carnegie Hall and John Jay College. These beautiful settings, with tasteful touches, such as elegant food, remind youth that they have much to contribute, and that their talents and artwork are deserving of attention.

High quality work. The events allow young people to showcase the high quality work that they accomplished over the course of the cycle. The artwork itself is often moving and shows the depths of commitment that young people have made to the program.

How important was the final event to this project overall?

- "It was important because I got the chance to meet the funders and directors that helped made it possible. It gave me a chance to thank them."
- "It was very important! It promoted all of the young artists work and art!"
- "[It was] the icing on the cake"
- "Amazing, it was very motivating and inspiring"
- "[It was] super important because it allowed me to showcase my talent."

Great unity. Final events provide youth with opportunities to work together with other groups from across the city. There is a unity to the performance that allows them to both collaborate with others and to feel valued and celebrated themselves.

Final Event Challenges

Expensive and logistically difficult. The citywide final events are expensive to operate, in that in order to ensure strong turnout, an appropriate venue must be identified, buses have to be provided, and food and drinks should be supplied. NeON Arts has been able to find outside funding for these events; however, this is an ongoing challenge to maintain. Moreover, the events require a large amount of coordination from program staff, causing resource issues.

Outcome Findings

What effect does NeON Arts have on participant outcomes and on broader systems and communities?

This section focuses on three key areas of outcomes that emerged from the evaluation: **Engagement**, **Relationships**, and **Individual or Internal Reflection and Change**. Importantly, these three themes were evident across all participant groups, reflecting the nature of NeON Arts—egalitarian, strengths-based, and rooted in the idea that we can all learn from each other.

Engagement—Trying Something New and Persisting

Engagement is a fundamental component of NeON Arts participation. As engaging in the program necessitates trying new things and taking creative risks, the natural reaction may be to shy away from these situations. However, the evaluation found that the safe space that NeON Arts has created allows participants to feel comfortable with this vulnerability. Notably, many of the same aspects of engagement that were observed in NeON Arts participants were also evident in other participant groups, such as stakeholders and partners. Three key themes related to engagement emanated from observations, interviews, focus groups, and surveys: **being present**, **persisting**, and **taking risks**.

Youth/Participants

The NeON Arts projects are designed to enable young people to engage in new activities that they may never have tried before. The work requires them to step out of their comfort zones and to conceive of themselves and the strengths they bring in new ways.

What was your first impression of this arts program?

- "It was different."
- "It was cool."
- "It was gonna be whack."
- "At first, I'm not gonna lie, I thought it was a joke… because it's a little weird for someone to want to sit there and hear what you have to say."
- "I thought it was ridiculous."
- "At first I didn't like it at all… but just the vibe around learning new things made me stick around and I'm glad I did."

Young people learned about NeON Arts through varied venues. Most reported that they became involved through probation, while others explained they heard about it through social media, word of mouth, or the Arches Transformative Mentoring program. Most justice-involved youth noted that they did not initially want to participate in the program (see text box above). However, many reported that

they grew to genuinely value the experience over time. Indeed, youth check-in surveys showed that youth generally looked forward to workshops (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: How much are you looking forward to participating in NeON Arts today? (N=25)

80%	20%

■ A lot   ■ Kind of   ■ Not at all   ■ I don't want to answer

While some participants began attending NeON Arts with a specific goal in mind, such as improving their writing skills or learning to use a camera, others had no expectations and were just looking for something to do.

Productive activities. Once engaged in NeON Arts, young people had an opportunity to experience new and productive activities. Evaluators observed participants actively engaged in the workshops, and during focus groups, young people described a range of interesting and exciting experiences they have taken part in, such as:

- *Performing.* Some participants have had opportunities to perform in competitions, for which they are sometimes afforded the chance to travel. According to one participant, "I had the chance to go to poetry competitions. I had the opportunity to get out of my neighborhood…" Others specifically mentioned excitement at performing at Carnegie Hall during citywide final events.
- *Visiting new places.* One project visited Gracie Mansion, which a participant described as "the most exciting thing I ever went to." Another group went together to the Poets House in downtown Manhattan, a place that they had not previously known to exist, and they also visited a place called Visions, which offers a range of services to the blind and visually impaired. When describing this trip, one participant noted, "There were blind people there and they wrote poems. It was amazing; I felt like they could see!"
- *Completing projects.* Participants reported having completed a wide range of projects during NeON Arts cycles, such as publishing poetry anthologies, filming and editing documentaries, and creating airbrushed clothing. One project worked together to create a book of their poetry: "The whole book process was really cool. It took a lot of work, but it built my creativity and also my confidence at the same time…it allowed me to be more comfortable in my writing, not be so afraid of expressing myself in words."

> "It's calm, keeps us off the streets, and it's good vibes… it's like stepping into a place where you don't have to feel out of order. You just feel comfortable. Everybody treats you the same…"
>
> -Youth Participant

Some young people pointed out that they would not have known about NeON Arts if their probation officers had not referred them, and the opportunities allowed them to engage in positive, productive activities in a safe space. As one young person pointed out, "It's just a good outlet for people that are in negative situations. They have something to look forward to."

> "There's a lot of talent that we have we don't know because realistically nobody ever gave us the chance because we don't have too many opportunities."
>
> -Youth Participant

Unique opportunities. Critically, the activities that NeON Arts provides are more than just tasks designed to keep young people engaged in productive tasks and off the streets. In many cases, the projects offer youth opportunities to engage in creative activities that they may have never tried previously or may not have even known existed (see Figure 4). This can allow young people to tap into previously untapped talents. Moreover, the projects offer variety in art forms, allowing individuals to find creative outlets in multiple disciplines. One stakeholder noted, "That's what I think is good about the program…we have a variety of creative arts opportunities." Youth corroborated this idea, explaining that the program offers choices that may not typically be available in their neighborhoods. One young person noted, "In my community, the programs you would find would be track and basketball; that's all you really have. So for somebody on a more artistic scale, that wouldn't really appeal to you." Several stakeholders agreed with this statement. One explained, "I'm in the heart of East New York. It is one of the most underserviced, low-resourced areas in Brooklyn… so being able to have these young men and women that come from these areas learn something other than basketball or football, something that can provide them with scholarships, something that teaches them discipline and focus without them having to pay… it's amazing, the transformation that we've seen within some of our kids."

Figure 4: Youth were exposed to new experiences through NeON Arts.

In NeON Arts, I visited places I have never been before (N=50).
2.86

In NeON Arts, I tried things that I was nervous to try… (N=50).
3.30

| 0 Not at all true | 1 | 2 Kind of true | 3 | 4 Definitely true |

On end-of-cycle surveys, 98% of youth reported that they would like to continue creating art in the future; of these, 84% would like to continue creating the type of art they had created during that cycle, and 24% would like to try creating a new type of art, such as "fashion videography," "expressive painting," and "cultural art."

Moreover, because these creative opportunities have allowed youth to tap into talents they may not have previously realized they had, it has led them to consider new career opportunities (see Figure 5); in fact, on end-of-cycle surveys, 90% of youth respondents indicated that they would be interested in pursuing internships with NeON Arts. In the words of one stakeholder, "NeON Arts is an opportunity

where the young people that we supervise get the opportunity to tap into their gift. A lot of times they don't realize that they have a lot of potential, they can create possibilities." Stakeholders further noted that some final events even afforded young people the chance to perform on the world-renowned stage of Carnegie Hall—a space in which youth may not have ever imagined themselves.

Figure 5: "After participating in NeON Arts, I want to do this as a job" (N=50).
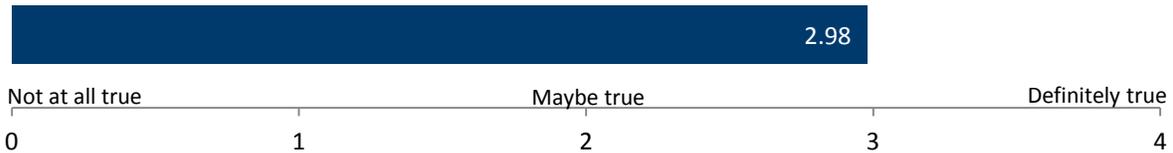
Showing up and persisting. Overall, one of the greatest struggles that NeON Arts has faced is consistent attendance at the workshops (see Appendix B for attendance analysis). Young people may have a lot of external pressures and distractions. While this is a key issue that projects continually work to address, it is also clear that there are pockets of deeply committed NeON Arts participants, and the program has seen multiple powerful transformations. For example, one artist spoke to the level of engagement among participants in his program: "I knew we had something when these folks started showing up on days they didn't have to report to their officer. And not just the ones who were being paid; I'm talking about people coming to read their poem on open mic or turn their poem in. And they would show up in a probation office."

> "We're just creating that platform for them to be able to perform the great skills and talents that they already possess, just allowing them to just be able to bring it out. But you do have to create that safe space for them, allow them to know that they're safe so that they can make themselves vulnerable and then begin to tap into that great talent, those gifts."
>
> **-NeON Stakeholder**

Stakeholders expressed that participating in NeON Arts encourages youth to learn about commitment: they have to show up each week, be responsible, and follow through on their projects until completion. Stakeholders and artists shared multiple stories about transformations they have seen in participants over time. For example:

- One stakeholder described one of her probation clients: "He attends the stakeholder meetings, every week he attends religiously. Since the film production started, he has been attending. He has not missed one session."
- Another stakeholder described a youth participant who had been on probation for four and a half years before he learned of Arches Transformative Mentoring and NeON Arts. Although he initially had a poor attitude when attending NeON Arts, he became devoted to the program. According to this stakeholder, "Now, he's the first one there, [and] he's the last one to leave." During this time, he became a father and started taking more responsibility for seeking employment.

Taking creative risks. As described earlier in this report, fundamental to participation in the arts is the notion of taking creative risks. Engaging in any new activity can be risky. However, engaging in one that involves the expression of emotions can be particularly daunting, especially in front of one's peers and adults, and perhaps even more so for youth who have matured in situations that did not foster their development of trust. Key to NeON Arts has been the development of safe spaces to encourage youth to take creative risks, while at the same time knowing that they are supported. Notably, interviewees across all groups (program staff, artists, stakeholders, and youth participants) repeatedly used the word "safe" when describing the NeON Arts environment. They credited this atmosphere to the nature of art itself and to staff's concentrated efforts. Youth check-out surveys confirmed that many youth tried new things during each workshop (see Figure 6).

Figure 6: Did you try something new today? (N=295)

91%	9%

■ Yes ■ No
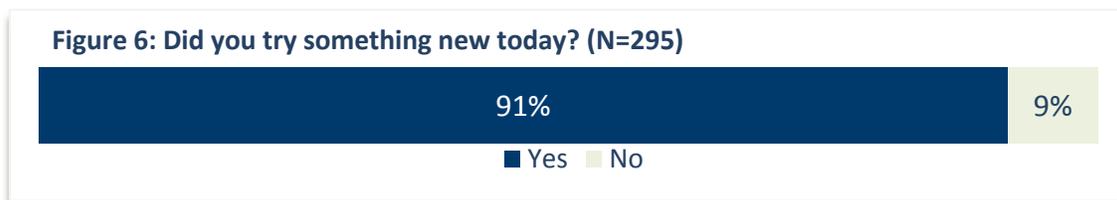
The benefits of these efforts are tangible. For example, one youth was secretly interested in opera but didn't want to admit this to others—until he felt safe within the space of NeON Arts. In another example, a stakeholder described the transformative effects of a young woman who participated in the Green Earth Poets Café during one of the cycles. According to this stakeholder, "There was a young woman—one of the clients—who was very reluctant to get involved with anything; she just stood in the back. But a couple of sessions in, she began to find her voice and she began to perform in the small group. But then at the finale… she controlled the room, she took the room, and she ended up winning first prize."

Core to creative risk taking is the willingness to make mistakes. While this can be difficult for anyone, it may be particularly challenging when individuals have had negative experiences in their education and do not have high self-confidence. NeON Arts has actively worked to create an environment in which individuals feel comfortable making mistakes. According to one project mentor, this approach has worked to improve participants' confidence and initiative. He noted that he has observed young people plunging right into activities, rather than asking artists to guide them through every step as they did initially.

Developing marketable skills. Many of the interviewees noted that the skills participants learn in NeON Arts can translate into marketable competencies (see Figure 7). As one artist noted, "We've had very good success with them coming through this program and then parlaying that into other work… You're giving them hard skills, like reading and writing skills and interactive skills." Youth corroborated this idea, expressing that they learned many functional skills that will serve them throughout their lives, such as time management, punctuality, communication skills, discipline, self-control, leadership skills, teamwork, flexibility, money management, and the ability to take constructive feedback. One participant described the importance of time management skills that she has learned through NeON

Arts: "Knowing that you should be places on time—that you should be there earlier than expected… Learning how to manage it here helps you in the real world."

Figure 7: NeON Arts has helped youth consider and prepare for arts careers.

In NeON Arts, I learned a new skill (N=50).

3.48

After participating in NeON Arts, I know more about arts careers (N=49).

3.31

| 0
Not at all true | 1 | 2
Kind of true | 3 | 4
Definitely true |
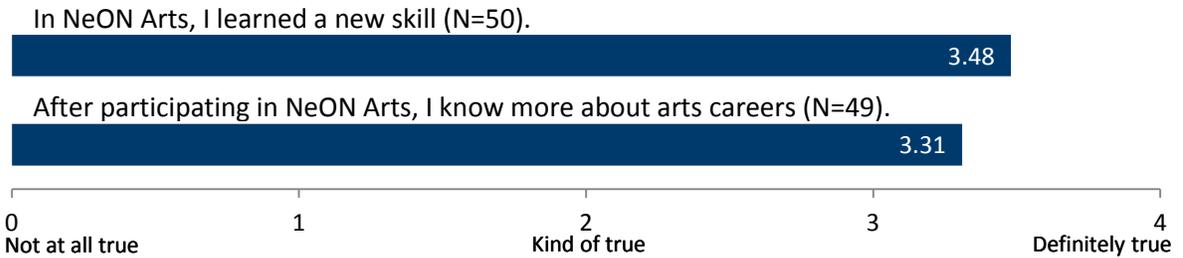
Evidence gathered through the evaluation indicates that these skills may translate into real progress toward building a résumé. For example, the following successes were noted:

- A poetry project at one site recruited adults who were working toward their GEDs to participate in the project. The artist reported that the poetry workshops helped these participants with their literacy skills, and almost all of them had completed their GEDs at the writing of this report.
- One youth became a Fame Airbrush apprentice and now travels with the artist throughout the boroughs assisting with the delivery of the project. NeON stakeholders had some extra funding, and they chose to use the funds to buy this apprentice his own equipment so that he can do this work independently as well.
- One probation client who participated in an animation project now has a well-paid job in animation.

> **"I love it, the fact that they're teaching people trades. The fact that if you're not an A+ student and your parents aren't talking about college, you might pick up something from NeON Arts that might snowball and become something in that field. I feel like they have something for everybody—if you're a musician, an artist, you want to make films—anything that's creative and you can make a living off it, I love that."**
>
> **-Artist**

Overall, participants reported enjoying workshops they attended. Youth check-out surveys revealed that the vast majority of participants felt respected, found the workshops to be a good use of their time, and enjoyed the workshop activities. Moreover, the majority of participants indicated that they found the workshops to be challenging (see Figure 8).

Figure 8. How did today's workshop go for you?

Did people treat you with respect today? (N=296)

| 94% | 5% | 1% |

Was today's workshop a good use of your time? (N=296)

| 96% | 3% | 1% |

Did you enjoy today's activities? (N=295)

| 95% | 1% | 4% |

Was today's workshop challenging? (N=296)

| 57% | 26% | 17% |

■ Yes ■ Kind of □ No
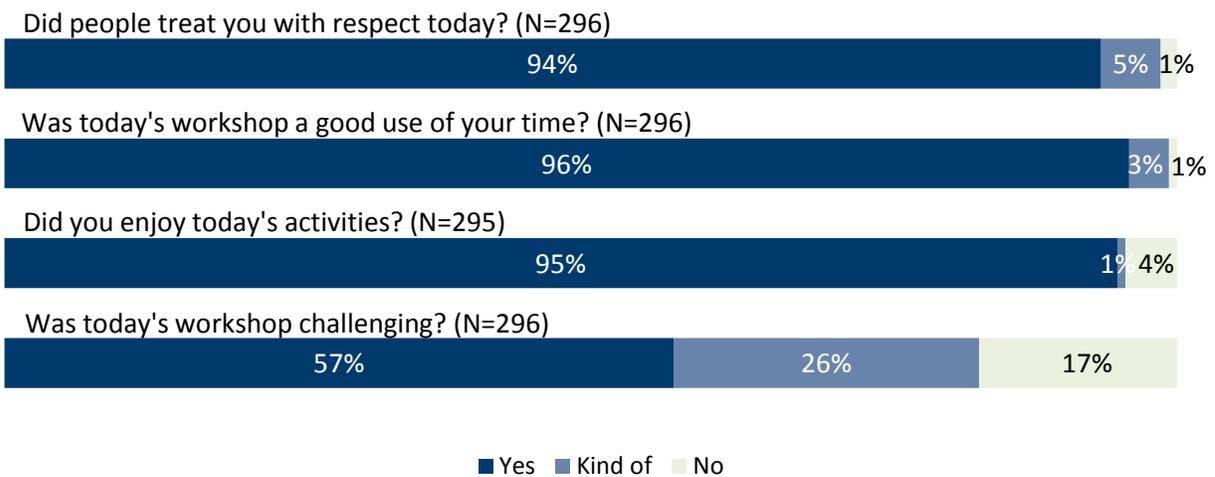
Community

Youth participants are not the only individuals who have been impacted through the NeON Arts project. The project involves the engagement of community members as well, and the evaluation found consistencies in some of the aspects of engagement demonstrated by this critical group as well. Specifically, individuals in the stakeholder groups were observed *showing up, persisting,* and *taking creative risks*.

Showing up and persisting. All seven stakeholder groups meet regularly throughout the year and engage in important work that involves their communities. Whereas individuals may normally be working in silos, the stakeholder groups offer critical opportunities to come together and work on productive activities that are meaningful to them as individuals and as professionals. One stakeholder expressed that the meetings offer important opportunities for members to learn about the work that is going on in their communities. They learn about existing community-based and arts organizations, and meet other like-minded individuals who also care about the community. Stakeholder meetings that were observed for the evaluation were well attended and included cross-sections of individuals from varied organizations. At one meeting, a stakeholder was observed advertising for an upcoming, unrelated event in the neighborhood and was asking others to help with the event and to recruit the young people with whom they worked. Multiple instances of cross-fertilization were observed in these groups throughout the period, including during a stakeholder focus group that involved individuals across neighborhoods. A separate sub-group was formed following this conversation, through which individuals worked on similar issues that their neighborhoods face.

Not unlike the youth participants, consistent participation was challenging within the stakeholder groups. Stakeholders have many responsibilities, and busy schedules make it difficult to find time to devote to their voluntary stakeholder duties. Therefore, attendance has not been consistent. However, like the youth participants, many are highly committed to the process.

Taking creative risks. Many stakeholders participate in the workshop activities themselves, opening themselves up to the vulnerability of creative expression. Several artists reported that probation officers frequently participate in their workshops. Two artists explained that when probation officers partake alongside the youth, it helps the young people to engage on a deeper level: "If the POs [probation officers] buy in, if the [DOP] staff buys in, the chances of our success go way up." This dynamic (discussed more fully below) leads to bonding, particularly between probation officers and youth. In order to do so, however, both groups must be willing to be vulnerable, and evaluators observed stakeholders doing just that. For example:

- One project publishes a magazine with poetry written by youth, the artist, and DOP staff, including probation officers. Anyone can submit their poetry to the magazine, and the titles or roles of authors are not printed in the magazine. Some probation officers and staff even share at Open Mic alongside participants.
- Metis observed one stakeholder co-chair participating in painting a mural on the side of a school. Like the youth, this stakeholder had grown up in the neighborhood and had even attended the school she was helping to beautify. This level of participation demonstrates the desire of youth and adults alike to improve their communities.

Government/Arts & Cultural Organizations

Similarly, through their participation in NeON Arts, government agencies and arts and cultural organizations have demonstrated these same characteristics.

Showing up and persisting. Staff from DOP and Carnegie Hall are committed to this challenging work together and have collaborated in an ongoing way to solve problems as they have arisen. The DOP/Carnegie Hall partnership itself is a strong example of how those involved in this project have shown up and persisted, as are the partnerships that exist between NeON stakeholder groups and arts organizations.

Additionally, DOP and Carnegie Hall staff frequently visit the workshops and participate in NeON Arts activities. Likewise, each YAG evaluation meeting included participation from DOP and Carnegie Hall, and all staff engaged in the creative evaluation design and workshop activities. Staff from NYC Opportunity participated in several of these meetings as well, demonstrating equal engagement and willingness to persist in tackling difficult challenges. The consistent presence of top program staff in activities has modeled the tone for the work as a whole. The evaluation team observed that everyone (regardless of their role) joined in the activities, demonstrating an important egalitarian atmosphere that guides the work.

Taking creative risks. By engaging in the workshop and YAG activities, top program staff necessarily opened themselves to vulnerability, again setting the tone for the program as a whole. In one YAG evaluation meeting that included youth participants, as well as Carnegie Hall, DOP, Metis, and NYC Opportunity staff, the discussion progressed into an honest and movingly raw conversation about race tensions, which was initiated by youth participants. The discussion necessitated great trust and risk on

the part of the young people, who shared their experiences as people of color. In this critical and monumental moment for the project, *youth modeled for adults* how to trust and take risks.

Relationships—Making New or Deepening Connections

The arts are known for their capacity to bring people together. This is partly due to their open, expressive nature and the creative atmosphere that is set. When examining themes related to the impact of NeON Arts, relationship building was recurrent. And, again, this theme was consistent across various involved groups. Through the project, individuals have **built relationships with their peers** and with those from **different generations and/or organizations**. Moreover, the work has resulted in **productive partnerships** that have extended beyond the direct purview of the project.

Youth/Participants

Building new bonds. According to interviews with both young people and NeON stakeholders, NeON Arts has served as a conduit for creating relationships between participants within sites, as well as across sites through final events. For example, in one interview, an artist noted that young people in his project have built supportive friendships with each other and are comfortable reaching out to their peers if they need to talk. On end-of-cycle surveys, participants themselves agreed that they have built positive relationships through the program (see Figure 9). According to one youth participant, "We also learned how to grow bonds amongst each other… I feel like we're all like a family… A lot of people also come from different home backgrounds where it might be rough at home, but coming here may be that outlet or that place where you can get everything out and actually dance your heart out and play the drums… and have someone to mentor you when you're going through the things that you're going through. That's what I learned and that's what pushed me and actually kept me here, because if it wasn't for that type of bond and those vibes, I don't think I would've stayed here long."

Figure 9: Youth have developed new relationships through NeON Arts.

In NeON Arts, I made new friends (N=50).

3.30

After participating in NeON Arts, I know more adults who care about me (N=50).

3.30

| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Not at all true | | Kind of true | | Definitely true |
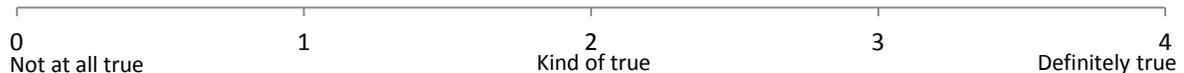
One stakeholder described a situation where participants at one site were deeply supportive of another young person who was dealing with an extremely challenging home life: "I had a young man who was in the seventh grade, born into Bloods, like third or fourth generation… 14 years old. And in those 14 years, I believe he lost 11 family members to gun violence. And he was an amazing poet…he was able to really start expressing himself and deal with a lot of the grief and death." This young man found the support of his peers that allowed him to work through his grief in productive ways. The supportive environment

can have a collective, positive impact on participants. The trusting environment encourages youth to open up and express themselves, and by expressing themselves more clearly, others are more likely to understand them and, therefore, form bonds with them.

Youth at one site also noted in a focus group that they appreciate the diversity of youth who attend the program, and this has helped them learn how to get along better with different personality types, and youth across sites corroborated this effect on end-of-cycle surveys (see Figure 10). One young person noted, "Personally, for me, I had to learn to adapt socially to the environment... coming here, it was new people, new faces, so I had to learn to deal with different personalities." Some youth acknowledged that this is an important life skill. One artist elaborated on this point, saying, "I think life skills is what we're talking about here, and some of those skills are hard skills—like learning to read, write, edit your work— and some of them are like learning to interact with people in the room that aren't like you, that come from a different place."

Figure 10: "After participating in NeON Arts, I get along with others… "(N=49).

		3.24
Worse than before	About the same	Better than before
0	1	2	3	4
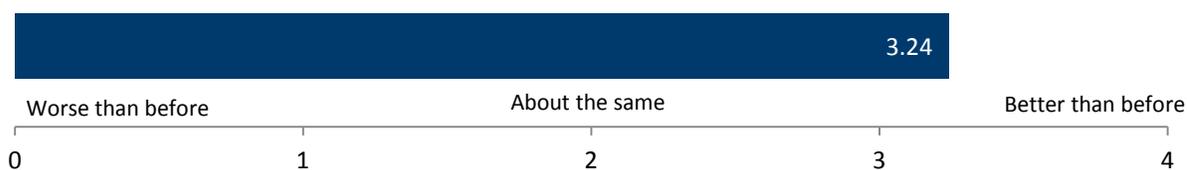
Stakeholders and participants credit the power of art for helping to build bonds. The South Bronx NeON now has a story wall consisting of stories from strangers that participants interviewed on the street through the Free Verse project. This process has allowed participants to find common ground among themselves, their peers, and others in their communities. According to one youth participant: "You have a whole flavor of people who come here to probation. When you read the people's stories and you realize 'oh that guy ain't really different; that almost sounds like me.' That's what art does." Another youth described traveling throughout the city to interview people for a film project: "We would go to different boroughs and meet different people and get the same response: it was just straight positivity… it made me understand that I had something more than what I was giving myself credit for… I found it exciting to get to connect with people that you wouldn't normally do on a regular basis."

Strengthening cross-generational relationships. NeON Arts has helped participants form new or deepened relationships with adults, such as probation officers, artists, and other community members. While some young people may not have had strong support systems available to them, stakeholders believe that NeON Arts connects youth to adults who care about them and celebrate their accomplishments with them. Stakeholders reported that NeON Arts also keeps young people reporting to their probation officers regularly and many are excited to tell their officers about their work on the projects. Final events also allow the community to see local youth in a new light. According to one young person, "Everybody's just amazed to see how much work we did and how beautiful we did it. And seeing the kids is not getting into trouble." Importantly youth check-out surveys indicated that, in addition to

working on projects with other youth, many youth reported collaborating with adults during workshops (see Figure 11).

Figure 11: Who did you work with today? (N=297)

Today, I worked by myself.

31%	69%

Today, I worked with other young people.

66%	34%

Today, I worked with adults.

46%	54%

■ Yes ■ No
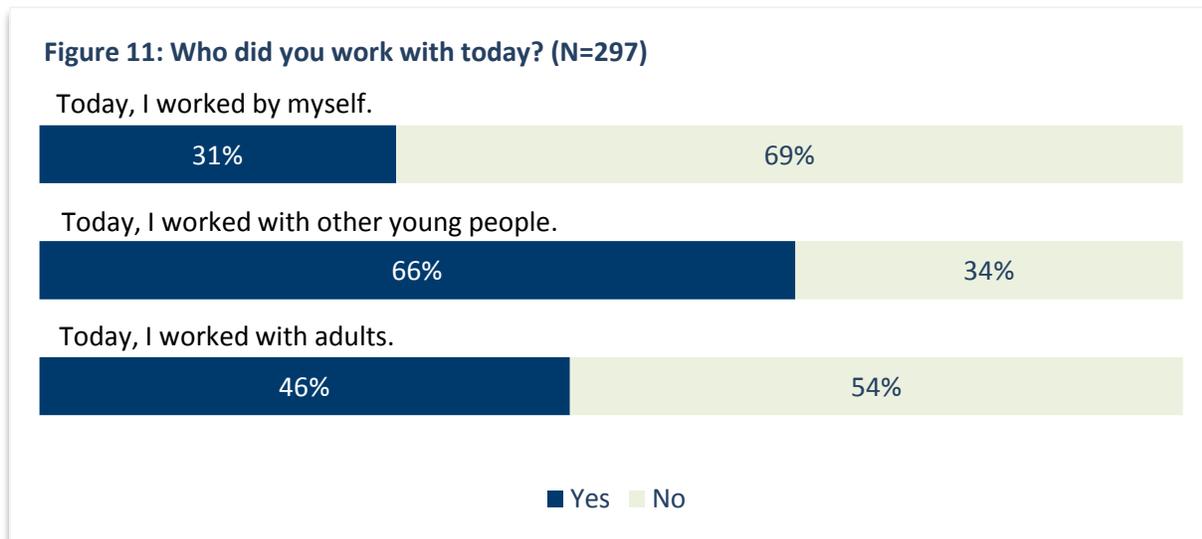
For their part, some young people reported that they had initially expected that the NeON Arts staff would judge them or try to catch them getting into trouble, but they found NeON Arts to be a supportive and nonjudgmental environment—one in which they were encouraged to be themselves.

> **"When I would step in the room… I wasn't judged or nothing for anything… And there was love there."**
>
> **-YAG Member**

One young person explained that, although he initially looked at his participation as a "drag," his perception of NeON Arts changed due to "the vibe."

Stakeholders noted that because participants do not know who is or is not on probation, young people are free to be themselves without experiencing the stigma associated with justice involvement. Participants reiterated this notion frequently, often making remarks such as this young person's comment: "Everybody in there [NeON] treats you the same; they don't treat you different. They treat you with respect."

Community

Likewise, the program has had important impacts on participating community members, particularly with regard to ***building partnerships*** and ***strengthening cross-generational relationships***.

Building partnerships. Many stakeholders have built partnerships with each other and with others in the community through their participation in the NeON Arts stakeholder group. Several cited examples of learning about new projects that existed that were previously unknown to them. In one such example, a stakeholder who is the leader of a community-based organization learned about the

> **"…youth don't want to be stuck. We love to grow. So what you gotta do is just give us an opportunity to step foot into growth."**
>
> **-YAG Member**

New Amsterdam Fencing Academy, which was implemented at the NeON site and is designed to teach youth discipline and focus. This stakeholder was highly positive about this project, explaining that it had been featured on the news due to its success in leading to "amazing transformation" in young people. As a result, this community-based organization now has a contract with the Fencing Academy outside of NeON.

Strengthening cross-generational relationships. One stakeholder explained that one of the goals of NeON Arts is to connect probation clients with their communities, stating, "We want both clients and community to come together to do the work." Impressed with their clients' progress, this often opens up a new level of dialogue between young people and their probation officers as they see each other in a new light and deepen their understanding of each other. Some probation officers in the stakeholder groups reported that they have built closer rapport with their clients through NeON Arts. For example, one probation officer explained, "[while] we may not be able to relate to them, we can through arts because we all have some type of feel for arts in different ways. I appreciate that, and I think it's a great experience for not only our clients but for us and it helps us to better relate to our clients." Artists reiterated this point, emphasizing that the workshops offer an important opportunity for probation officers to interact with their clients in a deeper way: "It's just the probation officers doing their job to relate to the students and really just going above and beyond, participating with the student as well to show them that they're more than just probation officers—they're peers in a way."

Moreover, NeON Arts presents a unique opportunity for youth on probation and other community members to come together without knowing "who's who." As one NeON stakeholder noted, "I think that in addition to positively impacting the clients, which I think is probably the most important piece, it's also an opportunity to showcase within the community that the folks who are on probation produce good stuff, good things, that they are creative… There's much more going on." One youth participant corroborated this perception: "Some of the adults that see us in NeON Arts see the youth in the neighborhood as being knuckleheads or acting crazy. The fact that we have this opportunity… shows a different vision of us because we're doing something positive… so now the next youth that comes behind us, they won't stereotype them… with this in the community, you give us an opportunity… so it kills the stereotype that we're stuck because youth don't want to be stuck. We love to grow. So what you gotta do is just give us an opportunity to step foot into growth."

Government/Arts & Cultural Organizations

In a parallel way, NeON Arts has offered an opportunity for DOP, Carnegie Hall, and participating arts organizations to *strengthen cross-organizational relationships*.

Strengthening cross-organizational relationships. NeON Arts has allowed DOP and Carnegie Hall to strengthen a partnership that was already forged. During interviews, Carnegie Hall and DOP staff acknowledged differences in their approach, which often related to logistics. For example, the way that the two organizations approach planning (Carnegie Hall's plans are completed years in advance, while DOP tends to focus on more near-term planning) and budgeting processes were different, creating the need to brainstorm ways to work around their differences. However, critically, according to

interviewees, the fact that their philosophical approach was aligned and their "hearts were in the same place" enabled them to deal with any inherent differences. Moreover, the trusting environment that NeON Arts seeks to foster across all situations allowed for genuine partnerships to form.

Through the project, DOP staff have also engaged with other organizations. For example, they have been asked to speak on panels and to meet with other organizations regarding how to integrate art into a variety of services. They also have become involved with Carnegie Hall's Create Justice initiative, a national collaborative designed to connect organizations which deliver arts programming to justice-involved youth.

Staff from arts and cultural organizations also expressed that the partnership has deepened their relationships with local DOP staff and other community partners. One staff member from an arts organization stated that NeON Arts has "enormously deepened" their relationship with DOP. Stakeholders further noted that the groups allow for positive and focused dialogue about issues that matter to all involved.

Internal Reflection—Growth & Broadened Perspectives

Involvement in the arts is noted for its capacity to help individuals learn about themselves. By their nature, arts are reflective experiences that allow for personal growth to occur. Recurring themes that emerged in the evaluation, across all involved groups, included *deep reflection on current beliefs and practices* and *revised approaches* based on this reflection.

Youth/Participants

Increased understanding of self. Several of the youth who were interviewed described how the program has helped them to learn more about who they are as individuals. In some cases, they learned about strengths and interests they did not know they had. In other cases, they were able to better identify or articulate their feelings. Stakeholders concurred with these sentiments, explaining that NeON Arts provides participants with exposure to new experiences that lead them to mature and learn more about themselves. One

If you had to choose one song to be the soundtrack of your NeON Arts experience, what would it be?

- *Uptown Funk* by Bruno Mars: "it's a hype song, and that's all we do. Like, we give people energy. When people see us, they get hyped and we give off the good vibe."
- *Man in the Mirror* by Michael Jackson because you have to change yourself before you can be an example for others: "Sometimes you could be a prime example for somebody, so by somebody seeing you take a step in your life, doing something positive with yourself, that one time they see you standing up there, you could inspire somebody to do something."
- *Time of Our Lives* by Pit Bull and Ne-Yo: "When you're dancing and you're in the spotlight… it really feels like the time of your life, you're really enjoying yourself, you're having fun."
- *Juicy* by the Notorious B.I.G. because "he's from the streets and he turned his life around."

stakeholder remarked that, "Exposure to NeON Arts and Sports allows them to grow. It helps them identify who they are." Another stakeholder added that NeON Arts is "allowing them the platform to add value to themselves."

Increased confidence. Integrally connected to better understanding of oneself is increased confidence. As one youth participant plainly pointed out, NeON Arts "just helped me become more confident in myself." Another young person expressed how NeON Arts has allowed him to show that he has something to contribute to the world (see Figure 12). According to this participant, "I'm showing what I can do, and it's a beautiful work of art, and I know I could do more in life and show more… people what I could do."

Stakeholders shared multiple stories of young people who improved their confidence by being given more responsibility. For example, one group of stakeholders described a youth participant who was very timid. Knowing this, they assigned him the responsibility of community outreach and found that this role helped push him to come out of his shell and gave him more confidence in speaking to others. Improved confidence, in turn, can lead participants to envision better futures for themselves. One artist explained that his teaching artists work with adults at Rikers, and the adults have joined the project after they are released. He noted that he can see the effect of this project on these participants' hope for the future: "For me, the thing that really made me smile was to see the spark return to a young man's eye, and that spark of hope, that spark of 'I can do it.'" Likewise, when envisioning their lives in the future (see text box above), many participants had specific personal goals, some lofty and some highly grounded. Responses frequently related to new skills or understandings that they gained through NeON Arts.

What is your vision for your life?

- "I've grown **stronger** as a person… seeing everything around me kind of falling down, but not really seeing everybody picking it up, that maybe **this is a calling** for me, that maybe if it doesn't happen in the years that I'm in college, that **I need to do something myself**."
- "I want to be **successful**, but not just doing anything. I particularly want to do **music**… and I want to do something **apart from music**."
- "I want to have my own practice as a psychologist so I can **help kids in the community**."
- "I want to act, so in five years I plan to be in one of ya'll favorite movies. I got **big goals, big dreams**. My number one dream is to be on a billboard in Times Square because this is my home."
- "I would like to be a **motivator** in my community… be a **family man**. Basically, everything that I've gained in my life I'd like to **give back in multitude**."
- "I want to be **financially stable**; I want to be able to take care of my mother."

Figure 12: "When I think about my future after participating in NeON Arts, I feel…" (N=50).

3.40	

Less hopeful   About the same   More hopeful

0   1   2   3   4
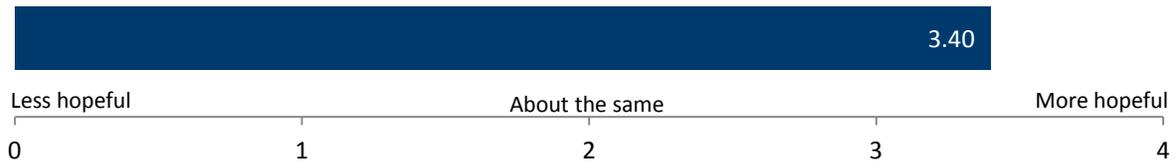
Figure 13: "In NeON Arts, I had a chance to express myself creatively…"(N=49).

3.37	

Never   Sometimes   All the time

0   1   2   3   4
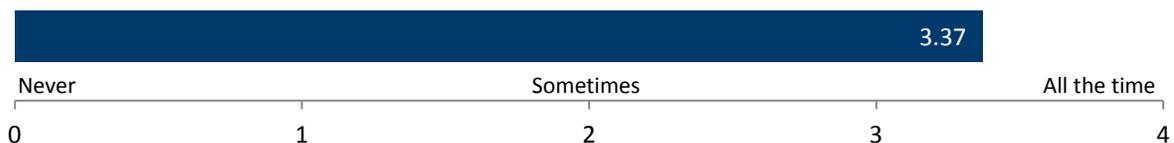
Self-expression. Key to development is being able to express oneself, which is fundamental to the arts. One artist explained that NeON Arts presents a unique opportunity for youth to express themselves and to take ownership of the experience. Along the same lines, a stakeholder explained that young people may not have had platforms to express themselves previously and, therefore, were not able to do so. However, "through music, arts, drawing…they're better able to express themselves." Young people agreed (see Figure 13 for data from the end-of-cycle survey); for example, one participant described his NeON Arts experience as: "Letting you express and showing you things that you've never seen before… I got to actually do something positive with my life." Others described how the release of self-expression has been highly beneficial to their well-being. One young person explained, "I was an angry guy when I got here. I found poetry as a release. So that was a godsend." Another participant described her own growth: "I did not want to do this. This took me out of my comfort zone completely. But now look at me." And yet another explained how he uses artistic expression as a coping mechanism now: "If I'm really feeling heated or upset, I choose to write something and go put it on paper and put a creative spin on it." See the text box above for other examples of youth's favorite aspects of NeON Arts.

> **What did you like most about NeON Arts?**
>
> - "The fact that the teacher saw potential in me."
> - "What I liked the most about Thrive is that it gave me a chance to express myself freely in art as well as creating a piece of art for my school."
> - "I like how it helped me develop as an artist."
> - "It's helping me find myself and actually feeling like I matter. People listen to me and I don't feel alone."
> - "Creating a platform to express myself."

Self-initiative. Stakeholders indicated that NeON Arts projects inspired youth to consider careers in the arts and motivated them to become leaders. One stakeholder noted that NeON Arts shows youth that "if you can't find a job, you can create one. You don't have to wait for someone to hire you. You could

hire them… You don't have to wait; you don't have to pass blame. It starts with you." Along these lines, one stakeholder explained that he envisions the youth he serves as future leaders in their communities. In his words, he hopes "to take them out of their community, provide that space, give them that safe haven…teach them about change, transformation, allow them to walk in that transformation, and reintroduce them to their community as leaders, ambassadors, kings, queens."

Community

Imagine that the NeON Arts program keeps going and more people from the neighborhood get involved. Describe what your neighborhood will be like in 5 years.

- "I think us doing this will change the young people out there… what we do here will draw them in. It'll **give them an option**… they will choose to be here instead of being out there… and as we do that, we'll **inspire other businesses and organizations** to do the same, create different outlets and different things. I think it creates a **richer community**… we change the Bronx demographic."

- "I see my whole neighborhood **talented** and becoming **successful**…and to see more **greatness** with them. Instead of bring down one another, I see them **lifting each other up**."

- "I see **progression**… if this keeps going at the rate that we're going, it'll change a lot of people's lives… This gives them a **safety net**, this gives them a comfort to know that they're gonna be ok… they can build a career; they can do whatever they want… I feel like if this keeps going, there won't be those basic stereotypes, those basic statistics. Because people from these boroughs could really show other people, like, 'we about what we about and we can shine even harder than somebody from the suburbs'…**our light does not dim for anybody**."

Within the community, similar themes have been evident among stakeholder groups.

Broadened perspective and revised approach. As described earlier, NeON Arts has been beneficial in building relationships between youth and community members, including probation officers. The building of these relationships has required individuals to broaden their perspectives and often to change their perspectives entirely. One stakeholder explained how NeON Arts has fostered this change: "It allows us as an agency to engage with our clients differently, and I think it allows the world to engage with our clients differently…I hear that from people on the stakeholder group. I think they have a different view now of what probation is about and what the clients are really like, and we're able to dispel some of their myths and misconceptions that they may have about our clients." Many NeON Arts projects allow community members to see young

people differently, and sometimes, this difference can be intentionally direct. For example, one stakeholder described how NeON Arts participants took part in a debutante cotillion through the Songs of Solomon project during one cycle. Throughout the project, participants learned public speaking skills, such as how to introduce themselves and think on their feet when asked questions. At the end of the cycle, they dressed in beautiful white gowns and tuxedos and were presented to their communities in a formal and refined manner.

Some stakeholders further explained how NeON offices have helped community members change their view of DOP as an agency. One stakeholder noted that although community members are initially unhappy when a DOP office is established in their neighborhood, once they see the variety of resources offered at the NeON, they recognize that they can add benefit. Another stakeholder pointed to the large numbers of community participants who engage in the workshops, indicating that community members are becoming more comfortable coming to the NeON.

Government/Arts & Cultural Organizations

Broadened perspective and changed approach. Staff from DOP also talked about the importance of the NeONs and the community partnerships in their development as an agency. Through NeON Arts, DOP has formed a network of local artists and a new vehicle for client, community, and staff engagement. When talking about the partnership with Carnegie Hall, one DOP partner stated, "I think it's been probably one of—if not the most—important partnerships for us in establishing this new relationship with the community." DOP staff went on to explain how the partnership has helped DOP to reconsider what justice could look like in the community. Moreover, one DOP partner described how the mission of NeON has expanded: "It's allowed us also to think through other possibilities. So now we have NeON Sports—same idea. It was a great first experience for the stakeholder groups to be in charge of projects… because art just brings people together… you can't compete with that…we could have NeON Arts, NeON Health, NeON Sports. Now we have the Nutrition Kitchens in the NeONs. We have all sorts of other opportunities to expand on what we bring to the community on a much more formal basis because we've been successful with the delivery of the arts programming."

From their point of view, Carnegie Hall program staff and administrators indicated that the partnership has led them to engage in deep reflection about their organizational culture, asking questions of themselves, such as, "What are we doing to make a space where people feel welcome and that their voices are heard?" Indeed, partners at Carnegie Hall reported that they have already observed organizational culture change from the NeON Arts partnership. As one staff member noted, "We think of this as central to what we're doing and super mission-centric, and that's a shift—it's growth for the organization." Another explained, "This program has had that institutional impact on not only how we see ourselves in relation to this work, but how we see ourselves in relation to all the work that we do." Additionally, their work with NeON stakeholder groups has helped Carnegie Hall learn to trust community members to make program decisions, rather than relying on "experts" to do so. Having the young people actually visit and engage in work at Carnegie Hall has been beneficial to all staff. Carnegie Hall program staff explained that they have begun having honest conversations about tough topics: "One area of conversation and, I suppose, growth is in people feeling comfortable enough to start asking questions about the program, about the young people, about the work. And to see the work happening in the building and in the neighborhood helps to start to dismantle stigma around race, around criminal justice, around class, around even community and what community means." According to Carnegie Hall program staff, as a result, this work has led individuals from different departments to get to know one another better. In addition, their Human Resources department is working on adapting their practices to help young people acclimate to the work world.

Evaluation Highlight: *Evaluator Outcomes*

The core characteristics of NeON Arts—that is, equal value given to all voices and consistent, ongoing reflection—had impact on all those involved in the project, even evaluation staff. As the evaluation team reflected on how the experience of working with NeON Arts has been impactful to them, the team noted that that the themes of engagement, creative risk-taking, and relationship building carried over to other evaluation work as well.

Showing Up & Persisting

The evaluation team was encouraged to participate in workshop activities during observations and YAG meetings. For example, at one YAG, the team engaged in a reflective activity, thinking through the following questions: What was your life like before NeON Arts? What did it look like as you were becoming more involved in NeON Arts? How has the experience changed your path? In a Fame Airbrush workshop activity, the team participated in making t-shirts, learning the skill and collaborating with participants. Likewise, in a Green Earth Poet Café workshop, the team was encouraged to engage in a creative poetry writing experience. Again, the consistent theme of genuine and personal engagement for all involved in the project was evidenced.

Taking Creative Risks

In addition to the vulnerability that goes along with participating in workshop activities, the use of a YAG represented a risk for the evaluators. While other evaluation projects have utilized participant groups in various aspects of the evaluation, the integral involvement of the YAG in all aspects of the evaluation design for this project was novel for the team. Moreover, some of the instruments created due to the involvement of the YAG were markedly different than instruments typically developed. For example, the youth focus group protocol was designed with workshop type activities, like imagining a song that represents participants' experience in NeON Arts and working together with other youth to envision their neighborhoods in five years. Additionally, the surveys were designed to be highly visually engaging and include no more than 10 questions. As this approach to evaluation required trying new techniques and methods and there was added time involved, the evaluation team too engaged in risk.

Making New or Deepened Connections

Likewise, the evaluation team has also had opportunity to strengthen relationships with DOP, Carnegie Hall, and local community members. Through formal, monthly meetings and ongoing, informal reflections, the evaluation team and NeON Arts partners worked on aligning their visions for the evaluation, ensuring that it was responsive to program needs, objective, and focused on participant outcomes. Any evaluation process requires mutual trust, which originates between individuals, but allows for larger organizational relationships to grow.

Broadened Perspective & Changed Approach

The incorporation of the YAG has had the greatest impact on the evaluation team's approach. As mentioned earlier, due to the involvement of the YAG, instruments and tools used looked different than those typically used. In the spirit of sharing best practices, as well as lessons learned, the team has been able to present practices and tools with their colleagues, who have in turn reported that they have incorporated them into their own projects, further spreading the learnings of NeON Arts' youth-centered approach.

Summary and Next Steps

Summary

Overall, the evaluation found that NeON Arts is a powerful program with strong potential to impact young people. Data collected through the evaluation point toward the program's positive effects on participants' engagement levels, the strength of their relationships, and their development as individuals. At its heart, NeON Arts brings people together through the collaborative and creative artistic process. And, it provides a strong model for how the arts can be used to reduce stigma and increase understanding between individuals, organizations, and agencies.

The evaluation found that NeON Arts had parallel impacts on all participant groups involved, including community members, staff from arts organizations, and staff from the primary partner agencies and organizations, including evaluators. The parallel nature of the outcomes is not coincidental. Evaluators found NeON Arts to be firmly rooted in a philosophical approach that is equal parts egalitarian, trusting, open, and pushing of limits. In the words of one participant, "Everybody in [NeON] treats you the same; they don't treat you different. They treat you with respect."

As impactful as NeON Arts can be, however, it is clear that young people must initially engage and persist in order to experience the benefits. The evaluation found that attendance and retention in the program are the greatest programmatic challenges. It may be that the variety of arts programs being offered is not rich enough to address the interests of all potential participants. Another recurring challenge that was noted is the capacity of smaller, local organizations to carry out the work of NeON Arts. The projects offered through NeON Arts are often delivered by organizations based outside of the neighborhoods instead of by local organizations.

Recommendations

- In order to foster greater participation of smaller, local arts organizations, the program should consider *partnering smaller arts organizations with larger, more experienced ones.*
- Additionally, the program may consider *making the "meet and greet" sessions* a required part of the applications, as programs that do not participate in these tend not to be selected.
- In order to better ensure variety of arts offerings at sites, consider *instituting a framework that encourages sites implement all major art forms* over the course of a 1-2 year period.
- *Clarify the roles for adults* in workshops to ensure the quality and nature of their engagement.
- Provide *additional opportunities for cross-site collaboratio*n, both during final culminating events, as well as outside of them.
- *Examine reasons why young people choose not to participate* or not to continue in the program.
- Conduct *deeper investigation into projects that successfully recruit and retain* their youth and allow opportunity for them to share their best practices with other artists and organizations.

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Technical Appendix

Appendix A: Evaluation Methods

Evaluation Questions

The evaluation had both implementation and outcome components. Evaluation questions for both of these components are shown below.

Implementation Evaluation

- What is the nature and quality of NeON Arts Implementation?
    - To what extent is the current process for selecting projects effective in ensuring that the program meets its goals?
    - To what extent is the current participant recruitment process effective in reaching the target population and numbers of participants?
    - To what extent do stakeholder groups play integral decision-making roles within the program?
    - What differences in participant engagement and stakeholder involvement are evident across projects and sites?
    - What are the overall successes and challenges of the program and what best practices in implementation are evident?
    - What recommendations for program improvement are made?

Outcome Evaluation

- What are participants' and stakeholders' perceptions of NeON Arts?
    - To what extent do participants perceive the program as high quality and relevant to their interests and needs?
    - To what extent do stakeholders perceive the program as high quality, relevant to the interests and needs of their communities, and effective in leading to positive outcomes in participants?
- What effect does NeON Arts have on participant outcomes?
    - What effects of participation, if any, are evident on participants' self-perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors?
    - What differential effects of the program, if any, are evident across sub-populations of participants, including (among others), individuals who are justice-involved/non-involved, youth/adults, males/females, and minority/non-minority?

- What broader effects does NeON Arts have on systems and communities?
    - What effect, if any, does the program have on combatting stigma associated with criminal justice involvement?
    - What effect, if any, does the program have on increasing collaboration across sectors (government, nonprofit, and private)?
- To what extent can NeON Arts assessment practices be improved in order to gather more valid and reliable data?
    - What data are currently being collected across projects and sites?
    - What gaps in data collection currently exist and how can they be filled?
    - What staff training needs should be addressed in order to strengthen data collection and analysis?

Observations

Between April and October 2017, the evaluation team observed a range of meetings and program activities, as well as three final events. These observations allowed the evaluation team to learn about the format and logistics for each project cycle.

Program meetings. Evaluators observed five different types of NeON Arts meetings between April and October 2017 (see Table A1).

Participant activities. Between June and August 2017, evaluators had the opportunity to visit seven NeON Arts project workshops, one open house, and three final events (see Table A2).

In order to ensure that all main aspects of the workshops were recorded during each observation, the evaluation team collaborated with the NeON Arts partners to develop a formal observation protocol. This protocol included questions regarding the following elements of a NeON Arts workshop:

- Basic information, including the numbers of youth, probation officers, and other adults present, and the stage of the project (e.g., initiation, design, execution);
- General descriptions of that day's workshop, such as the focus of the activity, the transferrable skills developed, the space in which the workshop was held, the materials used, the work products produced by the end of the workshop, and the culminating event or performance the youth were working toward;
- Notes on the artist's role and instructional style, the roles of stakeholders present, and the quality of interaction among youth and between youth and adults;
- Descriptions of the youth's level of engagement and collaboration in the activity, including notes on the artist's methods for cultivating these qualities; and
- General observational notes.

The evaluators also observed one project's open house, where youth were invited to meet the selected artist, learn about the upcoming project, and try their hand at the skills they would be learning if they chose to participate in the cycle. Finally, the evaluation team attended three final events, two of which were citywide and one of which was individual to a specific project.

Table A1: Meeting observations

Type of meeting	Location	Meeting purpose	Date
Artist Meet and Greet	Harlem NeON	The stakeholder group met artist applicants for the summer 2017 cycle, and artists presented their proposed projects and addressed questions.	April 10, 2017
Artist Meet and Greet	Bedford-Stuyvesant NeON	The stakeholder group met artist applicants for the summer 2017 cycle, and artists presented their proposed projects and addressed questions.	April 27, 2017
Artist Check-in Meeting	Carnegie Hall	Mid-way through the spring 2017 cycle, artists provided updates on their progress, including successes and challenges; shared ideas; and brainstormed next steps.	April 28, 2017
Final Artist Reflection	Carnegie Hall	Artists offered their overall feedback about the previous cycle and the final event, and then provided more project-specific impressions from the spring 2017 cycle.	July 12, 2017
Planning Meeting	Bedford-Stuyvesant NeON	Brainstorming session for the upcoming cycle, facilitated by NeON Arts staff. Participants discussed thoughts on location, scheduling, and other logistics, as well as reflected on individual youth progress.	October 26, 2017

Table A2: Project activity observations

Project	Type of activity	Location	Cycle	Date
Cobra Marching Band	Workshop	South Bronx	Spring 2017	June 23, 2017
Fame Airbrush	Open House	Jamaica	Spring 2017	August 17, 2017
Fame Airbrush	Workshop	Bedford-Stuyvesant	Summer 2017	August 17, 2017
Fame Airbrush	Workshop	Brownsville	Summer 2017	August 15, 2017
Fame Airbrush	Workshop	East New York	Summer 2017	August 15, 2017
Free Verse	Workshop	South Bronx	Summer 2017	August 11, 2017
Green Earth Poets Cafe	Workshop	Staten Island	Summer 2017	August 16, 2017
International Child Program	Workshop	Harlem	Summer 2017	August 10, 2017

Project	Type of activity	Location	Cycle	Date
Projectivity	Final Event	Staten Island	Spring 2017	June 14, 2017
N/A	Final Event	John Jay College	Spring 2017	June 30, 2017
N/A	Final Event	Carnegie Hall	Summer 2017	August 28, 2017

Interviews and Focus Groups

With the goal of ensuring that all NeON Arts participant groups were represented in the evaluation, evaluators conducted a series of interviews and focus groups with youth, stakeholders, artists, and NeON Arts partners. Descriptions of each of these methods and protocols are provided below.

NeON Arts partner interviews. In order to gather information about the history of the NeONs, NeON Arts, the NeON Arts partnership, and reflections on NeON Arts programming, evaluators created a NeON Arts partner interview protocol. While each protocol was tailored slightly based on the partner organization, questions generally focused on the effectiveness, strengths, and challenges of the partnership; perceptions regarding the outcomes of NeON Arts participation; lessons learned thus far; and recommendations for NeON Arts' next steps, both locally and nationally. Evaluators conducted six interviews with 10 NeON Arts partners, and each interview lasted approximately one hour (see Table A3). Of these six interviews, five were conducted in person and one interview was conducted by phone. All interviews were audio-recorded with permission from the participants.

Table A3: Partner interviews

Name	Organization	Date
Sarah Johnson	Carnegie Hall	November 1, 2017
Commissioner Ana Bermudez	Department of Probation	November 15, 2017
Ann Gregg	Carnegie Hall	January 12, 2018
Ayanna Cole	Carnegie Hall	January 12, 2018
LeBrandon Smith	Carnegie Hall	January 12, 2018
David Freudenthal	Carnegie Hall	January 12, 2018
Brandi Mathis	Carnegie Hall	January 12, 2018
Catrina Prioleau	Department of Probation	February 6, 2018
Michael Forte	Department of Probation	February 8, 2018
Dr. Clinton Lacey	Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services (formerly of Department of Probation)	February 12, 2018

Artist interviews. With the goal of learning more about artists' experiences as grantees, their perceptions of program effectiveness, and their recommendations for improvement, the evaluation team collaborated with NeON Arts partners to design a NeON Arts artist interview protocol. Artists were asked background information about their organizations, the goals and implementation design of their projects, their experience of the NeON Arts selection process, successes and challenges observed thus far, participation of probation officers and other adults in the workshops, the level of perceived support from Carnegie Hall and DOP, and overall feedback for program improvement. The evaluators conducted individual interviews with seven artists: one spring 2017 grantee, five summer 2017 grantees, and one

fall 2016 grantee (see Table A4). Interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes and all interviews were audio-recorded with permission from the participants.

Table A4: Artist interviews

Name	Organization	Date
Terrel Stowers	Cobra Marching Band	June 23, 2017
Phi Pham	Building Beats	August 11, 2017
Dave Johnson	Free Verse	August 11, 2017
Electra Weston	International Child Program	August 10, 2017; August 14, 2017
Danny Cross	Fame Airbrush	August 15, 2017
Curtis Harris	Green Earth Poets Café	August 16, 2017
Chantel Wright	Songs of Solomon	September 7, 2017

Stakeholder group focus groups. The evaluation team collaborated with NeON Arts partners to craft a NeON stakeholder focus group protocol designed to learn more about the experiences of NeON stakeholders, their perceptions of the effectiveness of NeON Arts on youth and the community, and their feedback for program improvement. Evaluators facilitated two focus groups in June 2017 comprised of three and eight participants, respectively, and each focus group lasted approximately 90 minutes (see Table A5). Stakeholders were asked about their involvement in the stakeholder group, the extent to which they believe NeON Arts is working toward its goals, the degree to which NeON Arts is meeting the needs of the community, the effectiveness of current outreach efforts, and their recommendations for improvement of the stakeholder group and NeON Arts overall. Both focus groups were audio-recorded as all focus group participants provided permission to record.

Table A5: NeON stakeholder focus groups

Date	Number of Participants	Sites Represented
June 23, 2017	3	Harlem, Jamaica, Bed-Stuy
June 28, 2017	8	East New York, Harlem, Staten Island, Bed-Stuy, Jamaica

Youth focus groups. In order to provide youth with the opportunity to share their experiences and feedback regarding their participation in NeON Arts, the evaluation team and NeON Arts designed an interactive youth focus group protocol. The protocol included questions regarding how youth first learned about NeON Arts, their initial impressions of the program, aspects of the program they have liked or disliked, transferrable skills they have learned and other ways they have been impacted through NeON Arts, their goals for their lives, and suggestions for program improvement. Interwoven within the focus group questions were activities intended to engage youth while gathering information, such as asking youth to choose a song that they would consider to be the soundtrack of their NeON Arts experience. After piloting the focus group with the YAG (see p. 18 for more information), the evaluators conducted five focus groups during June – August 2017— all occurring during the summer cycle (see

Table A6). The groups varied greatly in length, lasting between 10[6] and nearly 80 minutes; the length of focus groups depended on the amount of time artists were able to give of their workshop time and the number and engagement of youth participants. All but one focus group were audio-recorded, as one youth participant did not wish to be recorded.

Table A6: Focus groups

Project	Location	# of participants	Length of group	Date
Cobra Marching Band	South Bronx	8	78 minutes	June 23, 2017
International Child Program	Harlem	4	20 minutes	August 10, 2017
Free Verse	South Bronx	9	63 minutes	August 11, 2017
Fame Airbrush	Brownsville	2	13 minutes	August 15, 2017
Green Earth Poets Café	Staten Island	1	10 minutes	August 16, 2017

Other interviews. The evaluators conducted impromptu interviews with two project staff: an intern who had been working with the artist for a few weeks, and a mentor who had been working with the artist for many years. These interviews lasted approximately 10 minutes[7] and were not audio-recorded.

Needs Assessment

To gain more knowledge about the projects funded and program implementation the evaluation team conducted a needs assessment of the spring 2017 round. The purpose of the assessment was to document current practices, identify gaps or weaknesses, and make recommendations for future programmatic decisions. The evaluation team engaged in a multi-step process which included reviewing applications, scoring rubrics, selection meeting material, and monthly reports of funded projects. The evaluation team also reviewed sample attendance forms, and for contextual information, project press releases, and recruitment material. To systematically codify relevant information, team members reviewed the documents in tandem.

Attendance Analysis

The evaluation team conducted an attendance analysis of the spring 2017 round to gain more insight into workshop attendance for the NeON projects. Those who had at least one session attendance remained in the analysis and were counted toward the total number of youth participants for a site. The evaluation team examined the session attendance distributions and reported the range of youth attendance (highest and lowest session attendance on record) and average attendance for each session. Bar charts were constructed to display overall attendance patterns visually. Though those sessions with low attendance could be demonstrated and the overall trend of youth participation for each site discussed, why certain programs and certain sessions attracted more youth participants while the attendance records for other sessions were extremely low could not be pinpointed.

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[6] One workshop had only one youth participant, who had only attended one prior workshop.

[7] These interviews were shorter, as they were impromptu and thus there was little time to devote to them during the workshops.

Youth Surveys

The evaluation team collaborated with NeON Arts partners and YAG members to draft three youth surveys, with the goal of learning more about youth's experiences at their NeON Arts workshops. All three surveys were designed to be highly visual in order to maximize engagement and minimize literacy barriers that may exist among youth. Surveys were collected via an online platform so that they could be easily completed on tablets or smart phones. All three youth surveys are provided in Appendix B.

Youth check-in survey. The youth check-in survey was developed to gather information regarding youth's perceptions of the workshop in which they were about to participate. This survey was designed to be collected at the start of each workshop, and was piloted at two projects. It asks for the youth's first name and the first initial of their last name, how they are feeling that day, and how much they are looking forward to participating in that day's workshop. The check-in survey takes less than five minutes to complete and was collected at two NeON Arts projects during the spring 2018 round (see Table A7).

Table A7: Youth check-in survey responses

Site	Number of responses	Number of sessions surveyed
Cobra Marching Band	19	2
Free Verse Bronx	6	1

Youth check-out survey. The youth check-out survey was designed to gather data regarding youth's experiences of the workshop they attended. This survey was intended to be collected at the end of each workshop across all projects. The survey first asks for the youth's first name and the first initial of their last name. Next, youth are asked six multiple choice questions about the quality of their experience during the day's workshop, such as whether they tried something new, enjoyed the activities, found the activities to be challenging, and felt they were treated with respect. The check-out survey takes approximately five minutes to complete and was collected at all nine NeON Arts projects during the spring 2018 round (see Table A8).

Table A8: Youth check-out survey responses

Site	Number of responses	Number of sessions surveyed
Building Beats	7	3
Cobra Marching Band	114	12
Fame Bed-Stuy	75	7
Fame Harlem	22	3
Free Verse Bronx	25	6
Free Verse Brownsville	1	1
Free Verse East NY	5	1
Projectivity	23	11
Thrive Collective	25	6

Youth end-of-cycle survey. The youth end-of-cycle survey was designed to collect data regarding youth's experiences of the NeON Arts project cycle overall. This survey was developed for collection at the end of each project cycle across all projects. The survey is anonymous, and asks youth 16 questions about their experience in NeON Arts, 14 of which are multiple choice and two of which are open-ended. The first part of the survey asks youth to rate the effect that NeON Arts has had on their skills, creativity, relationships, and futures, including whether they hope to continue participating in the arts. The survey concludes with two open-ended questions about their perception of the final event and the project overall. The end-of-cycle survey takes approximately ten minutes to complete and was collected at five NeON Arts projects during the spring 2018 round (see Table A9).

Table A9: Youth end of cycle survey responses

Site	Number of responses
Building Beats	3
Fame Bed-Stuy	5
Free Verse East NY	6
Projectivity	6
Thrive Collective	10

Analysis

Qualitative

With participants' permission, most interviews and focus groups were audio-recorded. Recordings were later summarized individually, and some direct quotes were transcribed verbatim. Finally, individual interview and focus group summaries were analyzed across participant groups to identify themes within and across groups.

Quantitative

Data for each of the three youth surveys were analyzed in IBM SPSS. Each survey was analyzed separately by calculating means and frequencies of each question. Data for each survey were analyzed by project and across all projects, providing results for each site as well as a citywide perspective.

Appendix B: Youth Surveys

Youth Check-In Survey

1. What is your first name?

2. What is the first letter of your last name?

3. How's it going today?

| Good | OK | Not good | I don't want to answer |

4. How much are you looking forward to participating in NeON Arts today?

| A lot | Kind of | Not at all | I don't want to answer |

Youth Check-Out Survey

1. What is your first name?

2. What is the first letter of your last name?

3. Did you try something new today?

| Yes | No |

4. Mark each statement that is true about today's workshop. Choose as many as you like.
- ❐ Today, I worked by myself.
- ❐ Today, I worked with other young people.
- ❐ Today, I worked with adults.

5. Did people treat you with respect today?

| Yes | Kind of | No |

6. Was today's workshop a good use of your time?

| Yes | Kind of | No |

7. Did you enjoy today's activities?

| Yes | Kind of | No |

8. Was today's workshop challenging?

| Yes | Kind of | No |

Youth End of Cycle Survey

Please rate each statement on a scale of low (0) to high (4).

1. In NeON Arts, I made new friends.

0	1	2	3	4
Not at all true		Kind of true		Definitely true

2. After participating in NeON Arts, I get along with others…

0	1	2	3	4
Worse than before		About the same		Better than before

3. After participating in NeON Arts, I know more adults who care about me.

0	1	2	3	4
Not at all true		Kind of true		Definitely true

4. In NeON Arts, I learned a new skill.

0	1	2	3	4
Not at all true		Kind of true		Definitely true

5. In NeON Arts, I tried things that I was nervous to try…

0	1	2	3	4
Never		Sometimes		All the time

6. In NeON Arts, I visited places I have never been before.

0	1	2	3	4
Never		Sometimes		All the time

7. In NeON Arts, I had a chance to express myself creatively…

0	1	2	3	4
Never		Sometimes		All the time

8. After participating in NeON Arts, I know more about arts careers.

0	1	2	3	4
Not at all true		Kind of true		Definitely true

9. After participating in NeON Arts, I want to do this as a job.

0	1	2	3	4
Not at all true		Kind of true		Definitely true

10. When I think about my future after participating in NeON Arts, I feel…

0	1	2	3	4
Less hopeful		About the same		More hopeful

11. Would you like to continue creating art in the future?
- ❐ Yes
- ❐ No

12. [If answered yes to question 11] What kind of art would you like to create? Choose as many as you like.
- ❐ I would like to continue creating more of this kind of art
- ❐ I would like to work on a different kind of art

13. [If answered "I would like to work on a different kind of art"] What other kind of art would you like to create?

_____

_____

14. Would you be interested in discussing possible paid or voluntary internships with NeON Arts?
- ❐ Yes—paid or voluntary internship
- ❐ Yes—paid internship only
- ❐ No

15. What did you like most about NeON Arts?

_____

_____

16. How important was the final event to this project overall?

_____

_____

Appendix C: Attendance Analysis

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BUILDING BEATS (HARLEM)
Spring 2017 Round – Attendance Analysis Part One

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Building Beats hosted an Open House, 17 workshops, and a Final Event, which occurred during the last week of the program. The program ran for 12 weeks, from April to June 2017, providing 19 workshops. If we count all youth who attended at least one workshop, there were 30 youth participants. Youth attended[8] an average of 6 workshops (31% of workshops offered), ranging from a low of 1 workshop to a high of 14 workshops.

Table BB1. At a glance - attendance summary

Total number of youth participants	30
Range of youth workshop attendance	1 to 14
Average number of workshops attended	6
Average percent of workshops attended	31%

Table BB2 shows the total number of workshops, and the corresponding percentage of workshops, each youth participant attended out of the 19 workshops offered. At least 7 youth attended 50% percent of the workshops offered.

Table BB2. Attendance by individual youth participant

Westat-generated ID number	Total workshops attended	Percent of workshops attended
1001	11	58%
1002	12	63%
1003	2	11%
1004	9	47%
1005	3	16%
1006	3	16%
1007	1	5%
1008	1	5%
1009	14	74%
1010	4	21%
1011	14	74%

[8] Attendance patterns fluctuated for many workshops due to life events for youth participants. A workshop attendance data file provided by Carnegie Hall was the source of the data for this analysis.

Westat-generated ID number	Total workshops attended	Percent of workshops attended
1012	11	58%
1013	13	68%
1014	11	58%
1015	6	32%
1016	1	5%
1017	5	26%
1018	1	5%
1019	6	32%
1020	9	47%
1021	1	5%
1022	1	5%
1023	8	42%
1024	4	21%
1025	1	5%
1026	1	5%
1027	5	26%
1028	4	21%
1029	2	11%
1030	1	5%

In addition to describing the number of workshops each youth participant attended, we also examined how many youth participants were present at each workshop. Table B3 lists the numbers of youth participants per workshop and Figure B2 illustrates the pattern of workshop attendance.

Table BB3. Number of youth participants at each workshop

Workshop	Number of participants
Open House	0
Workshop 1	8
Workshop 2	10
Workshop 3	12
Workshop 4	10
Workshop 5	16
Workshop 6	9
Workshop 7	6
Workshop 8	7
Workshop 9	9
Workshop 10	8
Workshop 11	11
Workshop 12	9
Workshop 13	12
Workshop 14	7
Workshop 15	12
Workshop 16	9
Workshop 17	10
Final Event	0

Figure BB1 shows that none of the youth attended either the Open House or Final Event. Workshop 5 had the highest attendance rate with 16 youth participants. For the remaining workshops, attendance fluctuated between 6 and 12 youth participants.

Figure BB1. Workshop attendance pattern
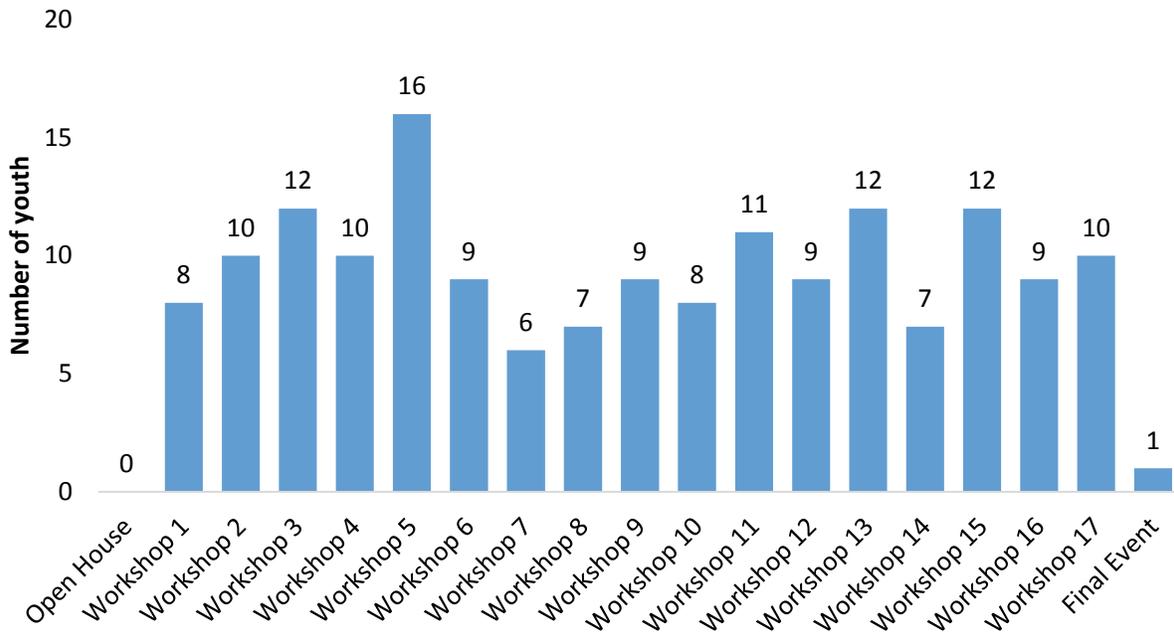
When we examined the attendance data closely, we found that among the 8 youth who attended the first workshop, 3 of them never returned to the workshop. The other 5 youth continued attending most of the Building Beats workshops. Of these 5 youth, one attended 13 workshops, three attended 11 workshops, and 1 attended 8 workshops. Presumably, after the first workshop, youth were able to determine if Building Beats interested them or not.

BUILDING BEATS (HARLEM)

Spring 2017 Round – Attendance Analysis Part Two

When we excluded the Open House and Final Event from the attendance analysis, the average percent of workshops attended by youth participants increased to 35 percent (an increase of 4 percentage points).

Table BB4. At a glance - attendance summary

Total number of youth participants	30
Range of youth workshop attendance	1 to 14
Average number of workshops attended	6
Average percent of workshops attended	35%

Table BB5 shows the total number of workshops, and the corresponding percentage of workshops, each youth participant attended out of the 17 workshops offered.

Table BB5. Attendance by individual youth participant

Westat-generated ID number	Total workshops attended	Percent of workshops attended
1001	11	65%
1002	12	71%
1003	2	12%
1004	9	53%
1005	3	18%
1006	3	18%
1007	1	6%
1008	1	6%
1009	14	82%
1010	4	24%
1011	14	82%
1012	11	65%
1013	13	76%
1014	11	65%
1015	6	35%
1016	1	6%
1017	5	29%
1018	1	6%
1019	6	35%
1020	9	53%

Westat-generated ID number	Total workshops attended	Percent of workshops attended
1021	1	6%
1022	1	6%
1023	8	47%
1024	4	24%
1025	1	6%
1026	1	6%
1027	5	29%
1028	4	24%
1029	2	12%
1030	1	6%

Table BB6 lists the number of youth participants per workshop and Figure BB2 illustrates the pattern of workshop attendance.

Table BB6. Number of youth participants at each workshop

Workshop	Number of participants
Workshop 1	8
Workshop 2	10
Workshop 3	12
Workshop 4	10
Workshop 5	16
Workshop 6	9
Workshop 7	6
Workshop 8	7
Workshop 9	9
Workshop 10	8
Workshop 11	11
Workshop 12	9
Workshop 13	12
Workshop 14	7
Workshop 15	12
Workshop 16	9
Workshop 17	10

Workshop 5 continued to have the highest attendance rate with 16 youth participants. For the remaining workshops, attendance fluctuated between 6 and 12 youth participants.

Figure BB2. Workshop attendance pattern
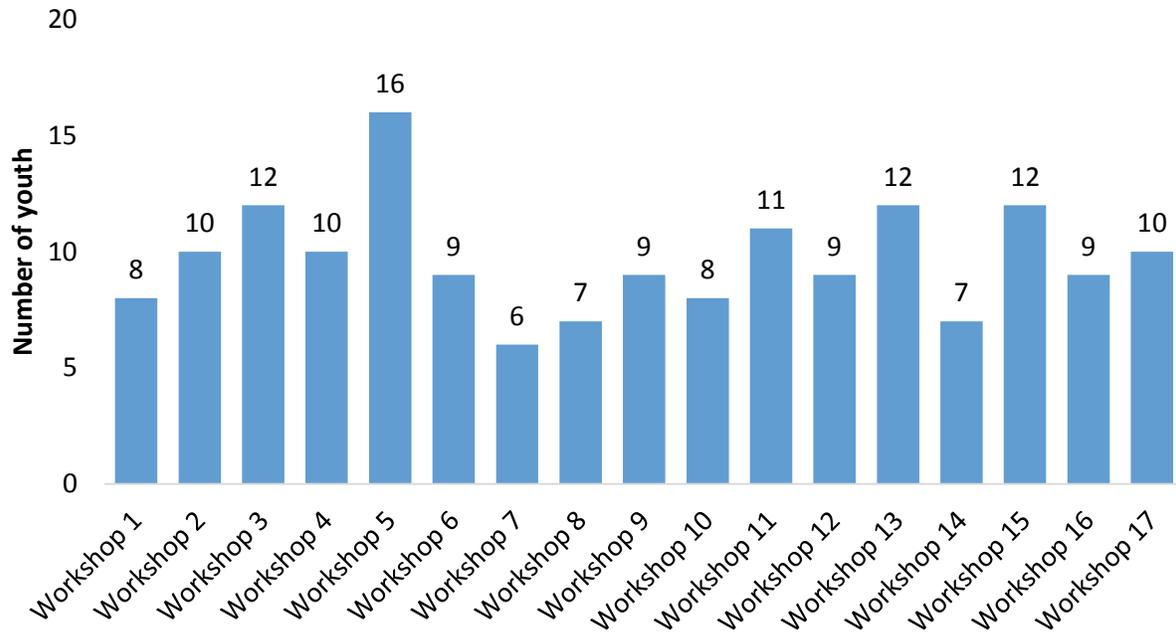
CHRIS OWEN
Spring 2017 Round – Attendance Analysis Part One

Chris Owen hosted an Open House, 11 workshops, and a Final Event, which occurred during the last week of the program. The program ran for 13 weeks, from March 28 to June 30, 2017 (comprising 13 workshops total). If we count all youth who attended at least one workshop, there were 19 youth participants. The number of workshops attended by youth ranged from 1 (low attendance) to 11 (high attendance). The average number of workshops attended by youth was 2.6. Given that there were 13 workshops total, on average, participants attended 20 percent of all workshops offered.

Table CO1. At a glance - summary

Total number of youth participants	19
Range of youth workshop attendance	1 to 11
Average number of workshops attended	2.6
Average percent of workshops attended	20%

Table CO2 shows the total number of workshops, and the corresponding percentage of workshops, each youth participant attended out of the 13 workshops offered.

Table CO2. Attendance by individual youth participant

Westat-generated ID number	Total workshops attended	Percent of workshops attended
6001	1	8%
6002	1	8%
6003	2	15%
6004	11	85%
6005	4	31%
6006	1	8%
6007	7	54%
6008	4	31%
6009	2	15%
6010	5	38%
6011	2	15%
6012	2	15%
6013	1	8%
6014	1	8%
6015	1	8%
6016	1	8%

Westat-generated ID number	Total workshops attended	Percent of workshops attended
6017	1	8%
6018	1	8%
6019	1	8%

In addition to describing the number of workshops each youth participant attended, we also examined how many youth participants were present at each workshop. Table CO3 lists the number of youth participants per workshop and Figure CO1 illustrates the pattern of workshop attendance.

Table CO3. Number of youth participants at each workshop

Workshop	Number of participants
Open House	2
Workshop 1	4
Workshop 2	4
Workshop 3	4
Workshop 4	7
Workshop 5	3
Workshop 6	1
Workshop 7	3
Workshop 8	7
Workshop 9	3
Workshop 10	3
Workshop 11	2
Final Event	6

Figure CO1 shows that Workshop 4 and Workshop 8 had the highest attendance; 7 youth participated in each workshop. Workshop 6 was not well attended with only one youth participant. There were six youth at the Final Event. For the remaining workshops, attendance fluctuated between 2 and 4 participants.

Figure CO1. Workshop attendance pattern
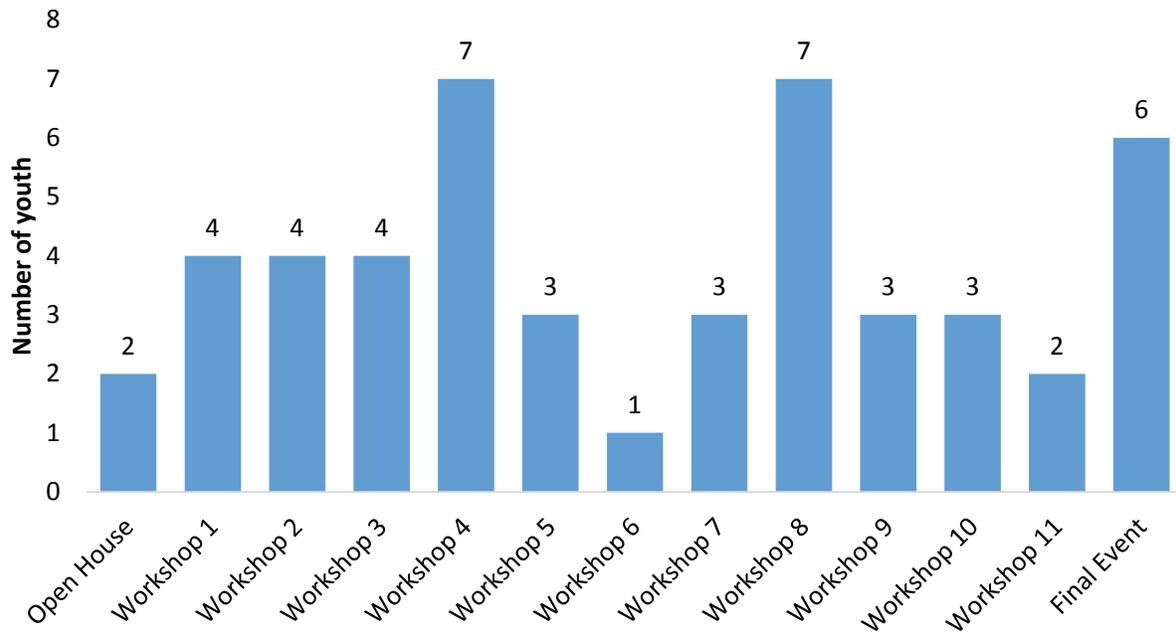
When we examined the data closely, we found that the two participants who attended the Open House never returned. Four students who attended Workshop 8 participated for the first time but did not return to any subsequent workshops. The one youth who attended all 11 workshops missed both the Open House and Final Event.

When we excluded the Open House and Final Event from the attendance analysis, the average percent of workshops attended by youth participants increased to 22 percent.

Table CO4. At a glance – attendance summary

Total number of youth participants	17
Range of youth workshop attendance	1 to 11
Average number of workshops attended	2.4
Average percent of workshops attended	22%

Table CO5 shows the total number of workshops, and the corresponding percentage of workshops, each youth participant attended out of the 13 workshops offered.

Table CO5. Attendance by individual youth participant

Westat-generated ID number	Total workshops attended	Percent of workshops attended
6001	0	0%
6002	0	0%
6003	2	18%
6004	11	100%
6005	4	36%
6006	1	9%
6007	6	55%
6008	3	27%
6009	1	9%
6010	4	36%
6011	1	9%
6012	1	9%
6013	1	9%
6014	1	9%
6015	1	9%
6016	1	9%
6017	1	9%
6018	1	9%
6019	1	9%

In addition to reviewing the number of workshops each participant attended, we also examined how many youth participants were present at each workshop. Table CO6 lists the number of youth participants per workshop and Figure CO2 illustrates the pattern of workshop attendance.

Table CO6. Number of Youth Participants at Each Workshop

Workshop	Number of participants
Workshop 1	4
Workshop 2	4
Workshop 3	4
Workshop 4	7
Workshop 5	3
Workshop 6	1
Workshop 7	3
Workshop 8	7
Workshop 9	3
Workshop 10	3
Workshop 11	2

Figure CO2. Workshop attendance pattern
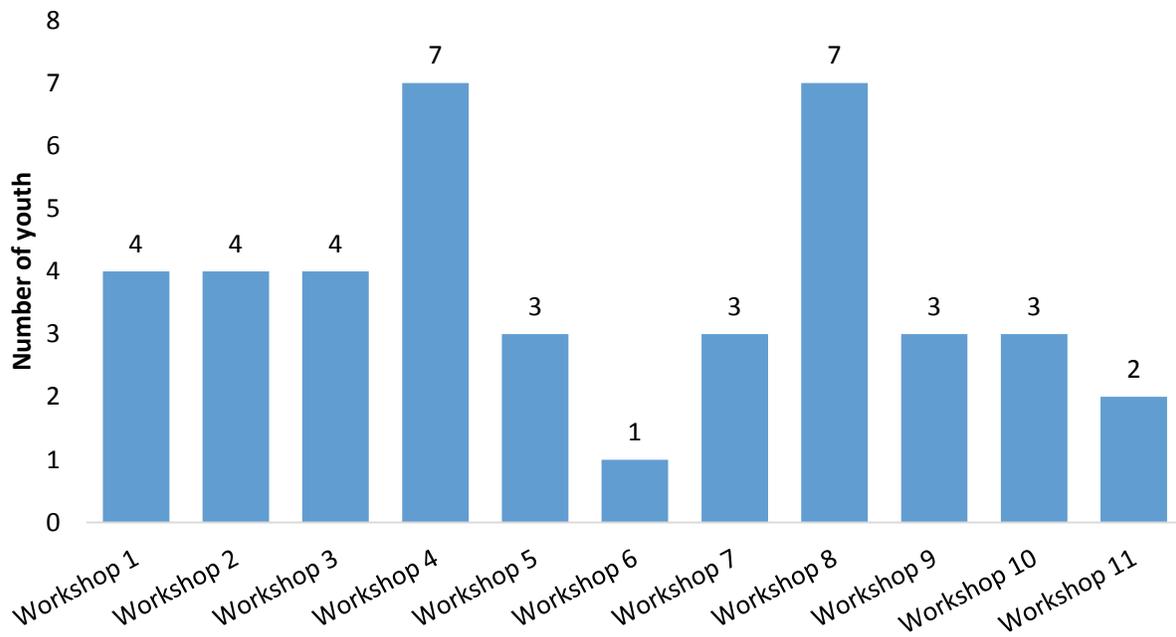
COBRA MARCHING BAND

Spring 2017 Round – Attendance Analysis Part One

Cobra Marching Band hosted an Open House, 27 workshops, and a Final Event, which occurred during the last week of the program. The program ran from April 4 to June 30, 2017 (comprising 29 workshops total). If we count all youth who attended at least one workshop, there were 43 youth participants. The number of workshops attended by youth ranged from 10 (low attendance) to 24 (high attendance). The average number of workshops attended by youth was 16.6. Given that there were 29 workshops total, on average, participants attended 57 percent of all workshops offered.

Table CM1. At a glance - attendance summary

Total number of youth participants	43
Range of youth workshop attendance	10 to 24
Average number of workshops attended	16.6
Average percent of workshops attended	57%

Table CM2 shows the total number of workshops, and the corresponding percentage of workshops, each youth participant attended out of the 29 workshops offered.

Table CM2. Attendance by individual youth participant

Westat-generated ID number	Total workshops attended	Percent of workshops attended
9001	17	59%
9002	21	72%
9003	22	76%
9004	23	79%
9005	24	83%
9006	19	66%
9007	19	66%
9008	21	72%
9009	22	76%
9010	13	45%
9011	16	55%
9012	23	79%
9013	23	79%
9014	20	69%
9015	17	59%
9016	22	76%

Westat-generated ID number	Total workshops attended	Percent of workshops attended
9017	20	69%
9018	19	66%
9019	19	66%
9020	14	48%
9021	20	69%
9022	10	34%
9023	16	55%
9024	17	59%
9025	16	55%
9026	12	41%
9027	13	45%
9028	15	52%
9029	13	45%
9030	13	45%
9031	14	48%
9032	14	48%
9033	14	48%
9034	13	45%
9035	15	52%
9036	15	52%
9037	13	45%
9038	12	41%
9039	14	48%
9040	11	38%
9041	12	41%
9042	13	45%
9043	14	48%

In addition to describing the number of workshops each youth participant attended, we also examined how many youth participants were present at each workshop. Table CM3 lists the number of youth participants per workshop and Figure CM2 illustrates the pattern of workshop attendance.

Table CM3. Number of youth participants at each workshop

Workshop	Number of participants
Open House	0
Workshop 1	16
Workshop 2	19
Workshop 3	16
Workshop 4	0
Workshop 5	19
Workshop 6	14
Workshop 7	13
Workshop 8	13
Workshop 9	14
Workshop 10	30
Workshop 11	40
Workshop 12	32
Workshop 13	43
Workshop 14	40
Workshop 15	0
Workshop 16	33
Workshop 17	42
Workshop 18	35
Workshop 19	35
Workshop 20	35
Workshop 21	31
Workshop 22	34
Workshop 23	13
Workshop 24	36
Workshop 25	43
Workshop 27	42
Workshop 28	12
Final Event	43

Figure CM1 shows that none of the youth attended the Open House, Workshop 4 and Workshop 15. Workshop 13, Workshop 25 and the Final Event had full participation with all 43 youth present. The program started with low participation, but by Workshop 10, attendance improved. From Workshop 10 to the Final Event, all workshops had more than 30 youth present, except Workshop 15, Workshop 23 and Workshop 28.

Figure CM1. Workshop attendance pattern
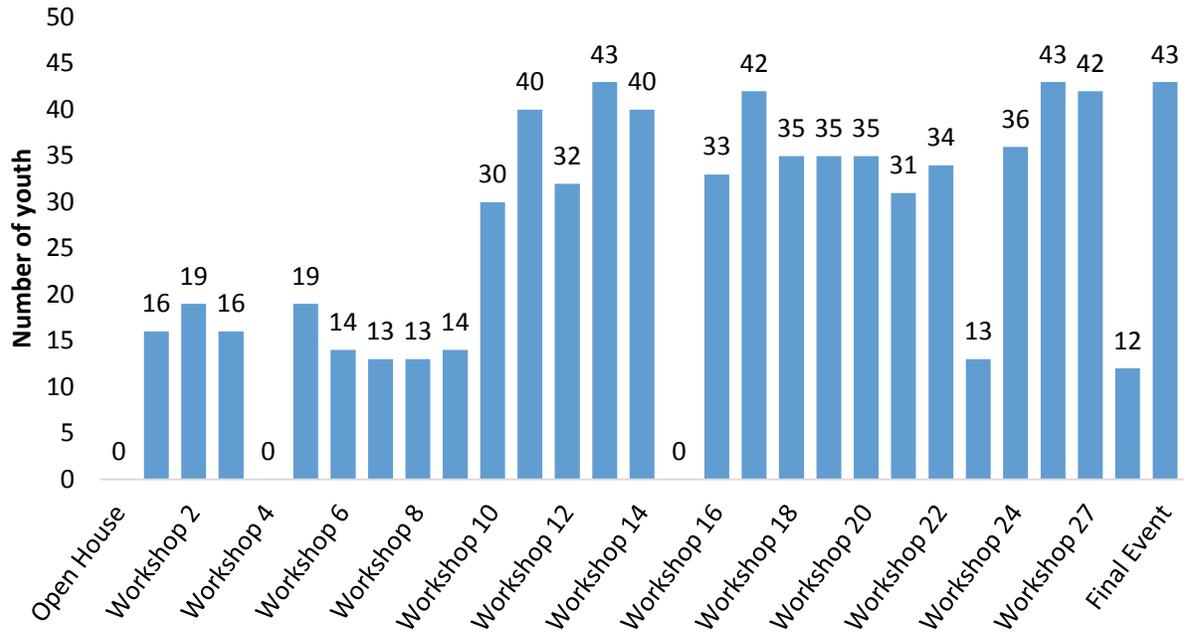
COBRA MARCHING BAND
Spring 2017 Round – Attendance Analysis Part Two

When we excluded the Open House and Final Event from the attendance analysis, the average percent of workshops attended by youth participants increased to 58 percent.

Table CM4. At a glance - attendance summary

Total number of youth participants	43
Range of youth workshop attendance	9 to 13
Average number of workshops attended	15.6
Average percent of workshops attended	58%

Table CM5 shows the total number of workshops, and the corresponding percentage of workshops, each youth participant attended out of the 27 workshops offered.

Table CM5. Attendance by individual youth participant

Westat-generated ID number	Total workshops attended	Percent of workshops attended
9001	16	59%
9002	20	74%
9003	21	78%
9004	22	81%
9005	23	85%
9006	18	67%
9007	18	67%
9008	20	74%
9009	21	78%
9010	12	44%
9011	15	56%
9012	22	81%
9013	22	81%
9014	19	70%
9015	16	59%
9016	21	78%
9017	19	70%
9018	18	67%
9019	18	67%
9020	13	48%
9021	19	33%

| Westat-generated ID number	Total workshops attended	Percent of workshops attended
9022	9	56%
9023	15	59%
9024	16	56%
9025	15	41%
9026	11	44%
9027	12	52%
9028	14	44%
9029	12	44%
9030	12	48%
9031	13	48%
9032	13	48%
9033	13	44%
9034	12	52%
9035	14	52%
9036	14	44%
9037	12	41%
9038	11	48%
9039	13	37%
9040	10	41%
9041	11	44%
9042	12	48%
9043	13	33%

In addition to reviewing the number of workshops each youth participant attended, we also examined how many youth participants were present at each workshop. Table CM6 lists the number of youth participants per workshop and Figure CM2 illustrates the pattern of workshop attendance.

Table CM6. Number of youth participants at each workshop

Workshop	Number of participants
Workshop 1	16
Workshop 2	19
Workshop 3	16
Workshop 4	0
Workshop 5	19
Workshop 6	14
Workshop 7	13
Workshop 8	13
Workshop 9	14
Workshop 10	30
Workshop 11	40
Workshop 12	32
Workshop 13	43

Workshop	Number of participants
Workshop 14	40
Workshop 15	0
Workshop 16	33
Workshop 17	42
Workshop 18	35
Workshop 19	35
Workshop 20	35
Workshop 21	31
Workshop 22	34
Workshop 23	13
Workshop 24	36
Workshop 25	43
Workshop 27	42
Workshop 28	12

Figure CM2 shows that the program started with low attendance. After Workshop 10, however, more youth joined the program. With the exception of Workshops 15 and 23, Workshop 10 and beyond had at least 30 participants in attendance. Zero youth attended Workshop 15 and only 13 youth attended Workshop 23. Overall, the program had a slow start and the latter part of the program was more successful in attracting youth participants.

Figure CM2. Workshop attendance pattern
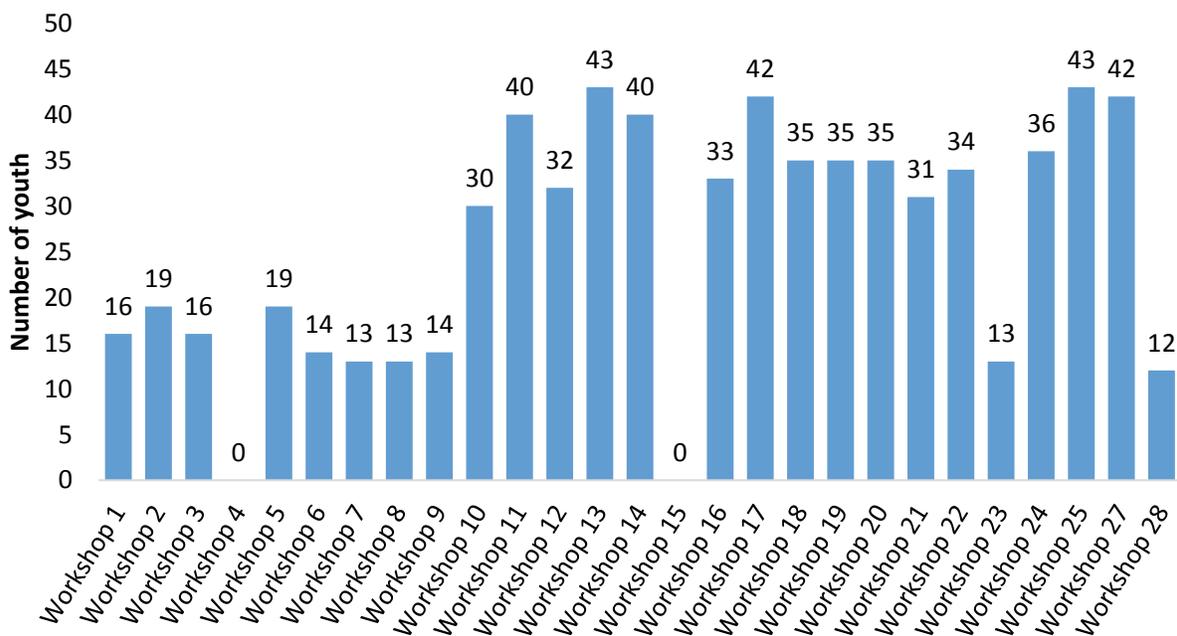
FAME AIRBRUSH (BEDFORD-STUYVESANT)

Spring 2017 Round – Attendance Analysis Part One

Fame Airbrush (Bedford) hosted an Open House, 11 workshops, and a Final Event, which occurred during the last week of the program. The program ran from March 9 to June 30, 2017 (comprising 13 workshops total). If we count all youth who attended at least one workshop, there were 33 youth participants. The number of workshops attended by youth ranged from 1 (low attendance) to 11 (high attendance). The average number of workshops attended by youth was 2.4. Given that there were 13 workshops total, on average, participants attended 18 percent of all workshops offered.

Table FA1. At a glance - attendance summary

Total number of youth participants	33
Range of youth workshop attendance	1 to 11
Average number of workshops attended	2.4
Average percent of workshops attended	18%

Table FA2 shows the total number of workshops, and the corresponding percentage of workshops, each youth participant attended out of the 13 workshops offered.

Table FA2. Attendance by individual youth participant

Westat-generated ID number	Total workshops attended	Percent of workshops attended
8001	1	8%
8002	2	15%
8003	3	23%
8004	1	8%
8005	2	15%
8006	2	15%
8007	3	23%
8008	11	85%
8009	2	15%
8010	8	62%
8011	1	8%
8012	1	8%
8013	1	8%
8014	1	8%
8015	4	31%
8016	1	8%

Westat-generated ID number	Total workshops attended	Percent of workshops attended
8017	1	8%
8018	1	8%
8019	2	15%
8020	3	23%
8021	1	8%
8022	1	8%
8023	1	8%
8024	2	15%
8025	1	8%
8026	1	8%
8027	1	8%
8028	7	54%
8029	1	8%
8030	1	8%
8031	4	31%
8032	4	31%
8033	2	15%

In addition to describing the number of workshops each youth participant attended, we also examined how many youth participants were present at each workshop. Table FA3 lists the number of youth participants per workshop and Figure FA1 illustrates the pattern of workshop attendance.

Table FA3. Number of youth participants at each workshop

Workshop	Number of participants
Open House	20
Workshop 1	3
Workshop 2	10
Workshop 3	13
Workshop 4	6
Workshop 5	5
Workshop 6	6
Workshop 7	1
Workshop 8	3
Workshop 9	4
Workshop 10	2
Workshop 11	5
Final Event	0

Figure FA1 shows that the highest rate of attendance was at the Open House; 20 participants attended. However, most youth who attended the Open House did not attend Workshop one. Only three youth attended the first workshop. None of the youth attended the Final Event. Workshop 2 and Workshop 3

had relatively high attendance with more than 10 youth participants. After Workshop 4, the number of attendees dropped again.

Figure FA1. Workshop attendance pattern
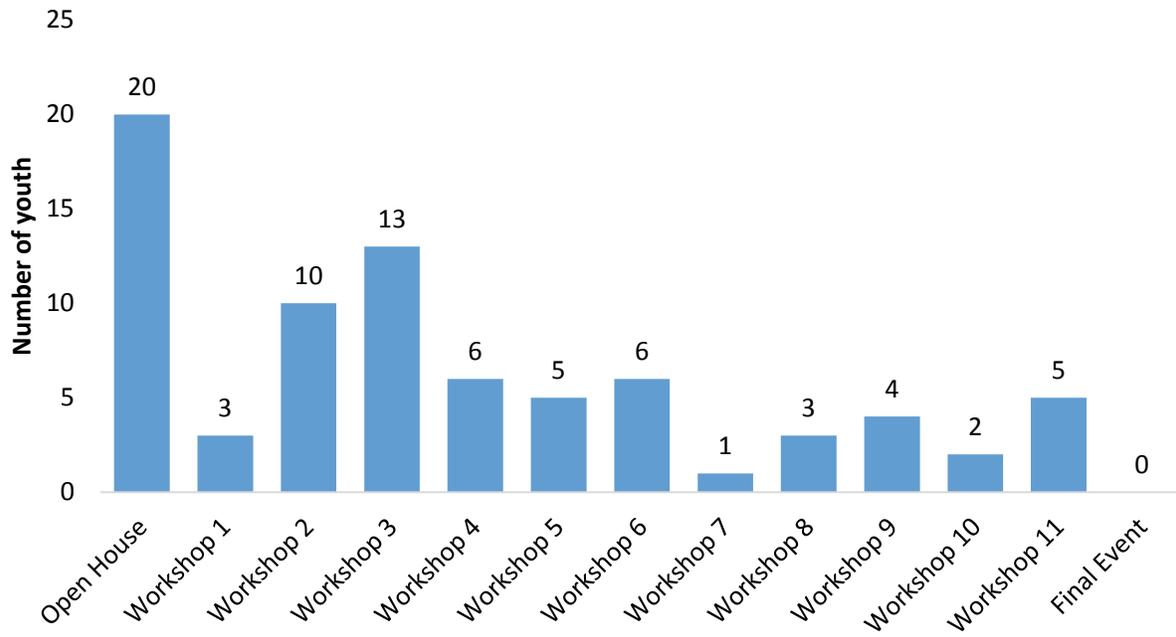
FAME AIRBRUSH (BEDFORD-STUYVESANT)

Spring 2017 Round – Attendance Analysis Part Two

When we excluded the Open House and Final Event from the attendance analysis, the average percent of workshops attended by youth participants increased to 22 percent.

Table FA4. At a glance - attendance summary

Total number of youth participants	24
Range of youth workshop attendance	1 to 10
Average number of workshops attended	2.4
Average percent of workshops attended	22%

Table FA5 shows the total number of workshops, and the corresponding percentage of workshops, each youth participant attended out of the 16 workshops offered.

Table FA5. Attendance by individual youth participant

Westat-generated ID number	Total workshops attended	Percent of workshops attended
8001	2	0%
8002	10	3%
8003	1	6%
8004	7	0%
8005	0	3%
8006	0	3%
8007	0	6%
8008	0	32%
8009	3	3%
8010	0	23%
8011	0	0%
8012	0	0%
8013	1	0%
8014	2	0%
8015	1	10%
8016	1	0%
8017	1	0%
8018	2	0%
8019	1	3%
8020	1	6%
8021	1	3%

Westat-generated ID number	Total workshops attended	Percent of workshops attended
8022	1	3%
8023	1	3%
8024	2	6%
8025	1	3%
8026	1	3%
8027	1	3%
8028	7	23%
8029	1	3%
8030	1	3%
8031	4	13%
8032	4	13%
8033	2	6%

In addition to reviewing the number of workshops each participant attended, we also examined how many youth participants were present at each workshop. Table FA6 lists the numbers of youth participants per workshop and Figure FA2 illustrates the pattern of workshop attendance.

Table FA6. Number of youth participants at each workshop

Workshop	Number of participants
Workshop 1	3
Workshop 2	10
Workshop 3	13
Workshop 4	6
Workshop 5	5
Workshop 6	6
Workshop 7	1
Workshop 8	3
Workshop 9	4
Workshop 10	2
Workshop 11	5

Figure FA2. Workshop attendance pattern
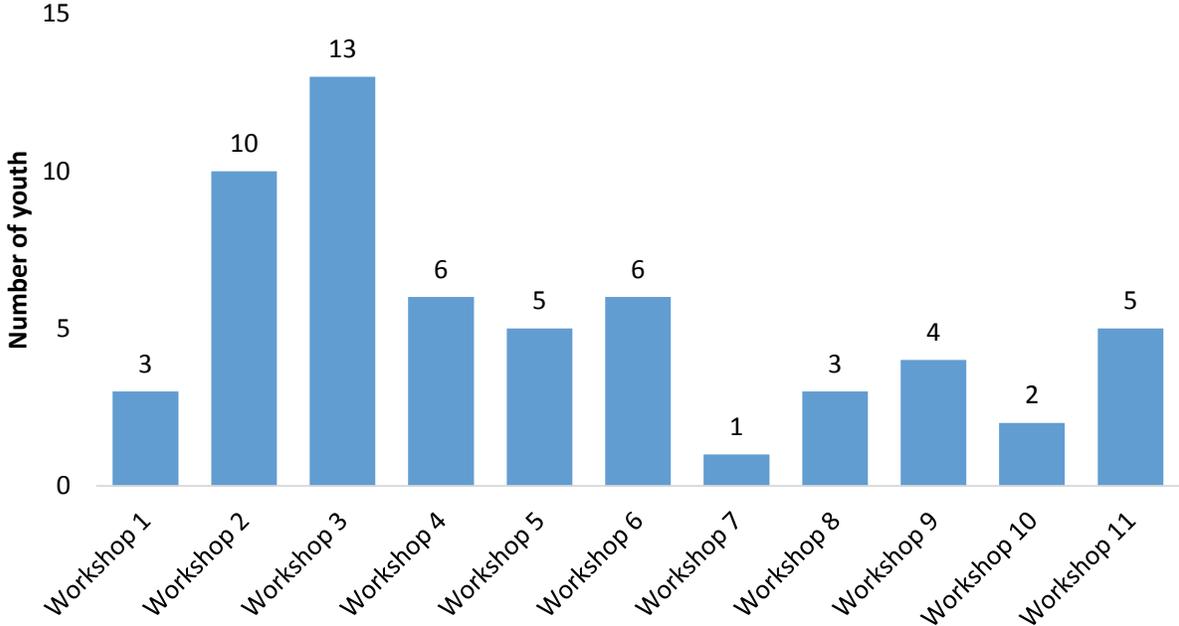
FAME AIRBRUSH (JAMAICA)
Spring 2017 Round – Attendance Analysis Part One

Fame Airbrush (Jamaica) hosted an Open House, 10 workshops, and a Final event, which occurred during the last week of the program. The program ran from April 17 to June 30, 2017 (comprising 12 workshops total). If we count all youth who attended at least one workshop, there were 29 youth participants. The number of workshops attended by youth ranged from 1 (low attendance) to 6 (high attendance). The average number of workshops attended by youth was 1.8. Given that there were 12 workshops total, on average, participants attended 15 percent of all workshops offered.

Table FAJ1. At a glance - attendance summary

Total number of youth participants	29
Range of youth workshop attendance	1 to 6
Average number of workshops attended	1.8
Average percent of workshops attended	15%

Table FAJ2 shows the total number of workshops, and the corresponding percentage of workshop, each youth participant attended out of the total 12 workshops offered.

Table FAJ2. Attendance by individual youth participant

Westat-generated ID number	Total workshops attended	Percent of workshops attended
5001	5	42%
5002	6	50%
5003	1	8%
5004	3	25%
5005	4	33%
5006	1	8%
5007	3	25%
5008	2	17%
5009	2	17%
5010	2	17%
5011	1	8%
5012	1	8%
5013	1	8%
5014	1	8%
5015	1	8%
5016	1	8%

Westat-generated ID number	Total workshops attended	Percent of workshops attended
5017	1	8%
5018	1	8%
5019	3	25%
5020	1	8%
5021	1	8%
5022	1	8%
5023	2	17%
5024	3	25%
5025	1	8%
5026	1	8%
5027	1	8%
5028	1	8%
5029	1	8%

In addition to describing the number of workshops each youth participant attended, we also examined how many youth participants were present at each workshop. Table FAJ3 lists the number of youth participants per workshop and Figure FAJ1 illustrates the pattern of workshop attendance.

Table FAJ3. Number of youth participants at each workshop

Workshop	Number of participants
Open House	10
Workshop 1	16
Workshop 2	12
Workshop 3	3
Workshop 4	5
Workshop 5	7
Workshop 6	0
Workshop 7	0
Workshop 8	0
Workshop 9	0
Workshop 10	0
Final Event	0

In addition to describing the number of workshops each youth participant attended, we also examined how many youth participants were present at each workshop. Table FAJ4 lists the number of youth participants per workshop and Figure FAJ2 illustrates the pattern of workshop attendance.

Figure FAJ1. Workshop attendance pattern
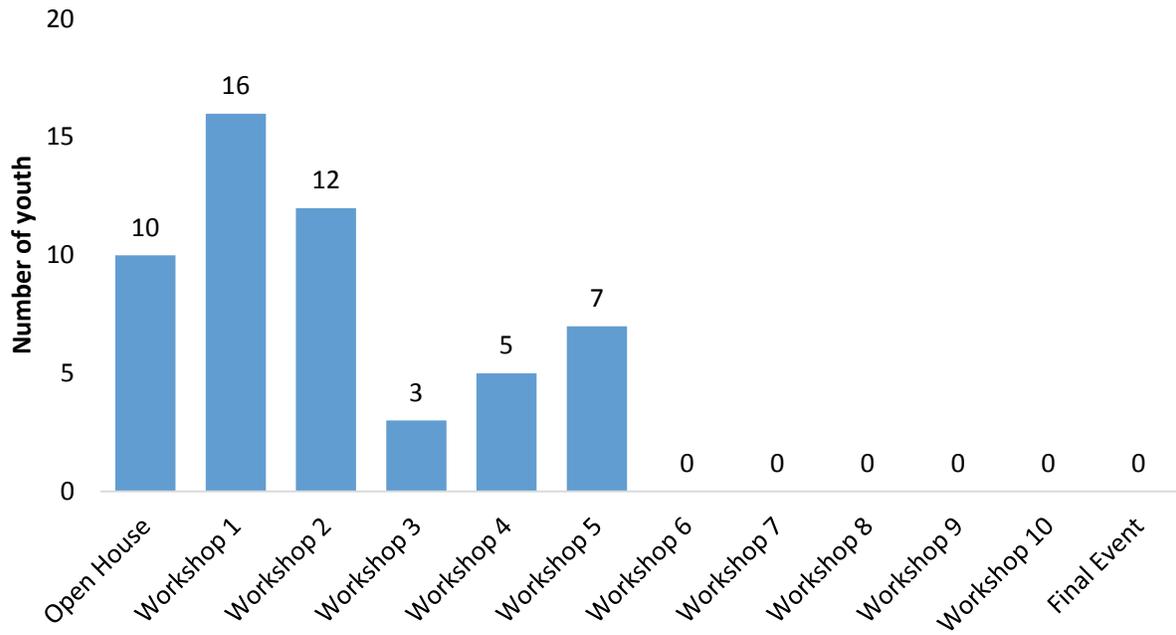
Figure FAJ1 shows that Workshop 1 had the highest attendance with 16 youth participants. However, the number of youth in attendance dropped to 12 for Workshop 2 and then to 3 for Workshop 3. Attendance rose during Workshop 4 and Workshop 5, but no youth participated after Workshop 5.

FAME AIRBRUSH (JAMAICA)

Spring 2017 Round – Attendance Analysis Part Two

When we excluded the Open House and Final Event from the attendance analysis, the average percent of workshops attended by youth participants increased to 13 percent.

Table FAJ4. At a glance - attendance summary

Total number of youth participants	27
Range of youth workshop attendance	1 to 5
Average number of workshops attended	1.6
Average percent of workshops attended	13%

Table FAJ5 shows the total number of workshops, and the corresponding percentage of workshops, each youth participant attended out of the 10 workshops offered.

Table FAJ5. Attendance by individual youth participant

Westat-generated ID number	Total workshops attended	Percent of workshops attended
5001	4	40%
5002	5	50%
5003	2	20%
5004	3	30%
5005	2	20%
5006	1	10%
5007	1	10%
5008	1	10%
5009	1	10%
5010	1	10%
5011	1	10%
5012	1	10%
5013	1	10%
5014	1	10%
5015	1	10%
5016	1	10%
5017	3	30%
5018	1	10%
5019	1	10%
5020	1	10%

Westat-generated ID number	Total workshops attended	Percent of workshops attended
5021	2	20%
5022	3	30%
5023	1	10%
5024	1	10%
5025	1	10%
5026	1	10%
5027	1	10%

In addition to reviewing the number of workshops each participant attended, we also examined how many youth participants were present at each workshop. Table FAJ6 lists the number of youth participants per workshop and Figure FAJ2 illustrates the pattern of workshop attendance.

Table FAJ 6. Number of youth participants at each workshop

Workshop	Number of participants
Workshop 1	16
Workshop 2	12
Workshop 3	3
Workshop 4	5
Workshop 5	7
Workshop 6	0
Workshop 7	0
Workshop 8	0
Workshop 9	0
Workshop 10	0

Figure FAJ2. Workshop attendance pattern
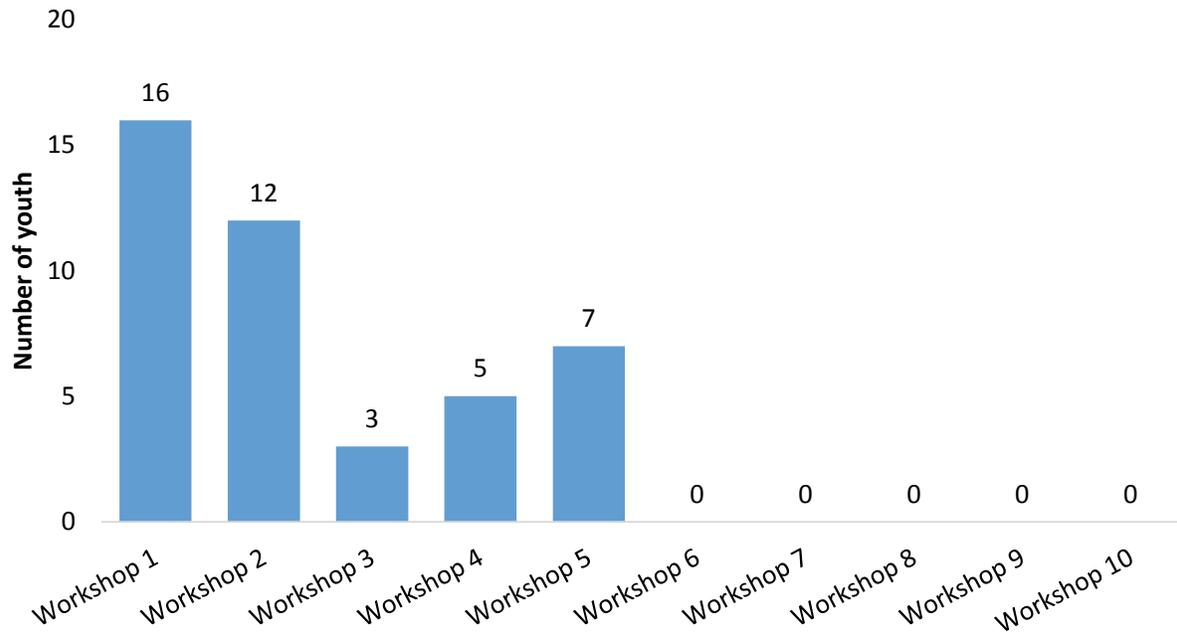
FREE VERSE (BROWNSVILLE)

Spring 2017 Round – Attendance Analysis Part One

Free Verse at Brownsville hosted an Open House, 30 weekly workshops, a Final Event, which occurred during the last workshop. The program ran from November 2016 to June 2017 with 32 workshops (Open House and Final Event included). If we count all youth who attended at least one workshop, there were 44 youth participants. The numbers of workshops attended by youth range from 1 (low attendance) to 21 (high attendance). The average number of workshops attended by youth was 4.3. Given that there were 32 workshops total, on average, participants attended 13 percent of all workshops offered.

Table FV1. At a glance - attendance summary

Total number of youth participants	44
Range of youth workshop attendance	1 to 21
Average number of workshops attended	4.3
Average percent of workshops attended	13%

Table FV2 shows the total number of workshops, and the corresponding percentage of workshops, each youth participant attended out of the 32 workshops offered.

Table FV2. Attendance by individual youth participant

Westat-generated ID number	Total workshops attended	Percent of workshops attended
2001	5	15%
2002	21	64%
2003	1	3%
2004	5	15%
2005	8	24%
2006	2	6%
2007	4	12%
2008	9	27%
2009	13	39%
2010	14	42%
2011	8	24%
2012	5	15%
2013	9	27%
2014	4	12%
2015	4	12%
2016	8	24%

Westat-generated ID number	Total workshops attended	Percent of workshops attended
2017	2	6%
2018	2	6%
2019	2	6%
2020	2	6%
2021	1	3%
2022	3	9%
2023	4	12%
2024	1	3%
2025	4	12%
2026	5	15%
2027	2	6%
2028	2	6%
2029	1	3%
2030	2	6%
2031	2	6%
2032	2	6%
2033	2	6%
2034	3	9%
2035	3	9%
2036	2	6%
2037	2	6%
2038	2	6%
2039	1	3%
2040	1	3%
2041	1	3%
2042	7	21%
2043	3	9%
2044	3	9%

In addition to describing the number of workshops each youth participant attended, we also examined how many participants were present at each workshop. Table FV3 lists the number of participants per workshop and Figure FV1 illustrates the pattern of workshop attendance.

Table FV3. Number of youth participants at each workshop

Workshop	Number of participants	Workshop	Number of participants
Open House	3	Workshop 16	9
Workshop 1	8	Workshop 17	1
Workshop 2	9	Workshop 18	1
Workshop 3	11	Workshop 19	1
Workshop 4	0	Workshop 20	0
Workshop 5	10	Workshop 21	0
Workshop 6	11	Workshop 22	4

Workshop	Number of participants	Workshop	Number of participants
Workshop 7	10	Workshop 23	1
Workshop 8	10	Workshop 24	4
Workshop 9	11	Workshop 25	5
Workshop 10	7	Workshop 26	3
Workshop 11	9	Workshop 27	1
Workshop 12	7	Workshop 28	4
Workshop 13	15	Workshop 29	5
Workshop 14	9	Workshop 30	4
Workshop 15	10	Final Event	4

Figure FV1 shows that the first half of the program had greater attendance than the latter half, and that after Workshop 17, attendance dropped considerably and remained low until the final workshop.

Figure FV1. Workshop attendance pattern
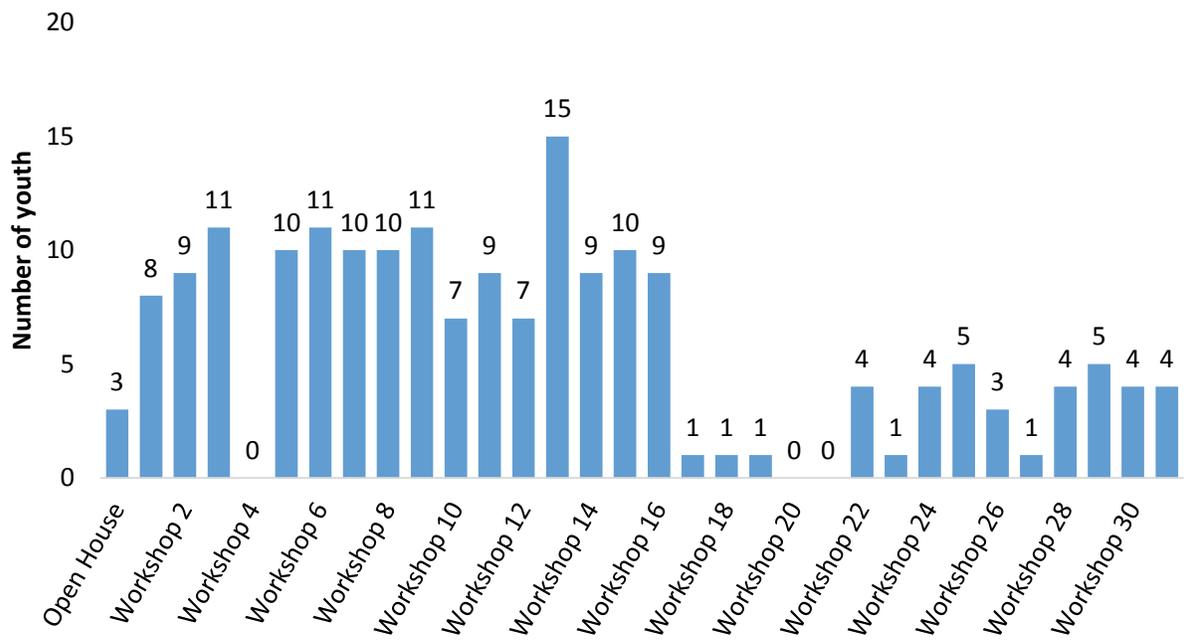
FREE VERSE (BROWNSVILLE)

Spring 2017 Round – Attendance Analysis Part Two

When we excluded Open House and Final Event from the attendance analysis, the average percent of workshops attended by youth participants increased to 14 percent.

Table FV4. At a glance - attendance summary

Total number of youth participants	44
Range of youth workshop attendance	1 to 20
Average number of workshops attended	4.1
Average percent of workshops attended	14%

Table FV5 shows the total number of workshops, and the corresponding percentage of workshops, each youth participant attended out of the 30 workshops offered.

Table FV5. Attendance by individual youth participant

Westat-generated ID number	Total workshops attended	Percent of workshops attended
2001	5	17%
2002	20	67%
2003	1	3%
2004	5	17%
2005	8	27%
2006	2	7%
2007	4	13%
2008	8	27%
2009	12	40%
2010	12	40%
2011	8	27%
2012	5	17%
2013	9	30%
2014	4	13%
2015	4	13%
2016	8	27%
2017	2	7%
2018	2	7%
2019	2	7%
2020	2	7%
2021	1	3%

Westat-generated ID number	Total workshops attended	Percent of workshops attended
2022	3	10%
2023	4	13%
2024	1	3%
2025	4	13%
2026	5	17%
2027	2	7%
2028	2	7%
2029	1	3%
2030	2	7%
2031	2	7%
2032	2	7%
2033	2	7%
2034	3	10%
2035	3	10%
2036	2	7%
2037	2	7%
2038	2	7%
2039	1	3%
2040	1	3%
2041	1	3%
2042	7	23%
2043	2	7%
2044	2	7%

Table FV6. Number of youth participants at each workshop

Workshop	Number of participants	Workshop	Number of participants
Workshop 1	8	Workshop 16	9
Workshop 2	9	Workshop 17	1
Workshop 3	11	Workshop 18	1
Workshop 4	0	Workshop 19	1
Workshop 5	10	Workshop 20	0
Workshop 6	11	Workshop 21	0
Workshop 7	10	Workshop 22	4
Workshop 8	10	Workshop 23	1
Workshop 9	11	Workshop 24	4
Workshop 10	7	Workshop 25	5
Workshop 11	9	Workshop 26	3
Workshop 12	7	Workshop 27	1
Workshop 13	15	Workshop 28	4
Workshop 14	9	Workshop 29	5
Workshop 15	10	Workshop 30	4

Figure FV2. Workshop attendance pattern
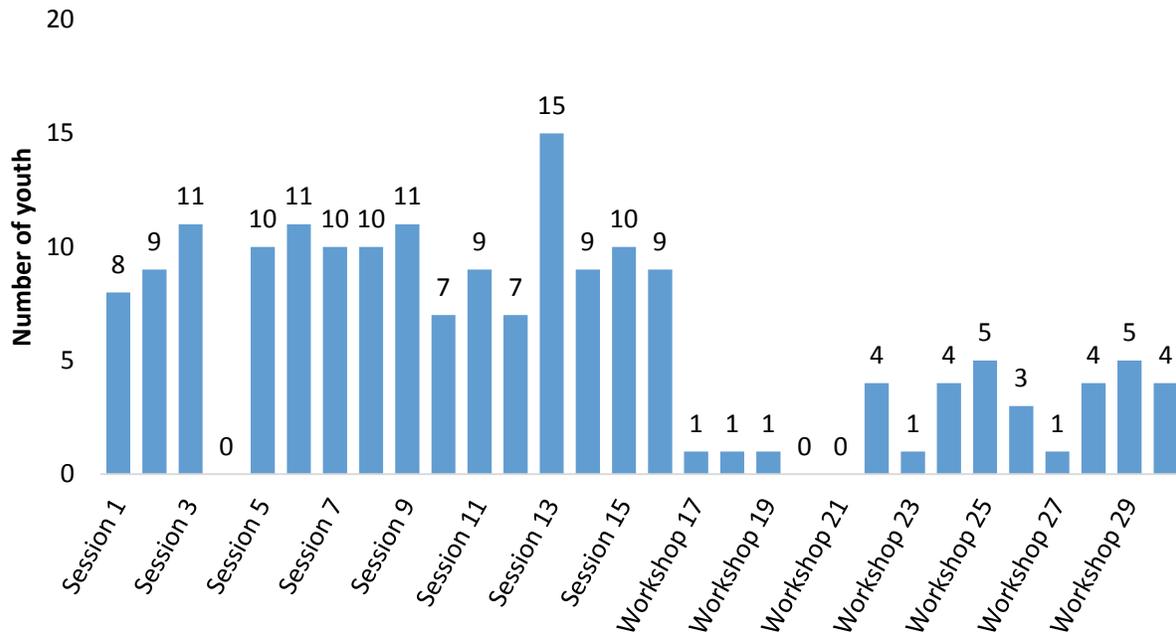
FREE VERSE (SOUTH BRONX)
Spring 2017 Round – Attendance Analysis Part One

Free Verse (South Bronx) hosted an Open House, 16 workshops, and a Final Event, which occurred during the last week of the program. The program ran from March 2 to June 30. 2017 (comprising 18 workshops total). If we count all youth who attended at least one workshop, there were 35 youth participants. The number of workshops attended by youth ranged from 1 (low attendance) to 18 (high attendance). The average number of workshops attended by youth was 9.7. Given that there were 18 workshops total, on average, participants attended 54 percent of all workshops offered.

Table FVB1. At a glance - attendance summary

Total number of youth participants	35
Range of youth workshop attendance	1 to 18
Average number of workshops attended	9.7
Average percent of workshops attended	54%

Table FVB2 shows the total number of workshops, and the corresponding percentage of workshops, each youth participant attended out of the 18 workshops offered.

Table FVB2. Attendance by individual youth participant

Westat-generated ID number	Total workshops attended	Percent of workshops attended
7001	13	72%
7002	15	83%
7003	10	56%
7004	13	72%
7005	18	100%
7006	14	78%
7007	18	100%
7008	10	56%
7009	14	78%
7010	15	83%
7011	13	72%
7012	7	39%
7013	1	6%
7014	8	44%
7015	13	72%
7016	6	33%

Westat-generated ID number	Total workshops attended	Percent of workshops attended
7017	9	50%
7018	10	56%
7019	15	83%
7020	17	94%
7021	4	22%
7022	10	56%
7023	10	56%
7024	15	83%
7025	15	83%
7026	12	67%
7027	13	72%
7028	9	50%
7029	1	6%
7030	3	17%
7031	3	17%
7032	1	6%
7033	1	6%
7034	1	6%
7035	1	6%

In addition to describing the number of workshops each youth participant attended, we also examined how many youth participants were present at each workshop. Table FVB3 lists the number of youth participants per workshop and Figure FVB1 illustrates the patter of workshop attendance.

Table FVB3. Number of youth participants at each workshop

Workshop	Number of participants
Open House	27
Workshop 1	20
Workshop 2	22
Workshop 3	20
Workshop 4	23
Workshop 5	25
Workshop 6	20
Workshop 7	25
Workshop 8	22
Workshop 9	26
Workshop 10	12
Workshop 11	17
Workshop 12	12
Workshop 13	14
Workshop 14	10
Workshop 15	18
Workshop 16	15
Final Event	10

Figure FVB1 shows that the Open House had the highest attendance with 27 participants. Workshop 14 and the Final Event had the lowest attendance with 10 participants each. After workshop 9, the number of participants began to fall; the second half of the program, in general, had lower attendance compared to the first half of the program.

Figure FVB1. Workshop attendance pattern
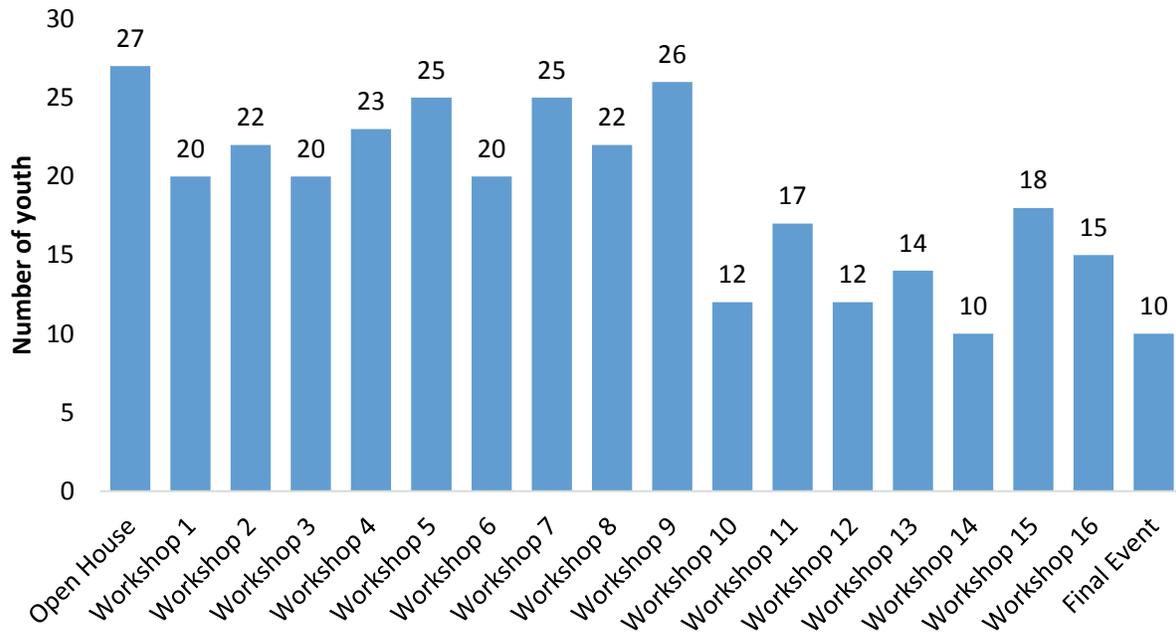
FREE VERSE (SOUTH BRONX)

Spring 2017 Round – Attendance Analysis Part Two

When we excluded the Open House and Final Event from the attendance analysis, the average percent of workshops attended by youth participants increased to 55 percent.

Table FVB4. At a glance - attendance summary

Total number of youth participants	34
Range of youth workshop attendance	1 to 16
Average number of workshops attended	8.9
Average percent of workshops attended	55%

Table FVB5 shows the total number of workshops, and the corresponding percentage of workshops, each youth participant attended out of the total 16 workshops offered.

Table FVB5. Attendance by individual youth participant

Westat-generated ID number	Total workshops attended	Percent of workshops attended
7001	12	75%
7002	14	88%
7003	9	56%
7004	11	69%
7005	16	100%
7006	13	81%
7007	16	100%
7008	8	50%
7009	12	75%
7010	14	88%
7011	11	69%
7012	6	38%
7013	0	0%
7014	7	44%
7015	12	75%
7016	5	31%
7017	7	44%
7018	9	56%
7019	14	88%
7020	16	100%
7021	4	25%

| Westat-generated ID number	Total workshops attended	Percent of workshops attended
7022	8	50%
7023	9	56%
7024	14	88%
7025	14	88%
7026	10	63%
7027	11	69%
7028	8	50%
7029	1	6%
7030	3	19%
7031	3	19%
7032	1	6%
7033	1	6%
7034	1	6%
7035	1	6%

In addition to reviewing the number of workshops each youth participant attended, we also examined how many youth participants were present at each workshop. Table FVB6 lists the number of youth participants per workshop. Given that workshop capacity was 15 participants, we also calculated the percent of capacity for each workshop (number of participants divided by 15). Figure FVB2 illustrates the pattern of workshop attendance.

Table FVB6. Number of youth participants at each workshop

Workshop	Number of participants
Workshop 1	20
Workshop 2	22
Workshop 3	20
Workshop 4	23
Workshop 5	25
Workshop 6	20
Workshop 7	25
Workshop 8	22
Workshop 9	26
Workshop 10	12
Workshop 11	17
Workshop 12	12
Workshop 13	14
Workshop 14	10
Workshop 15	18
Workshop 16	15

Figure FVB2 shows that Workshop 9 had the highest attendance with 26 participants. Workshop 14 had the lowest attendance with 10 participants. After workshop 9, attendance began to fall; the second half of the program, in general, had lower attendance compared to the first half of the program.

Figure FVB2. Workshop attendance pattern
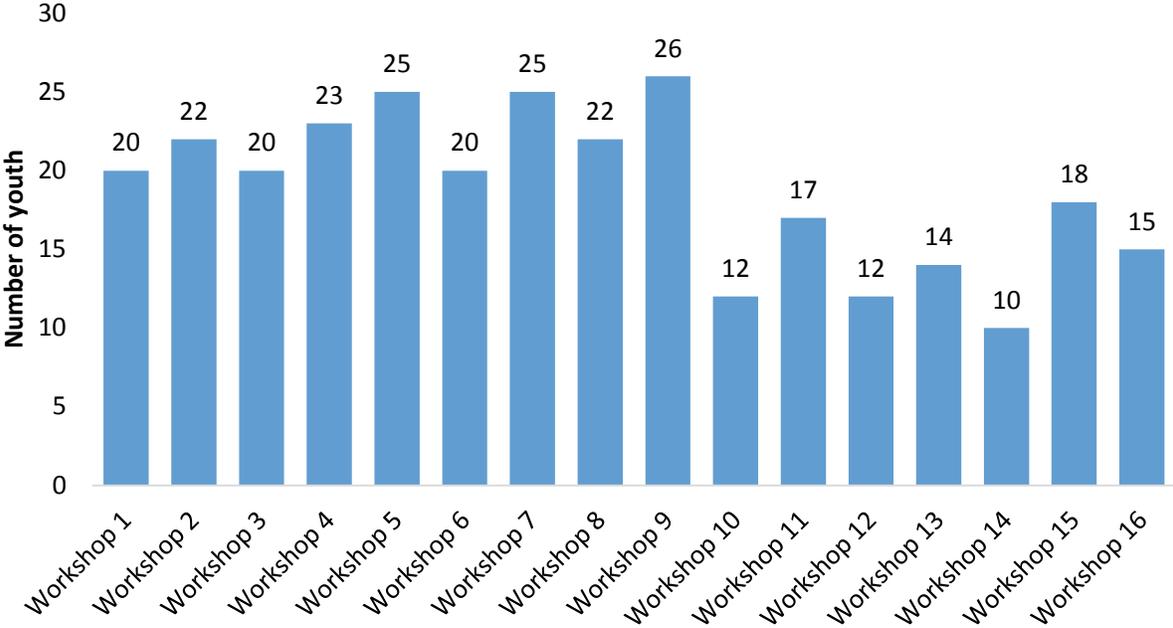
PROJECTIVITY
Spring 2017 Round – Attendance Analysis Part One

Projectivity hosted an Open House, 10 weekly workshops, and a Final Event, which occurred during the last workshop of the program. The program ran for 12 weeks, from April to June 2017 (comprising 12 workshops). If we count all youth who attended at least one workshop, there were 12 youth participants. The number of workshops attended by youth ranged from 1 (low attendance) to 10 (high attendance). The average number of workshops attended by youth was 7. Given that there were 12 workshops total, on average, participants attended 58 percent of all workshops offered.

Table P1. At a glance - attendance summary

Total number of youth participants	12
Range of youth workshop attendance	1 to 10
Average number of workshops attended	7
Average percent of workshops attended	58%

Table P2 shows the total number of workshops, and the corresponding percentage of workshops, each youth participant attended out of the12 workshops offered. At closer examination, 2 youth attended one workshop (ID #3008 attended the Open House; ID #3001 attended workshop 2). Other than these two youth, the rest of the youth participants attended 6 or more workshops. Therefore, 10 participants (83 percent) attended more than half of the workshops. Three youth (ID #3003, ID #3006 & ID #3007) were present at 10 of the 12 workshops.

Table P2. Attendance by individual youth participant

| Westat-generated ID number	Total workshops attended	Percent of workshops attended
3001	1	8%
3002	9	75%
3003	10	83%
3004	7	58%
3005	8	67%
3006	10	83%
3007	10	83%
3008	1	8%
3009	8	67%
3010	6	50%
3011	6	50%
3012	8	67%

In addition to describing the number of workshops each youth participant attended, we also examined how many youth participants were present at each workshop. Table P3 lists the number of youth participants per workshop and Figure P1 illustrates the patter of workshop attendance.

Table P3. Number of youth participants at each workshop

Workshop	Number of participants
Open House	3
Workshop 1	4
Workshop 2	5
Workshop 3	8
Workshop 4	6
Workshop 5	6
Workshop 6	6
Workshop 7	6
Workshop 8	5
Workshop 9	5
Workshop 10	7
Final Event	3

Figure P1 shows that the Open House and Final Event had the lowest attendance with 3 youth participants. By Workshop 3, the number of participants increased to 8 and remained between 5 and 7 participants per workshop until the Final Event. Three participants attended the program early on and participated consistently until the last workshop.

Figure P1. Workshop attendance pattern
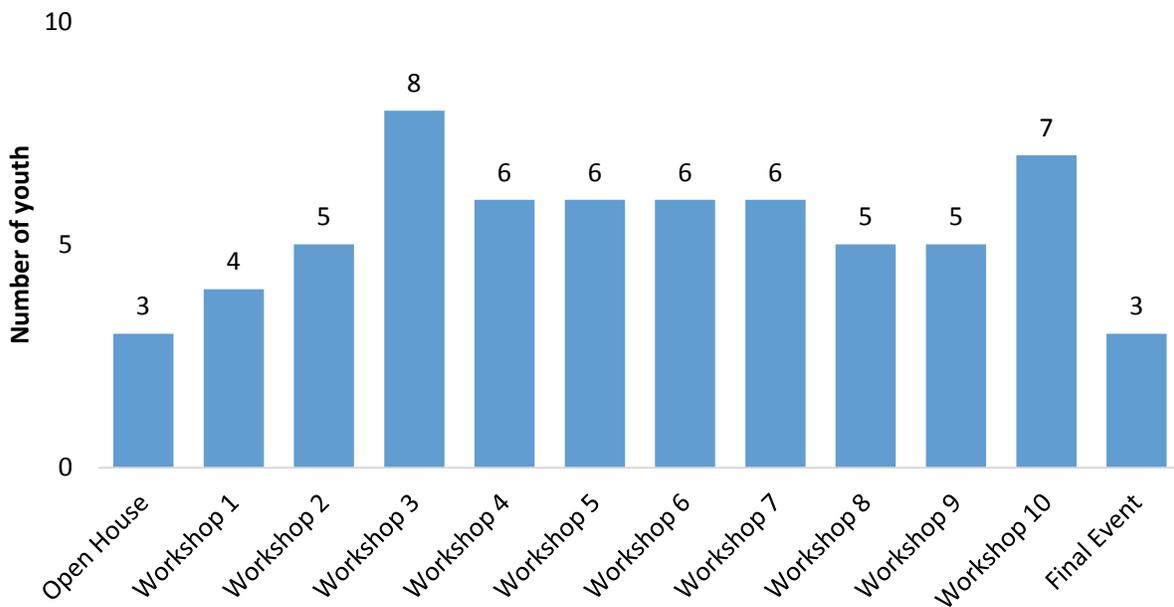
When we excluded the Open House and Final Event, the average percent of workshops attended by youth participants increased to 80 percent (an increase of 22 percentage points).

Table P4. At a glance - attendance summary

Total number of youth participants	11
Range of youth workshop attendance	1 to 10
Average number of workshops attended	8
Average percent of workshops attended	80%

Table P5 shows the total number of workshops, and the corresponding percentage of workshops, each youth participant attended out of the 10 workshops offered. All but 2 youth attended more than half of the workshops. One youth was present for all 10 workshops.

Table P5. Attendance by individual youth participant

Westat-generated ID number	Total workshops attended	Percent of workshops attended
3001	1	10%
3002	9	90%
3003	10	100%
3004	7	70%
3005	7	70%
3006	8	80%
3007	9	90%
3009	8	80%
3010	5	50%
3011	6	60%
3012	8	80%

In addition to reviewing the number of workshops each participant attended, we also examined how many youth participants were present at each workshop. Table P6 lists the number of youth participants per workshop and Figure P4 illustrates the pattern of workshop attendance.

Table P6. Number of youth participants at each workshop

Workshop	Number of participants
Workshop 1	4
Workshop 2	5
Workshop 3	8
Workshop 4	6
Workshop 5	6
Workshop 6	6
Workshop 7	6
Workshop 8	5
Workshop 9	5
Workshop 10	7

Figure P2. Workshop attendance pattern