

Strengthening Networks, Sparking Change:  
Museums and Libraries as Community Catalysts

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2016



## Acknowledgements

This report was made possible with generous support from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). Reinvestment Fund Policy Solutions is grateful for the guidance and support of IMLS Director Dr. Kathryn K. Matthew, along with Christopher Reich, Dr. Marvin Carr, Sarah Fuller, and the rest of the IMLS staff for their engagement with this project over the past six months. We would also like to thank those museums and libraries who hosted site visits and provided valuable insights to inform the study: the Delta Blues Museum in Clarksdale, MS; The Topeka-Shawnee County Public Library in Topeka, KS; The Queens Museum in New York City; and the Free Library of Philadelphia. We also greatly appreciate those museum and library staff members who participated in phone interviews during the course of our research, expanding its breadth and depth. We are truly grateful for the guidance and suggestions provided on multiple versions of the report from a panel of external subject matter experts, which greatly enhanced the quality of the final report. Finally, we are very grateful for the active involvement of the Town Hall participants, who came from all corners of the country to review the draft document and provide constructive feedback and critical guidance on this project.

This report was greatly enhanced by the contributions of Reinvestment Fund and Social Impact of the Arts staff. We especially appreciate the oversight provided by Dr. Ira Goldstein, President of Policy Solutions; and Dr. Mark Stern, Director of Social Impact for the Arts Program and Kenneth L. M. Pray Professor of Social Policy and History at the University of Pennsylvania. We also want to acknowledge the valuable research assistance we received from Colin Weidig, Jacob Rosch, and Adam Steinberg.

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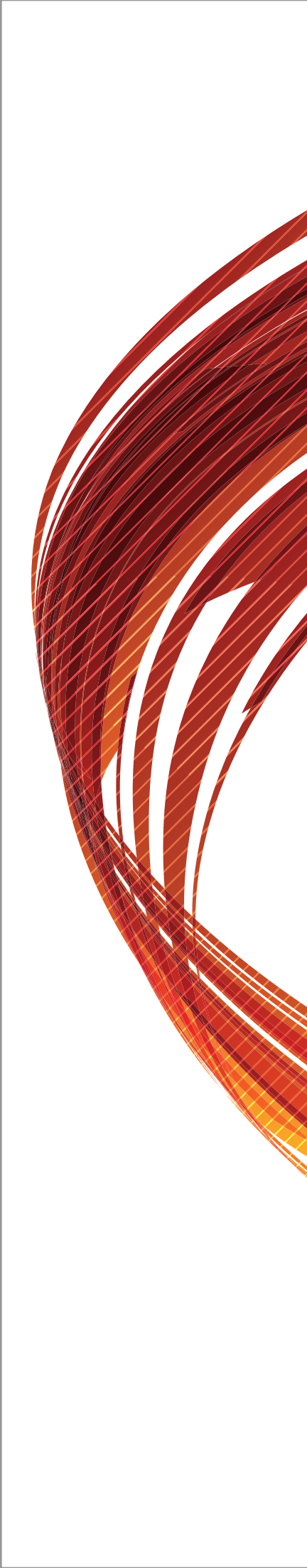
# Strengthening Networks, Sparking Change: MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES AS COMMUNITY CATALYSTS

Museums and libraries have long served as place-based hubs for members of the public to engage in informal learning, access collections for educational or aesthetic purposes, and participate in civic dialogue. Across the country, changing community needs and priorities along with new modes of engagement have created an imperative to connect with and serve the public in ways that extend beyond traditional institutional formats and settings. Museums and libraries have begun to respond to this imperative. In so doing, they are connecting with the public in new and deeper ways, strengthening the social and institutional networks that support community wellbeing, and even acting as catalysts to spark positive change.

There is great variety in the museums-and-libraries field that affects how and why any individual institution serves its community and the resources it brings to the table. There are sectoral differences, a primary one being a public-private distinction that has consequences for fiscal stability and the types of engagements institutions pursue. Public libraries are free resources, open to and funded in large part by the public, and typically part of municipal or county governments. On the other hand, museums are often private organizations that charge admission.

There are also important commonalities across the two sectors. Many museum and library professionals noted that sectoral divisions can feel less consequential than staff size, location (urban, rural, or suburban), relationships to other local institutions, and other elements of institutional structure or setting. Institutions also define the communities they serve in different ways: from a strictly geographic understanding (zip code, neighborhood, and city) to communities of experience (new Americans) to communities of interest (historic-car enthusiasts). Despite this diversity, museums and libraries of all shapes and sizes share a number of features that make them well situated as catalysts for positive change: they are embedded in local communities; they have a public service orientation; and they are viewed as community assets.

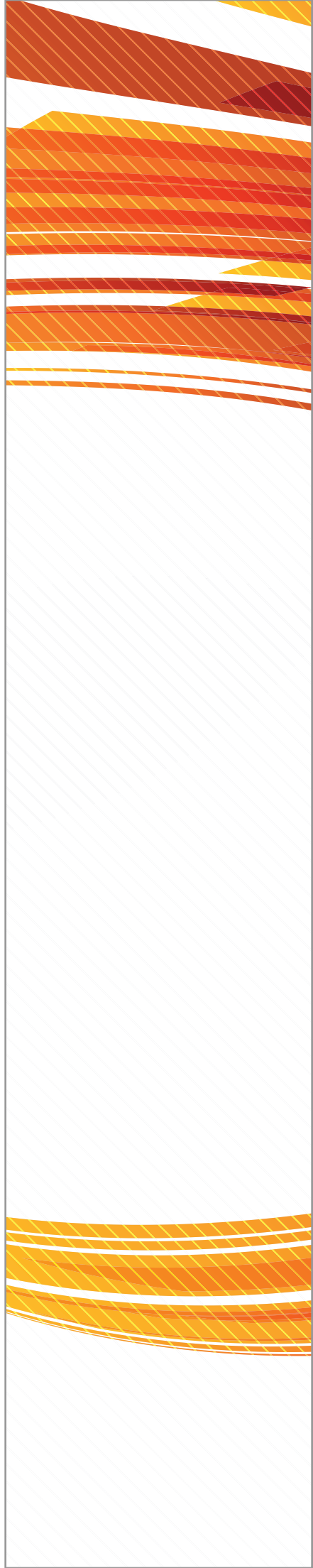




Together with the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), Reinvestment Fund and the University of Pennsylvania’s Social Impact of the Arts Project surveyed the range of ways museums and libraries of all types strive to address community challenges, on their own or through strategic partnerships, and even spark change. The effort began with the creation of a “conversation-starter” document based on the review of a wide array of literature (academic articles, IMLS grantee reports, and published external evaluations of library and museum initiatives), site visits to four museums and libraries actively engaged with their communities, and phone interviews with museum and library staff from across the country. In addition, Reinvestment Fund’s Policy Advisory Board, along with a panel of subject matter experts from relevant fields such as philanthropy, higher education, and nonprofit management, also provided substantive feedback on multiple drafts of the document. The examples and insights compiled were presented in draft form at a town hall gathering of more than 60 leaders from museums, libraries, universities, foundations, government agencies, and related community service sectors. Feedback from town hall participants was reviewed and synthesized by the research team in this report.

This document brings together the preliminary literature and practice survey with the experiences and vision of those working to spur change in their communities every day. It catalogs how these efforts are initiated and sustained; the tools and methods available to assess community need and evaluate impact; and the skills and competencies required to implement and sustain new efforts successfully. It also uses the concepts of social wellbeing and collective impact to situate museums and libraries as critical sites within broader institutional and interpersonal networks of community resources. These are complementary conceptual frameworks to help museums and libraries contextualize and tailor their efforts to catalyze positive change.





The document is divided into the following sections:

- The Introduction traces the increasing importance of anchor institutions (typically universities and hospitals) to contextualize the evolving efforts of museums and libraries and the broad content areas in which they are expanding their activities. It also presents the social wellbeing and collective impact frameworks that are referenced throughout the document.
- The Continuum of Museum and Library Community Initiatives describes the types of efforts that can improve social wellbeing for residents. This section catalogs key considerations for museums and libraries as they design community-focused efforts.
- Understanding Assets and Challenges, and Evaluating Impact summarizes effective methods for assessing community assets, needs, and approaches to evaluating the impact of museum and library efforts to promote the wellbeing of their communities.
- Building Capacity to Support and Spark Change reviews the requisite skills and competencies required of community-centered institutions and provides considerations for obtaining them through staff development, hiring practices, or partnership.
- The Conclusion summarizes key themes from each section to highlight opportunities for museums and libraries to catalyze change in their communities going forward.



## I. INTRODUCTION

**Comanche artist Tim Tate Nevaquaya performs at an educational event at the Comanche National Museum and Cultural Center (CNMCC) in Lawton, Oklahoma. CNMCC is committed to educating the public about the great Comanche Nation. Photo Courtesy CNMCC©**

## A. Learning from Anchor Institutions

The experience of other institutions' efforts to collaboratively improve local communities can provide instructive insight for museums and libraries as they become more engaged in similar activities. "Anchor institutions" (typically universities and hospitals) often play this role. Over time, their engagement with communities has expanded and diversified, which has spurred these anchors to develop new ways to understand the impact of their activities.

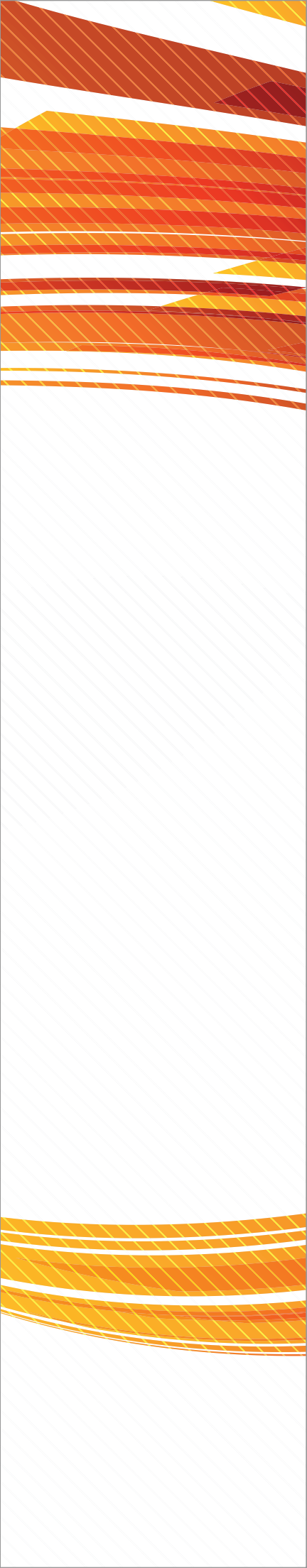
The concept of anchor institutions emerged relatively recently. Until the late 20th century, traditional economic anchors in big cities and small towns alike tended to be locally headquartered companies. The wages and taxes of their employees drove local economies and their executives influenced the social and economic development of their communities through philanthropy and by sitting on local planning commissions and the boards of local cultural organizations. Across the country, the influence and impact of locally based companies have drastically declined as large-scale manufacturing has become automated or relocated overseas, and the companies that remain are more mobile due to changing leadership preferences, job markets, and tax incentives.

"Anchor institutions" have evolved to fill the resulting gap, becoming those organizations around which localities could re-build their economies. Anchor institutions have been defined by the following features: 1) spatial immobility; 2) a job base that is large and diverse (by education and skill set); 3) nonprofit status; and 4) a public service mission.<sup>1</sup> Typically these are higher education and medical institutions (i.e., eds and meds). Related private sector industries such as biotechnology, advanced manufacturing, and hospitality can thrive around these place-based anchors.

As anchor institutions have taken on more significant roles economically, they have also become increasingly engaged in their local communities in ways that transcend the traditional educational and medical services they provide. Through outreach, satellite services, and local partnerships, universities and hospitals have extended the reach of their core services to places beyond their main campus locations, created new opportunities for people to access their resources, and become involved with activities not formally related to







their primary mission—such as urban redevelopment or supporting early childhood education.

Among colleges and universities, this movement has evolved from a commitment of direct public service and charity to a model of embedded engagement in their local communities. Indeed, the Carnegie Foundation has established standards for what it means to be a civically engaged institution—creating a framework for colleges and universities to understand where their work falls along a broader spectrum of outreach and collaboration.<sup>2</sup>

Hospitals have also expanded their reach—they now provide services like flu shots and cancer screenings in neighborhoods through satellite offices or mobile health clinics. They support youth health and safety in partnership with local school districts and work with community-based organizations to conduct public health outreach and connect with underserved populations (e.g., remote and immigrant populations). In some cases, they engage in community-based participatory research with local organizations to better understand how to address serious local needs, such as obesity, addiction, bullying, or youth violence.<sup>3</sup>

Anchor institutions have also made efforts to evaluate the effects of their work. For example, the Democracy Collaborative at the University of Maryland recently developed an Anchor Dashboard to provide guidance for assessing the impact of anchor institutions in two different areas: 1) impacts on community conditions (e.g., housing affordability, health indicators); and 2) impacts of institutional effort (e.g., dollars spent, procurement shifted, people hired) across 12 outcome areas.<sup>4</sup>

Although museums and libraries are not anchor institutions in a strict sense (because, for example, generally they do not employ as many people as universities and hospitals), they do have some traits in common. Museums and libraries tend to be place-based, perceived as public assets, and have a public service mission. These commonalities make tools like the Anchor Dashboard and the Carnegie Foundation’s standards for civically engaged institutions useful resources for museums and libraries. The following sections move beyond the anchor model to introduce two conceptual frameworks for museums and libraries to think about their engagement with local communities, social wellbeing and collective impact.

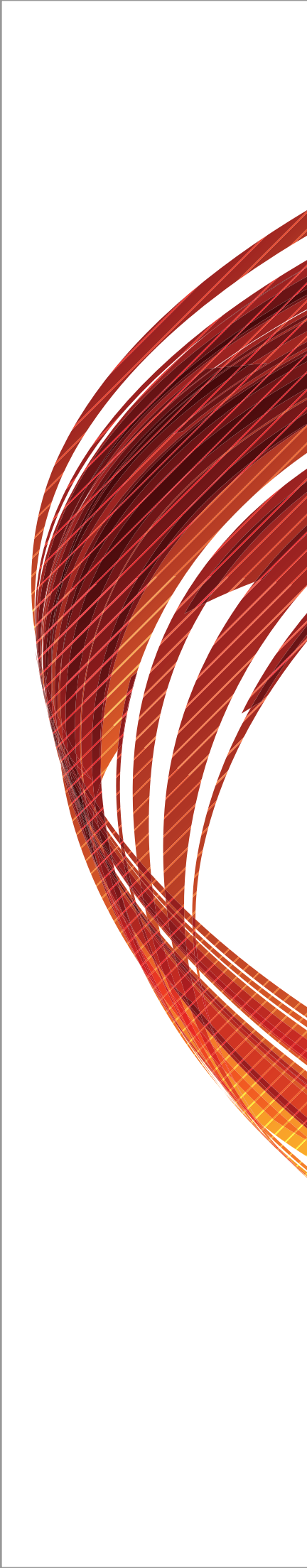


## B. Promoting Social Wellbeing

The concept of multidimensional social wellbeing emerged from a movement in the United States and abroad to look beyond economic outputs to assess the relative wellness of individuals, communities, and nations. This movement recognizes that while people value their material standard of living, other factors also matter.<sup>5</sup> Recent scholarship has taken this approach to assess social wellbeing at the neighborhood level. Adopting this approach involves understanding complex, interrelated processes along the following dimensions:<sup>6</sup>

- Economic Wellbeing: material standard of living—income, education, and labor force participation;
- Economic and Ethnic Diversity: the extent to which certain income levels and ethnic groups are concentrated or mixed in a place;
- Health: physical and mental health status as well as access to care;
- School Effectiveness: the degree to which the local school environment is conducive to learning—student achievement, dropout rates;
- Cultural Engagement: opportunities to experience one’s own cultural legacy and those of other residents;
- Housing Quality: physical and financial conditions associated with shelter—crowding, code violations, and relative cost burdens;
- Political Voice: freedom of expression and involvement in the democratic process;
- Social Connection: the presence of nonprofit organizations and cultural resources that connect at an institutional level, and the level of trust and neighborhood participation that underlie interpersonal relations;
- Environment: the quality and risks of the physical environment the presence of parks and open space, heat vulnerability, and environmental hazards;
- Insecurity: threats to physical security—violent and property crime, social tensions.





Across the country, museums and libraries are already conducting activities and forging strategic partnerships that enhance multiple dimensions of social wellbeing. The social wellbeing concept provides a framework for museums and libraries to understand the context for their community-oriented initiatives.

Promoting the wellbeing of communities along these dimensions requires multifaceted, long-term engagement on the part of diverse stakeholders. In their communities, museums and libraries are part of broader institutional and interpersonal networks that support individuals and families across many dimensions of wellbeing. Their efforts to improve social wellbeing through strategic partnerships contribute to the collective impact of these broader networks—impacts that can enhance the quality of life for all residents.

### C. Contributing to Collective Impact

Collective impact is frequently used to describe initiatives that involve multiple entities from different sectors coming together around a specific social problem with common measures of success, led by one “backbone” organization.<sup>7</sup> Libraries and museums already participate in this sort of initiative, sometimes as the backbone, but more commonly as members of a cross-sectoral team. Collective impact can also be used as a more fluid concept for thinking about the results of one institution or initiative within the totality of multiple efforts in a community to address a single challenge.

This broader understanding of collective impact provides a useful framework for museums and libraries to understand and position their work within a larger context. Collective impact also provides a language for institutions to describe their efforts to promote different dimensions of social wellbeing. There are a variety of ways that museums and libraries already contribute to collective impact across multiple dimensions of social wellbeing. These include:

1. Guiding vision and strategy;
2. Supporting aligned activities;
3. Establishing shared measurement practices;
4. Building public will;
5. Advancing policy;
6. Mobilizing funding.

The intersection of collective impact and social wellbeing is where museums and libraries can position themselves as catalysts for change: Although museums and libraries cannot eliminate social ills like poverty in a neighborhood altogether, their contributions can tip the scales across multiple dimensions of social wellbeing such as health, political voice, or social connection.

## D. Collective Impact and Social Wellbeing in Action

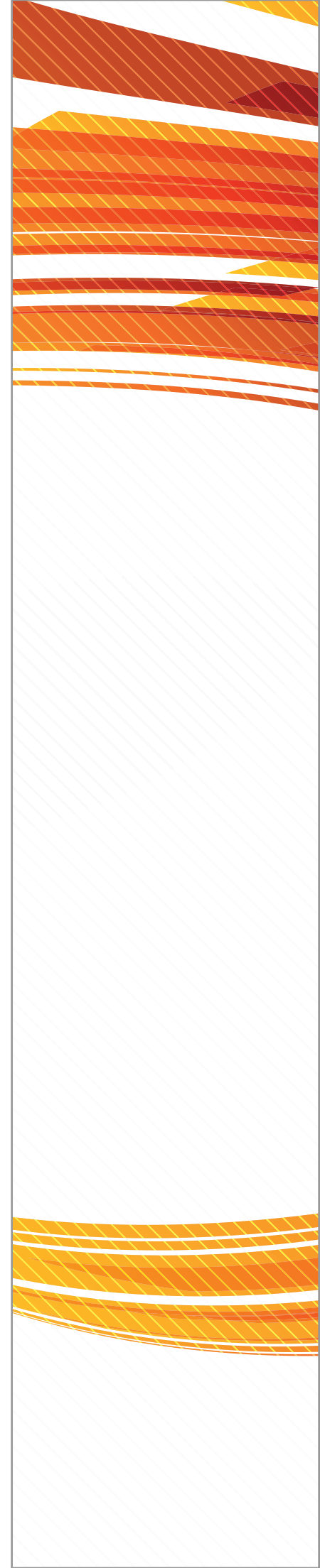
Collective impact and the multiple dimensions of social wellbeing are important concepts for understanding four areas where libraries' and museums' community-focused initiatives tend to be focused: lifelong learning and cultural engagement, economic development, physical and mental health, and place-making and the environment.<sup>8</sup> In each of these areas, museums and libraries are not the only entities working in to advance social wellbeing. Rather, their efforts contribute to the collective impact of a diverse range of actors and activities designed to meet particular challenges while also strengthening broader networks of support in their communities.

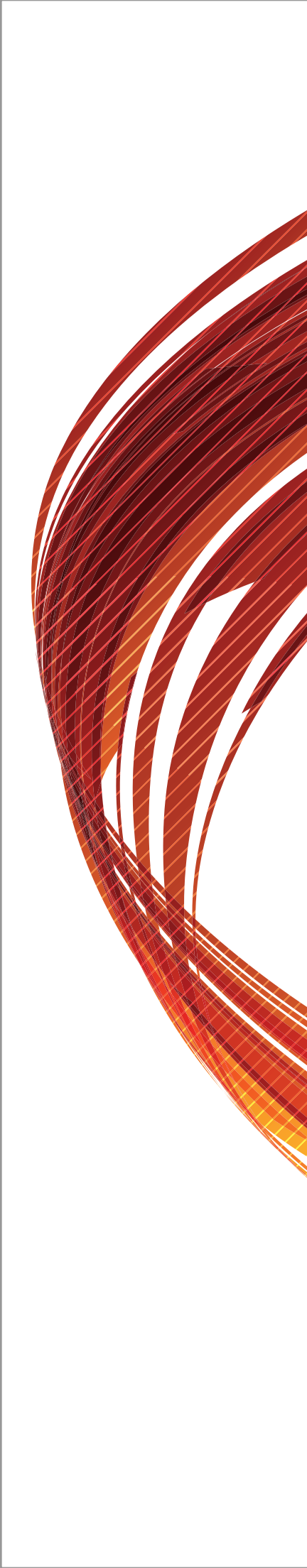
### **Lifelong Learning and Cultural Engagement**

(Social wellbeing dimensions: school effectiveness, political voice, social connection)

For museums and libraries, supporting lifelong learning and cultural life have long been core activities. Innovations in educational efforts often focus on high-need populations such as children in low-achieving schools, English language learners, individuals with intellectual or physical disabilities, or young adults without high school diplomas, and tend to focus on high-need subject areas, such as digital literacy and science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM). These initiatives can include extracurricular programming, co-development of subject-matter curriculum, co-teaching with educators, and actively participating in the selection of school leadership.

On the cultural engagement side, an increasingly diverse society provides opportunities for museums and libraries to forge relationships with regional and community-based institutions, crossing barriers of social class, race, and ability. For example, in Pennsylvania, the Lancaster Public Library established an Autism Resource Center, which has materials for tactile manipulation designed to help autistic children learn, in addition to topical books and DVDs. In Chicago,





the National Museum of Mexican Art developed a high school art and literature curriculum related to a special exhibit for local Latino students who might not visit the museum on their own.

### **Economic Development**

(Social wellbeing dimensions: economic wellbeing, economic/ethnic diversity, housing quality)

Museums and libraries support their local economies in some obvious and some much less apparent ways. They provide direct employment and generate some basic spillover effects, especially for museums that attract tourists from outside the region. Some are also becoming more intentional in how they contribute to the vitality of downtowns or cultural districts. Others are more focused on strengthening the workforce.

The Charlotte Mecklenburg Library in Charlotte, North Carolina, joined with the Children’s Theater to create ImaginOn, a combined theater and library space with collaborative programming that is now a downtown destination supporting additional commercial activity. Many libraries offer job search resources and skills training, business resource centers for entrepreneurs, and technical assistance for nonprofits and businesses. Museums are partnering with local community colleges and community development corporations to meet the job training needs of residents. Both sectors are increasingly considering economic development as a value that guides their own growth.

### **Physical and Mental Health**

(Social wellbeing dimensions: health, physical insecurity)

For most museums and libraries, physical and mental health programming represents an expansion of their core missions. With growing national concern around a range of public-health issues and epidemics, passage of the federal Affordable Care Act, and recognition that people are seeking new sources of health information, public health has become a higher priority for entities working to improve various dimensions community wellbeing. Efforts in this area range from traditional formats—a library health reference desk or a museum exhibit about nutrition—to more novel, such as on-site yoga classes and healthy snacks, and partnerships with departments of health.



In Illinois, the Waukegan Public Library designed health literacy classes for Spanish speakers that include presentations by doctors and other healthcare professionals. The Witte Museum in San Antonio, Texas, incorporated data collection into a new permanent health science learning exhibit. Visitors submit information about their health and health-related knowledge that is de-identified and shared with the San Antonio Metropolitan Health District and local health care industry leaders to provide baseline information and monitor change over time.

### **Place-making and the Environment**

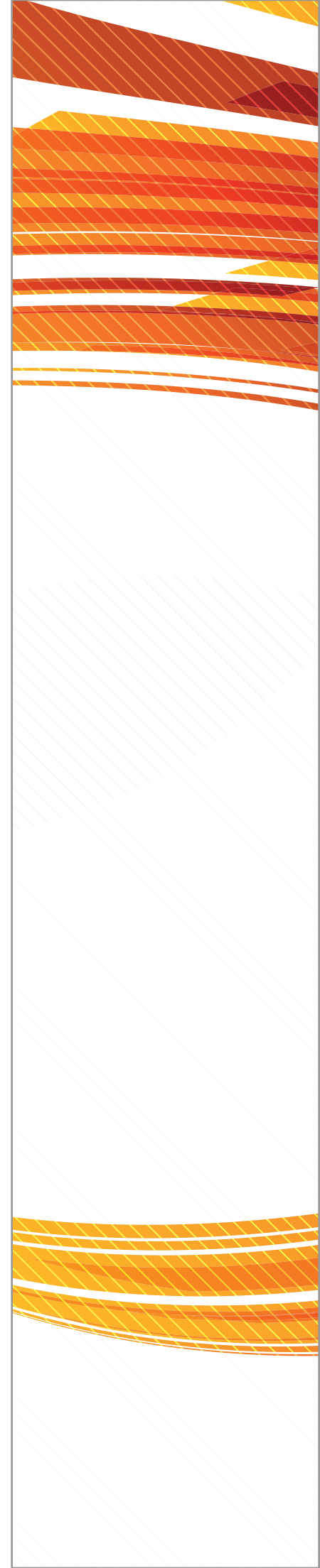
(Social wellbeing dimension: environment)

As museums and libraries extend their institutional reach beyond their walls, they are not just investing in people. They also invest in places and address environmental issues relevant to their communities.

The Studio for Public Spaces at The Exploratorium science museum in San Francisco takes learning experiences outdoors, typically in the creation of interactive exhibits in public spaces all over the city. North Carolina's Greensboro Public Library gave an environmental education focus to a new branch, which included the adoption of model practices (e.g., rainwater collection and use), targeted outreach to public housing residents, and a partnership with the local planning department to provide information about weatherization and energy savings programs for homeowners.

### ***Spotlight: Delta Blues Museum, Clarksdale, Mississippi***

The Delta Blues Museum (DBM) has influence far exceeding its modest size. The Mississippi Delta is one of the country's poorest regions but it is also renowned for its rich cultural heritage. DBM began as an informational exhibit at the local library for blues fans to learn more about the music, and has grown into an international cultural and educational destination. Tasked with telling the history of a uniquely American art form that began in the rural South and went on to influence music globally, it has evolved into an effective promoter and preserver of blues music and culture. DBM is also a major economic driver for the town of Clarksdale. But music and musicians come first at the museum, and focusing on new ways to serve its core mission has made DBM a more effective economic driver than if the institution had simply set out to attract more tourists.





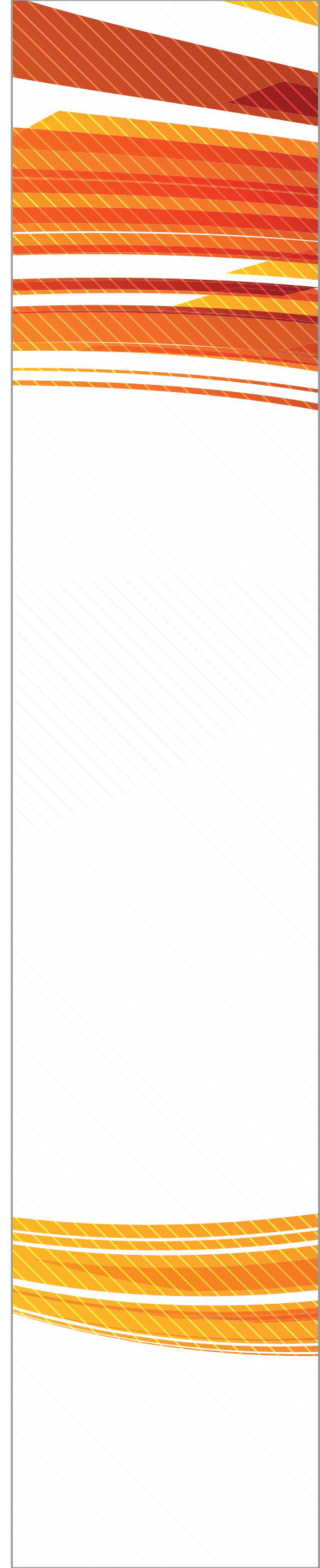
Percent of workforce that was unemployed in Clarksdale, MS, 2010-2014 (Source: PolicyMap)

Today, the town is Mississippi's top destination for international tourists, and the music clubs, hotels, and restaurants that have opened in recent years benefit from the visitors drawn to the museum and its annual music festivals. In 1999, city officials relaunched the museum as an independent entity, and the museum now occupies a former freight rail depot in downtown Clarksdale. DBM keeps the story of the blues relevant to locals as well as tourists. By training the next generation of musicians, DBM helps a unique and authentic blues culture continue to thrive locally. In turn, Clarksdale remains a destination for fans from around the world.

BM cultivates the future of the blues with an Arts and Education Program that teaches students both the music and the history of the blues through participation in the Delta Blues Museum Band. Band classes are open to everybody, no experience necessary, and the cost is nominal. Instruction keeps with the tradition of the blues as a practice passed down informally from one musician to another. Students learn to play all the instruments and learn the dynamics of playing together. While parents may register their children to keep them out of trouble—the area has its share of drug use and other criminal activity—the program's biggest impact may be broadening horizons for kids who otherwise might never leave the Delta. After receiving the National Arts & Humanities Youth Program Award in 2014, the DBM Band traveled to the White House, and they have performed at the Chicago Blues Festival in addition to playing at Clarksdale's festivals and clubs.

DBM fosters partnerships with the Delta's educational system from elementary age through college. The DBM executive director has built these relationships through trying different approaches, seeing what worked, and always being willing to pick up the phone to see if a teacher or administrator could use the museum's collection in their curriculum. Each year DBM does a training for Teach for America teachers to help them learn about the rich local culture and incorporate the music and history of the blues into lesson plans. The museum has also worked with a history class from Coahoma Community College, a historically black higher-education institution, on a website about the Great Migration, when Clarksdale was a way station for many African Americans who moved to the North in the 20th century.

Taken together, DBM's efforts promote several dimensions of social wellbeing in Clarksdale. The band program increases social connection by creating a venue for participants to build relationships with one another and other institutions when they perform around the region. DBM's work with Teach for America and the community college deepen curricula and contribute to educational effectiveness. And DBM fosters economic wellbeing through the creation of direct and indirect job opportunities related to its music festivals, its tourism appeal, and its critical position in the blues cultural network.





## II. The Continuum of Museum and Library Community Initiatives



**Kaitlin Teague's Storytime  
at Mid-Columbia Libraries' West  
Pasco Branch in Pasco, Wash.  
Credit: Mid-Columbia Libraries.  
Photo by KIM FETROW**



Efforts to support community wellbeing and catalyze positive change range broadly in purpose, form, and scope. The sheer diversity shows that museums and libraries are addressing many types of issues, in a variety of effective ways, with and without partner organizations. This section describes important differences across initiatives and provides considerations for museums and libraries as they embark on new projects.

## A. The Dimensions of Community-Focused Initiatives

The range of ways museums and libraries advance social wellbeing can be plotted along three main dimensions that are generally independent from each other:

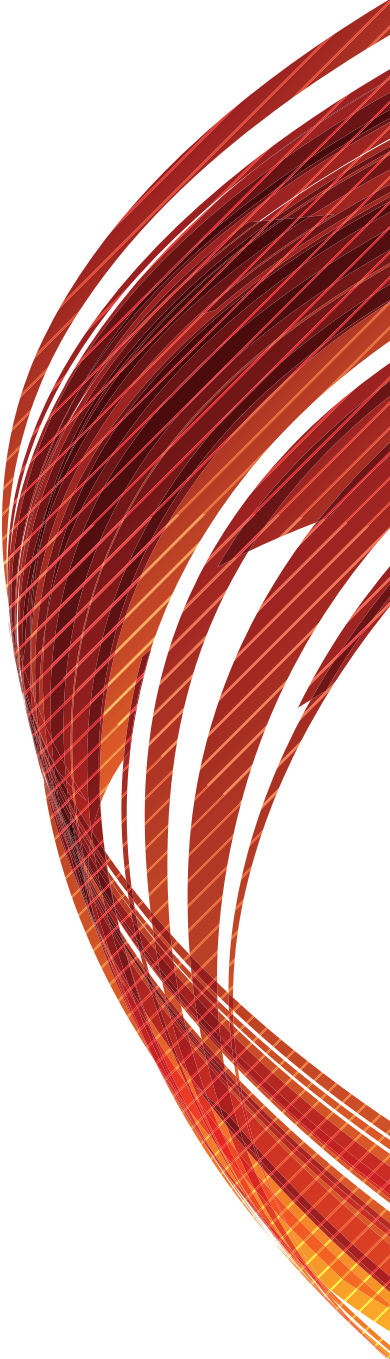
- The relationship between an individual initiative and an institution's established activities and spaces;
- The relative formality of a partnership, when there is one; and
- The museum's or library's level of involvement.

For purposes of this document, “partnership” refers to relationships where a museum or library voluntarily joins with at least one other entity, and each partner shares responsibility and resources for achieving mutually identified goals. Partnerships are distinct from other less structured collaborations, in which museums and libraries contribute to broader community-driven work, but their participation is mandatory, or there may not be shared responsibility, goals, or resources (e.g., renting space, or compulsory participation in a municipal initiative). In many cases, museums and libraries may engage members of the public without the support of another organization.

### 1. Relationship to Established Activities and Spaces

***Community-oriented initiatives span from traditional services and onsite activities to expanded service types in new locations.***

A review of the literature and interviews with practitioners across the country points to a continuum of initiative types, from those tied most closely to historic, core activities and traditional spaces to those that reflect a more expansive understanding of institutional imperatives that may take place offsite or in virtual/online spaces. Museums and libraries frequently support multiple programs simultaneously, taking part in a range of activities along this spectrum to serve diverse needs.



**Core Services Onsite:** These initiatives fit within more common and longstanding types of museum and library activities, but have a special focus on underserved parts of the community or emerging local concerns. These efforts are generally informational and collection- or exhibit-based, and include targeted library literacy programs and museum exhibits about pressing community issues.

**Core Services in Community or Virtual Spaces:** These initiatives hew closely to traditional services but may take place offsite. These include co-locating library services in public housing or museum programming at local cultural festivals. For instance, the Virginia Beach Public Library Summer Slide program brings an enhanced summer reading program to 14 elementary schools with high poverty rates. The effort was inspired by national research on the “summer slide,” during which skills and knowledge fade over the school break. In addition to distributing prizes for books read, which is also done in the library-based program, a librarian offers thematic lessons. The school district provides meals and transportation for the students, many of whom would be unable to travel to their local library branch during the day. The program also uses school district data to identify children who need support, to track how they fare, and to make program adjustments and expansions.

**Expanded Onsite Services:** These initiatives include new activities intended to draw people into museum or library facilities and may involve a reconfiguration or repurposing of existing spaces. These may include makerspaces in libraries or out-of-school-time programs at museums. For instance, the Frye Art Museum in Seattle runs the here:now program for people with dementia and their caregivers. Frye staff collaborated with the Alzheimer’s Association of Washington State and Elderwise, a local adult day center with a cultural enrichment focus, in the development of here:now. The central components include gallery tours, art-making classes, and an interactive film program. The intent is to reduce feelings of isolation and depression by promoting the exchange of ideas and aesthetic appreciation without the need for short-term memory. A secondary aim is to train family members and caregivers to incorporate creative activities into routines.

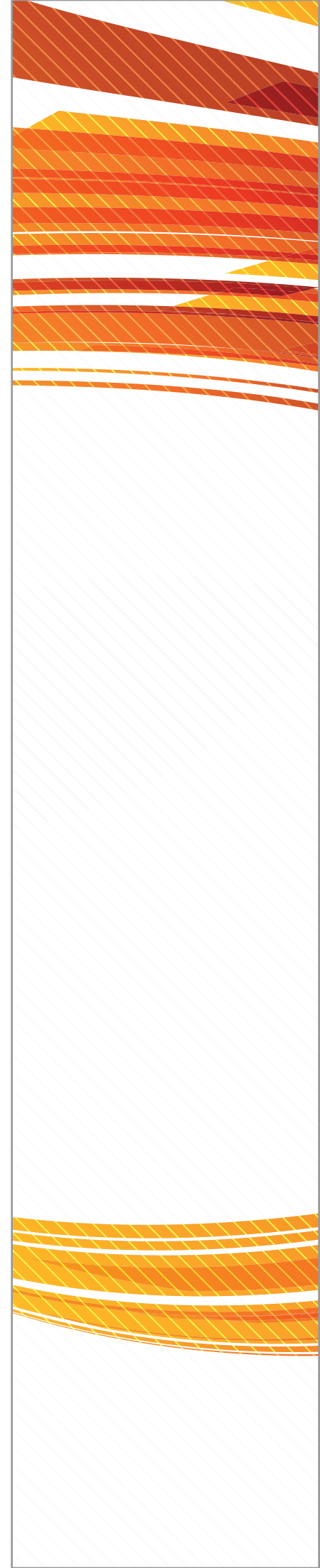
**Expanded Activities in Community or Virtual Spaces:** These initiatives meet community needs beyond traditional service types and take place offsite or online. These may include museums and libraries co-developing park space

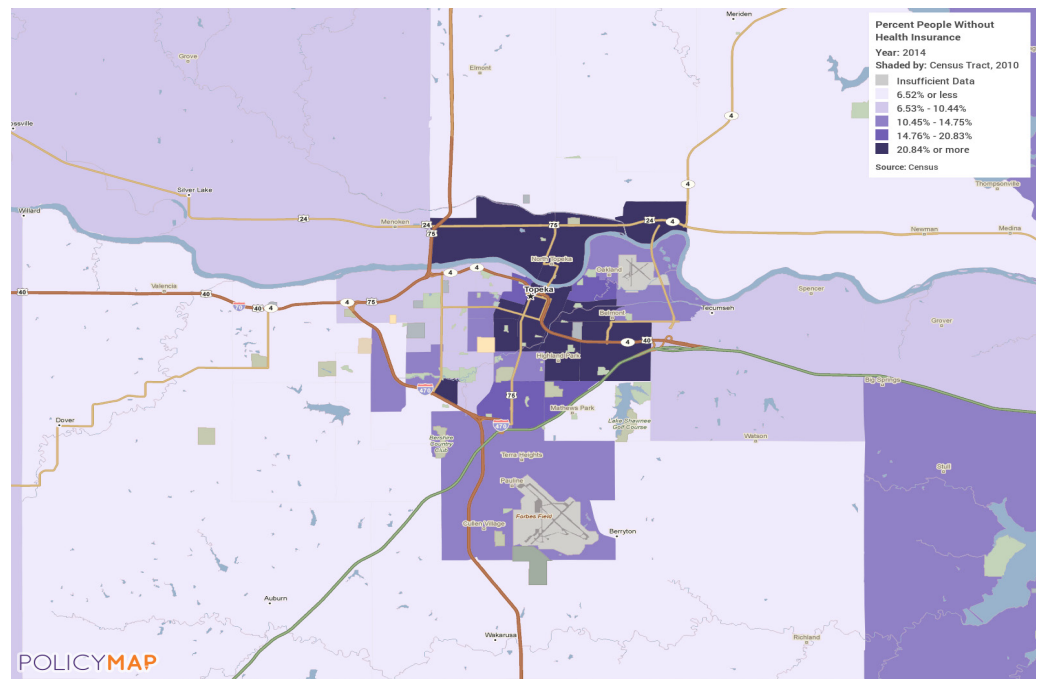
or job training partnerships. In Connecticut, the Hartford Public Library (HPL) serves the city's growing immigrant population through a series of efforts to build networks of relationships and social capital in immigrant communities. The library's Cultural Navigator program trains and matches volunteers to help new immigrants integrate and adjust to life in the United States. HPL successfully advocated for the establishment and formalization of a citywide Commission on Refugee and Immigrant Affairs (CRIIA); HPL now provides training and other supports to CRIIA members.

***Spotlight: Topeka Shawnee County Public Library***

With just a single location, the Topeka Shawnee County Public Library (TSCPL) serves 556 square miles that include the city of Topeka, Kansas, and all of Shawnee County. Located near the capitol in downtown Topeka, TSCPL physically sits at the center of the community and engages in a range of creative programming and partnerships to reach the 178,831 residents in its service area. TSCPL engagement in Topeka is built into the institutional mission of the library. A recently completed multiyear strategic planning process was conducted in close partnership with local community groups to identify how TSCPL can most effectively serve the needs of greater Topeka.

Through this process, TSCPL identified the public's perception of it as an honest broker of information as one of its core strengths. From this position, the library has come to occupy a strategic role on local planning and economic-development commissions. In addition, TSCPL librarians play a leadership role in facilitating the work of Heartland Healthy Neighborhoods (HHN), a coalition of stakeholders using a collective-impact model to improve the health of Topeka residents. In addition to providing meeting space for the group, a TSCPL librarian assists the group in achieving its mission. The librarian has a seat on HHN's leadership team and acts as the group's designated meeting facilitator, scheduling meetings, designing the agenda, and keeping coalition members accountable to ensure activities stay on schedule.





Percent of population without health insurance in Topeka, KS, 2010-2014 (Source: PolicyMap)

HHN’s work involves the development of mutually reinforcing strategies and programming to enhance the public health of Topeka residents and neighborhoods. These include improving access to health care services, promoting healthy eating and active living, enhancing prenatal and infant care, creating a built environment that is safe and accessible for diverse modes of transportation and recreation, enhancing care for Medicare patients, and supporting healthy workplace policies and environments in partnership with local employers.

As the library has become increasingly engaged in broader civic dialogues in the city, staff have needed to adapt existing skills and develop new ones to meaningfully contribute to these efforts. TSCPL leadership trained its staff in process-oriented skills, such as meeting management and group facilitation. This professional development helped librarians take the skills developed through their training in library science and transfer them into guiding collective decision-making processes for the future of their communities.

Equally important, TSCPL librarians have been conscious to remain objective when they facilitate group decision making about sensitive or contentious subjects. While in another context, a library staff member may be called on to provide access to or navigate health information in a way that demands professional knowledge, for the purposes of brokering these dialogues, TSCPL felt that letting go of the expert role was essential. The TSCPL librarian leading the HHN



coalition came to the project without any experience in public health or wellness, which she perceived as a crucial advantage for maintaining her impartiality in facilitating the group's work. "If I could conceivably have a seat at the table, I shouldn't be leading the process," she said. In this case, a lack of expertise actually mitigated the possibility that the HHN's work would be intentionally or unintentionally guided by the facilitator rather than the community.

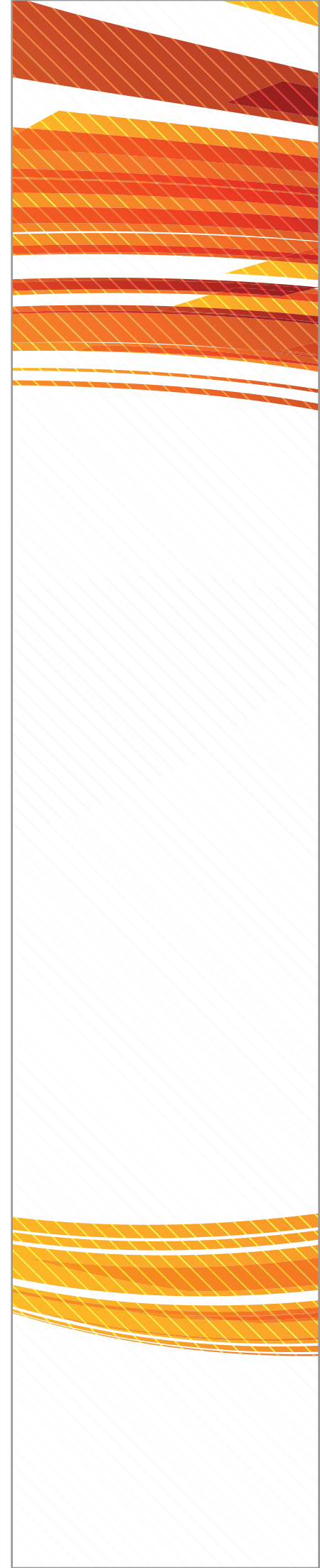
## 2. Formality of Partnerships

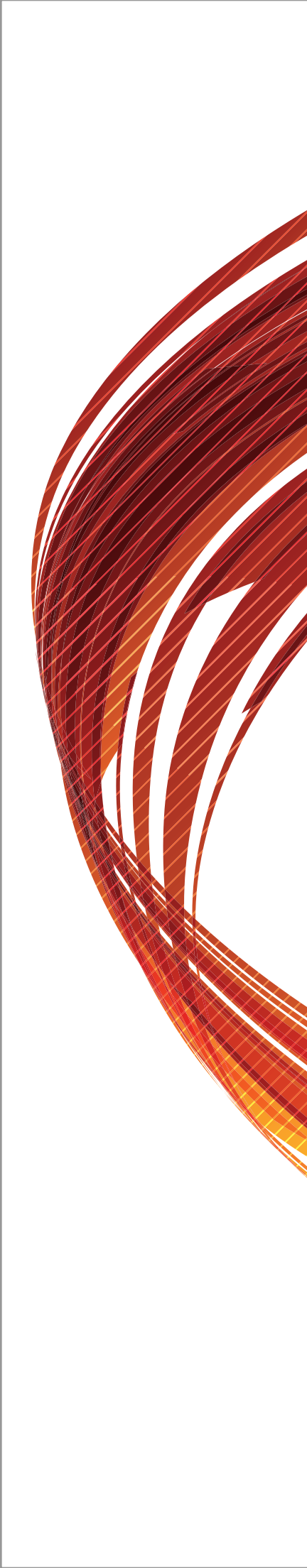
### **From ad hoc to legally bound, museums and libraries adjust the formality of partnerships to different contexts.**

Partnerships with external organizations or agencies range from ad hoc "I just pick up the phone if I need something" to signed memoranda of understanding with commitments that span years. Even the least formal partnerships feature shared responsibilities, resources, and common goals. The degree of formality of a partnership can appear incidental, but closer examination reveals it is often important and frequently strategic; there are particular advantages and challenges to both informal and formalized approaches in different contexts.

Informality is sometimes a function of programmatic maturity. Many practitioners described early-stage partnerships using a romance analogy: It is important to date before committing to marriage. Informality can also be a response to local circumstances. For example, less formal efforts may be common in small towns, where personal relationships are highly valued and where community leaders frequently interact in unofficial settings, such as the Rotary Club. They also occur in big cities, for example, when librarians make direct connections with individual principals or teachers to avoid navigating the bureaucracy of a school district's central administration.

Informal partnerships can have the advantage of being more flexible, and can also set community members at ease knowing their collaboration is "off the record." Key advantages of informal arrangements include "no-strings-attached, getting-to-know-you periods," along with nimble responsiveness to get things done, lower investments of resources, and ready "escape hatches" to part ways if necessary. However, informal partnerships can also carry considerable sustainability risks when these partnerships are based principally on personal relationships.





More formal agreements carry considerable advantages that can help institutionalize partnerships and ensure programs outlast the tenure of the individual staff. While formalizing partnerships often requires additional administrative work associated with drafting memoranda of understanding (MOUs) or contracts to clearly define roles and expectations, they can also provide structure for partners through all the stages of a program from an initial pilot to full-fledged implementation over a mutually determined timeline. Formalized partnerships can also protect museums and libraries from unforeseen risks related to funding, facilities, public reputation, and safety. Another advantage of formalized partnerships is enhanced ability to fundraise—both private philanthropy and government funding streams to support program implementation increasingly require applicants to work in collaboration with other institutions to develop multifaceted approaches to address pressing social concerns.<sup>9</sup>

### 3. Role and Level of Involvement

**Museums and libraries play multiple roles in community-oriented partnerships.**

Partnerships differ according to the role of the museum or library—whether it leads, contributes, or convenes. The level of involvement in any partnership may reflect specific characteristics or strengths of an institution, or may simply represent an opportunity to help out in the community. In any of these roles, museums and libraries can spark improvements to social wellbeing, either in a very specific instance, or through participation in broader collective-impact initiatives made up of multiple organizations working toward a common goal.

Partnerships in which a museum or library takes a leadership role are often an extension of an institution’s core operations, taken in a new direction or to greater depth. The advantage of an active role in creating and managing an effort is control over implementation details. For example, in 2013, the Oakland Museum of California (OMCA) Board of Trustees approved a strategic plan that articulated the museum’s desire and commitment to facilitate community revitalization and creative place-making. OMCA is now leading a planning process (Envisioning a Lake Merritt Cultural District Project) designed to foster conversations about the neighborhood, its community needs, and its future.

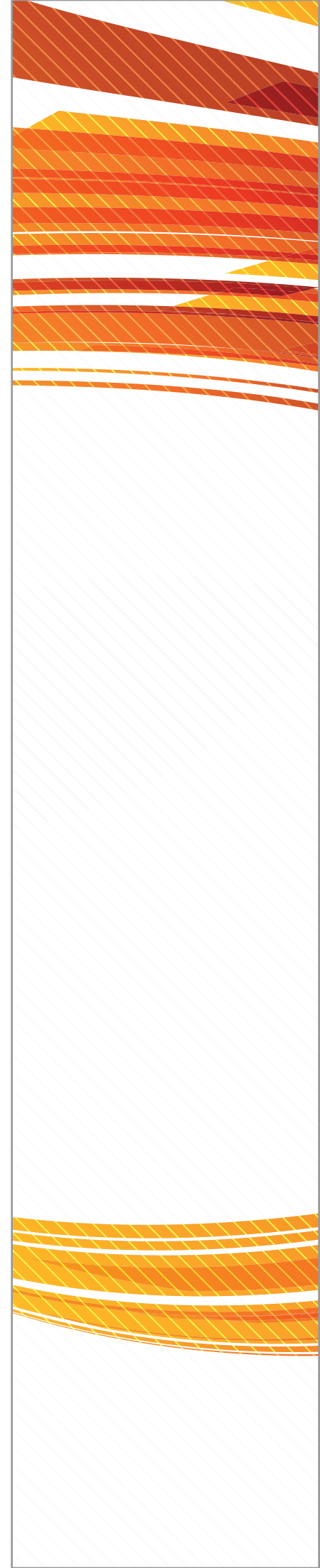
The museum brings local residents together to address key local challenges, such as spatial fragmentation caused by infrastructure (e.g., wide streets, parking lots,

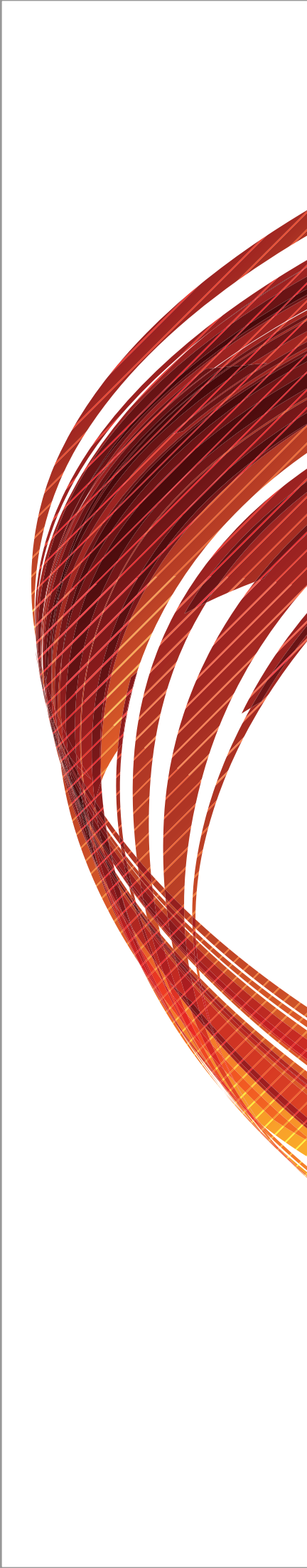
and imposing facilities). The process is designed to both meet local challenges and instill a sense of identity and destination for the district without diminishing the unique contributions and histories of its component neighborhoods. Through this process, OMCA hopes to catalyze the transformation of the Lake Merritt neighborhood into a “cohesive, integrated, and walkable district.” Plan partners include the City of Oakland, Alameda County, Laney College, Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART), and the Oakland Unified School District.

As a contributing partner, a library or museum provides resources to a project led by another organization. This level of involvement may be suitable to formalized collective-impact efforts with multiple organizations working together, or it may simply be a way to support an initiative led by another organization. For example, a staff person may train teachers to incorporate museum collections into lesson plans or conduct digital literacy classes at a senior center computer lab. Sometimes a staff member is permanently assigned to an offsite location to provide additional support for program participants and beneficiaries. Edmonton Library’s Welcome Baby program enlists nurses at public health clinics to provide new mothers with a basket of books, a library card application, and educational materials on the importance of early literacy. Nurses distribute these baskets to parents bringing their children in for vaccinations.

A tremendous asset for many museums and libraries is a public perception as trusted institutions in their communities. As a result, serving as conveners of group processes can be just as critical as providing leadership or contributing expertise, especially when sensitive topics like health or contentious political issues are on the table. In convening roles, a museum or library brings stakeholders together to enhance a community’s political voice, address common challenges, or enhance social connection. Different sectors may approach convening in different ways: Libraries often strive to be honest brokers of information, while some museums bring a relevant institutional point of view or knowledge base to a project.

For example, in many places where there have been police-community tensions, libraries have hosted conversations where contrasting viewpoints are exchanged. In a Manhattan neighborhood with a large immigrant population, the Lower East Side Tenement Museum’s Tour & Discussion series draws on deep staff knowledge about 19th century immigrant stories to facilitate discussion among





people of diverse ethnic, religious, racial, and national backgrounds about how their own families' stories mirror historic experiences. Both approaches can build connections and decrease friction across groups in a community.

As seen in this section, initiatives museums and libraries undertake to serve their local communities vary widely in the relative “distance” from core mission-related activities, their level of formality, and the role that these institutions play in different partnerships. The following section provides key considerations for museum and library staff as they pursue a diverse range of community-oriented initiatives.

## B. Considerations for Designing and Sustaining Community-Oriented Initiatives

A common set of considerations guides museums' and libraries' decisions to participate in the community-oriented efforts reviewed in this study. These include: institutional support for testing and managing new initiatives, the process through which goals are set, the ability of an initiative to adapt to changing circumstances over a lifecycle, and how roles and responsibilities are defined. Within each of these areas, museums and libraries face challenges and are presented with opportunities to find new ways to advance their institutional missions through collaboration and outreach that enhance the wellbeing of people living in the communities they serve.

**Community-focused efforts thrive when commitment to them permeates all organizational levels, and lines of responsibility for creating and sustaining initiatives are clear.**

The pursuit of catalytic community-oriented initiatives has pushed institutional boundaries toward meeting specific needs, both through traditional activities<sup>10</sup> and a more fundamental shift toward collaboration, reflection, and community-driven programming.<sup>11</sup> At many museums and libraries this has entailed a top-to-bottom assessment and even reorganization of community-engagement and partnership practices, while others have made more minor adjustments.



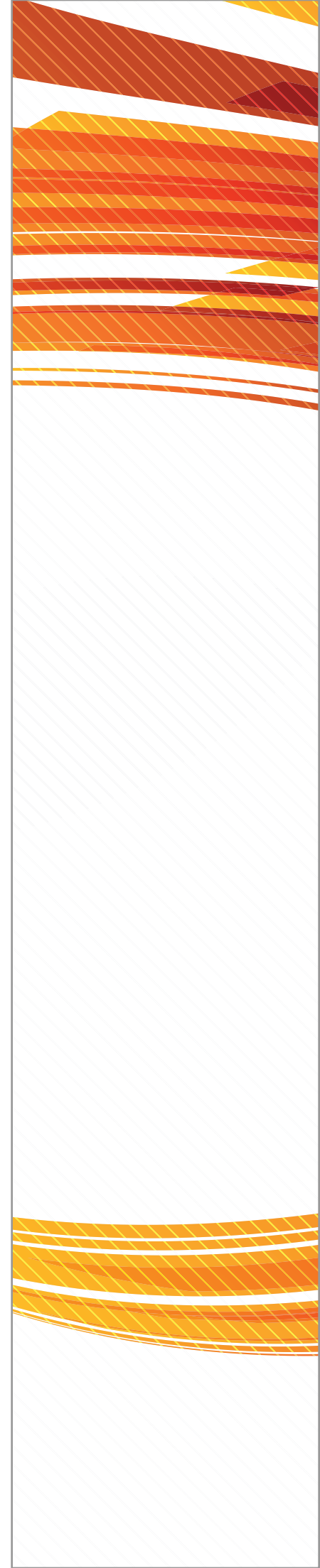
In interviews, museum and library staff consistently highlighted the need for high-level institutional support for community-oriented work and partnership formation. Consistent messaging from the director and board level about the importance and intent of these activities is essential to a truly community-focused orientation. There is also a need for clarity about where authority and responsibility to begin and sustain initiatives lies. In some library systems, branch staff are instrumental in piloting new ideas, while in others there is a more centralized approach. No matter what the decision-making structure looks like, it should be clearly communicated. Adequate resources are essential for departments or individuals tasked with outreach, so that they can develop, monitor, and adjust their work. Without sufficient financial means and staff time, efforts can quickly falter.

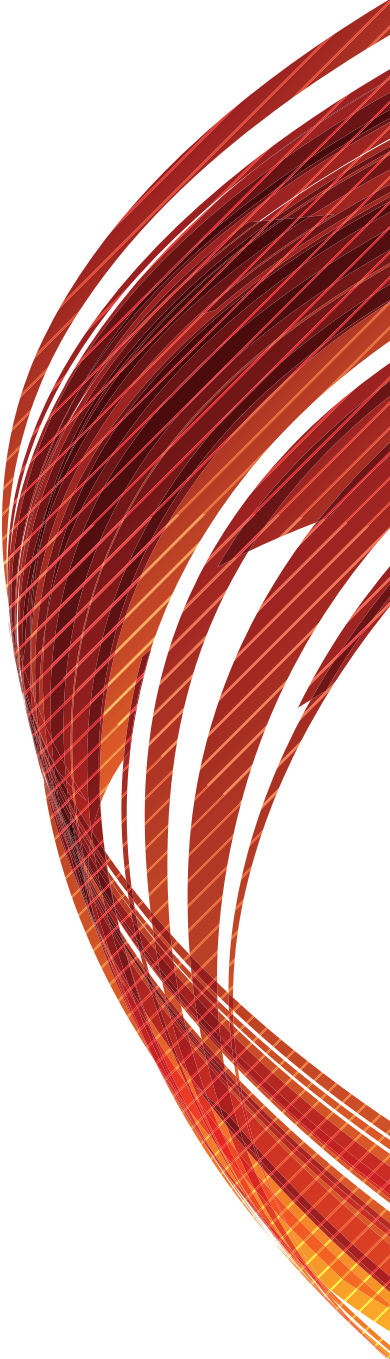
**Reputational risks associated with moving into new content areas can be managed so that community trust is enhanced rather than compromised.**

Museums and libraries often prize their particular reputation in a community. Some are proud to be seen as purveyors of accurate and trusted information, honest brokers in sensitive matters, or protectors of cultural heritage. Some institutions see themselves as advocates for critical issues. However, as institutions become more involved in initiatives addressing potentially contentious matters, they expose themselves to a greater level of public scrutiny and reputational risk. The director of the Topeka Shawnee Public Library acknowledged that as the library has become more involved with local economic development efforts, she and her staff are continually challenged to maintain their institutional position as a site for the free exchange of competing ideas, even when this may conflict with personally held beliefs. Each institution must carefully consider whether and when it is appropriate for them to take positions about matters of public concern, such as education or immigration policy, when doing so may expose the institution to diminished public trust or reputation.<sup>12</sup>

**Museums and libraries face practical constraints that can limit their ability to engage with members of the public and partner with external groups.**

“Getting away from the desk”—both moving around the building and getting outside of it—has become a mantra for some community-facing institutions, but breaking the habit of staying within arm’s reach of a collection or database can be hard.<sup>13</sup> Officials at several institutions emphasized the importance of attending a variety of community events to demonstrate engagement, but this can also put





a strain on staff resources. For example, a group of branch librarians at the Free Library of Philadelphia received extensive training related to business services. Ideally, these librarians would attend networking events and commercial corridor association meetings to connect with the entrepreneurs they hope to serve. In the library field this is typically called “embedded librarianship.” But often there is not enough staff coverage at the branches to allow librarians to be offsite.

At other institutions, staff noted that community events are frequently held at night or over weekends, requiring staff to put in additional hours beyond their standard workday. Having sufficient staff levels and flexible schedules that allow individuals to swap out traditional hours of operation for evenings and weekends can support efforts to connect more deeply with the community and help mitigate burnout among staff who spend a lot of time offsite.

**Initiative planning and management includes testing new ideas, transitioning to new phases, and sustaining efforts as they evolve over time.**

Community initiatives tend to follow a similar path: big idea, planning, launch, growth, and sustained operation or sun-setting. Not all initiatives will be lasting, nor should they be. As one museum official put it, “We start each pilot with a question” to guide the work. Starting small with pilots or informal partnerships creates learning opportunities that require minimal resources and minimal risk. Even after a program has entered full implementation, it may need to adapt to changing needs or resources.

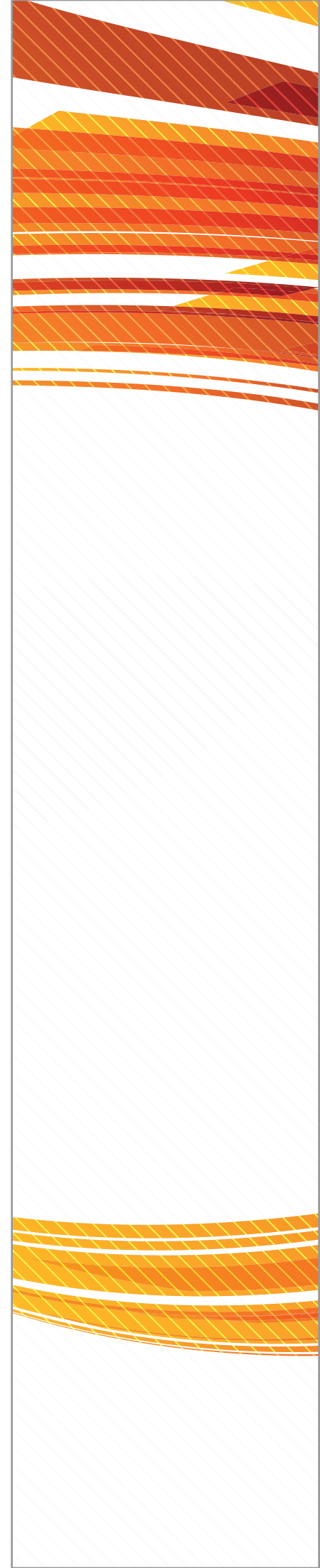
In Massachusetts, the New Bedford Whaling Museum’s Apprenticeship Program was developed in response to a citywide call to action to address the low graduation rate and high youth unemployment rate. Since 2010, the program has provided disadvantaged students with opportunities to enhance their academic skills and knowledge, develop professional skills, and gain exposure to higher education and different career paths. Since its inception, the Whaling Museum has maintained a close partnership with New Bedford High School through a consistent and rigorous application process and established sustainable levels of annual enrollment: 18 students per year. To date, every student who has participated in the program has graduated from high school.

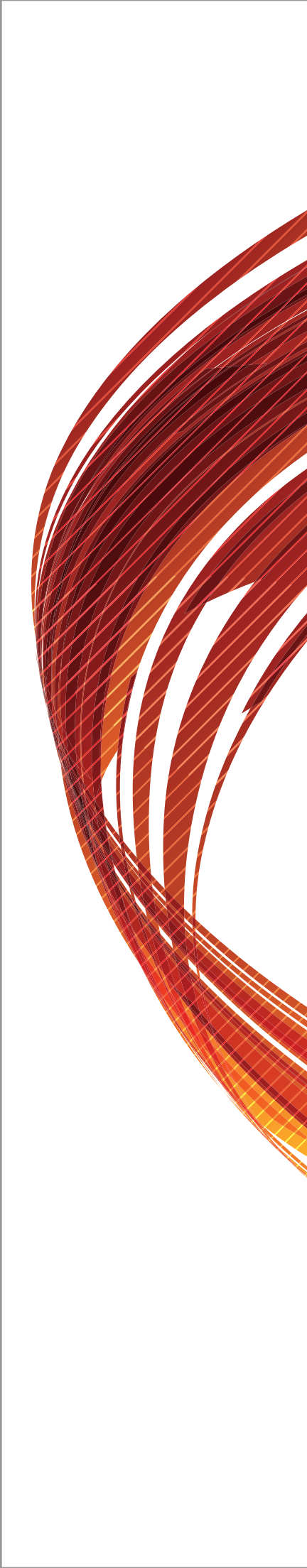
As program participants began graduating from high school and transitioning to college, Whaling Museum staff realized their graduates needed ongoing support to successfully make this transition—a well-documented phenomenon among disadvantaged and first-generation college students across the country.<sup>14</sup> In response to this ongoing need, the program is pursuing opportunities to expand its support to graduates during their first year in college. Like many programs, the Apprenticeship Program is principally supported through grant dollars, challenging program staff to continually write successful grant applications. The program's expansion to first-year college students makes the museum eligible for additional funding streams focused in this area. In this way the Whaling Museum is enhancing its services for New Bedford youth and creating an opportunity to become more financially sustainable.

**Partnerships are most effective when they are developed strategically, with clearly defined roles for each partner that account for their particular capacities and resources.**

When it comes to partnerships, museum and library staff have acknowledged becoming more deliberate in identifying partners with specific, complementary skill sets or resources (e.g., neighborhood relationships, content expertise, and financial stability), with whom they could effectively share goals and responsibilities. Some institutions even use set criteria to evaluate potential partnerships to assess their own capacity to partner on a given effort, their potential partner's limitations, and other relevant considerations.

These evolving approaches are being developed in response to the fact that partnerships can put stress on limited resources—particularly time—and create tension related to communication, expectations, and conflicting institutional cultures, all of which need to be managed.<sup>15</sup> Initiating partnerships with clearly defined roles for carefully selected partners can increase the value of working together and also mitigate potential rough spots down the road.





Museum and library staff may consider the following types of questions during partnership development, as applied to their own institutions and potential partners as well:

- How does this partnership advance each partner’s institutional mission?
- How does this partnership address an unmet need in the community?
- Does this partnership expand access to community members who are not yet engaged with the institution?
- What unique contributions does each institution bring to the partnership?
- Does each institution have the capacity—skills, time, financial resources, space, etc.—to meet their commitments to the partnership?
- Does each institution have the capacity to manage the partnership?
- How and when could a pilot initiative transition to a sustained partnership?
  - What evidence would prompt this transition?
- How will the partners assess the results of their combined efforts—for their institutions and the community?



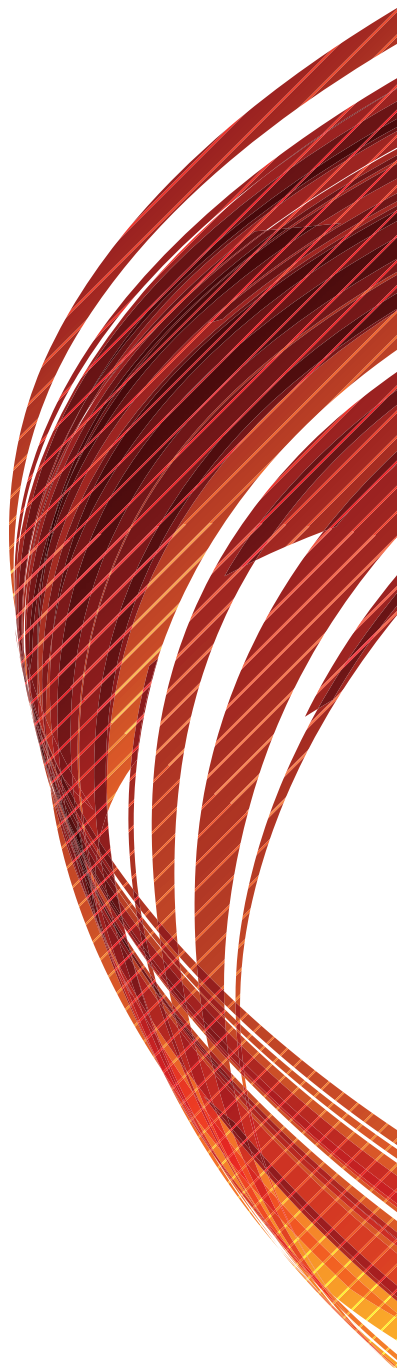


### III. Understanding Assets and Challenges, and Evaluating Impact

Down the Rabbit Hole is one of the many adventures awaiting children and parents in Young At Art Museum's WonderScapes Gallery, a place designed to nurture early learners ages 4 and under. WonderScapes is based on the classic tale, Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, as reinterpreted by the poetic imagery of artist/illustrator DeLoss McGraw. Credit: Young At Art







As museums and libraries become more involved in collaborative efforts to enhance social wellbeing and spark change, it becomes increasingly important to understand the degree to which their efforts are successful. This means understanding existing community assets and resources, the aspirations of community members, and existing gaps between current and desired circumstances. Museums and libraries throughout the country are already doing this work in diverse ways and settings—some using very sophisticated, expensive approaches; others using relatively straightforward, low-cost approaches. No matter the size of the institution, or the size of its budget for research and evaluation, it is possible for museums and libraries to identify local assets, challenges, and the gaps they are well-suited to address. It is also possible to understand how their efforts contribute to achieving community aspirations.

This section presents an overview of different ways museums and libraries inventory community assets and challenges, and evaluate the effectiveness of activities intended to meet local needs. Using the social wellbeing and collective-impact frameworks can help institutions contextualize their work, and think about ways to leverage their own contributions to catalyze change. These frameworks can help institutions identify the right questions to ask, data to collect, and necessary analyses to understand local needs and the impact of their work.

### A. Understanding Community Assets and Challenges

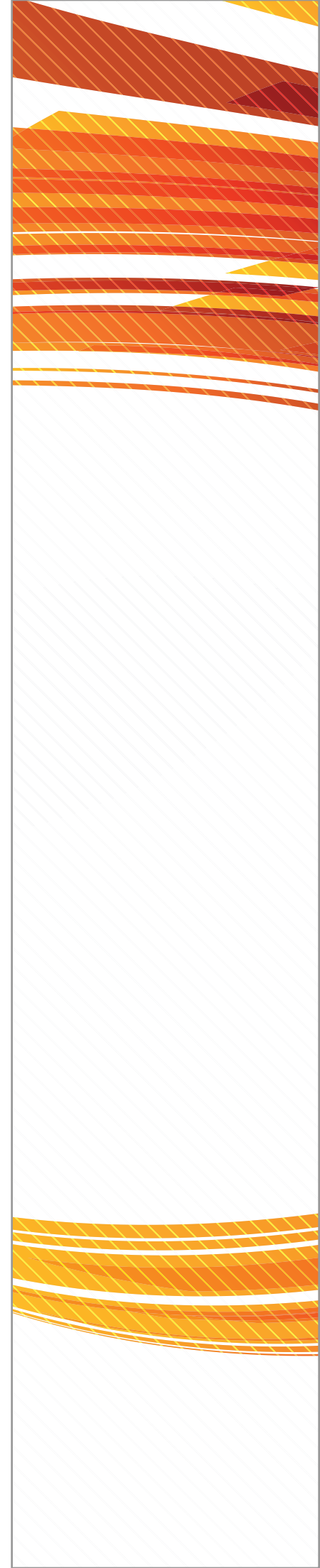
Every community has a mix of assets and challenges. Assets include the institutions and individuals that collectively make up networks that support social wellbeing. They include physical attributes like transit access and less tangible attributes like a strong sense of cultural heritage. Challenges are similarly varied and may include limited financial resources, environmental hazards, or public safety concerns—challenges that can make it difficult for communities to achieve their aspirations and adapt to changing conditions over time.

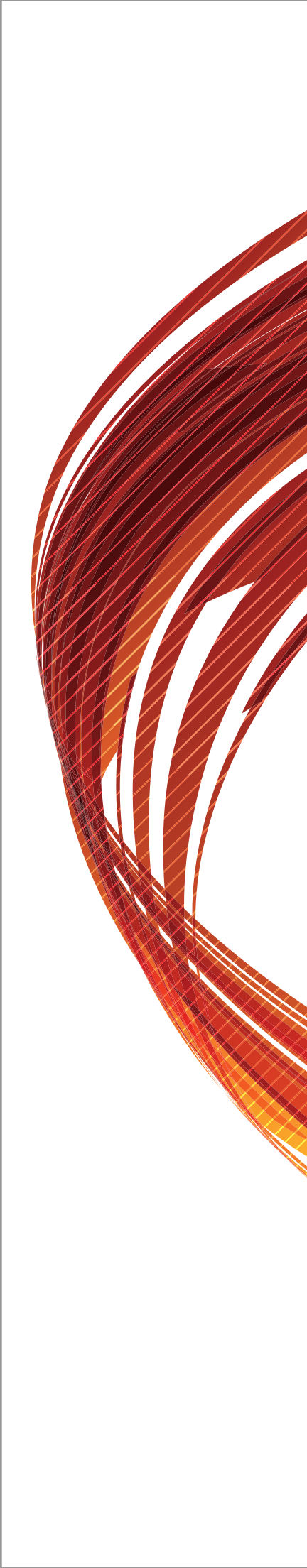
Painting a full and accurate picture of community assets and challenges requires collecting data from multiple sources. The process can be iterative, with outreach and investigation conducted both prior to and during service delivery or programming. The social wellbeing framework provides an organizing principle to inventory and understand assets and gaps. It can also help museums and libraries see themselves as assets—e.g., as sites of cultural engagement and social connection.

This approach is similar to “asset mapping,” which is commonly used in the community development field to plot resources (including cultural institutions, houses of worship, small businesses, schools, parks, etc.) and their connections to one another.<sup>16</sup> Museums and libraries can then build from their own strengths to address multiple dimensions of wellbeing, whether independently or in partnership with others.

### **Dimensions of Social Wellbeing<sup>17</sup>**

- **Economic Wellbeing:** material standard of living— income, education, and labor force participation;
- **Economic and Ethnic Diversity:** the extent to which certain income levels and ethnic groups are concentrated or mixed in a place;
- **Health:** physical and mental health status as well as access to care;
- **School Effectiveness:** the degree to which the local school environment is conducive to learning— student achievement, dropout rates;
- **Cultural Engagement:** opportunities to experience one’s own cultural legacy and those of other residents;
- **Housing Quality:** physical and financial conditions associated with shelter—crowding, code violations, and relative cost burden;
- **Political Voice:** freedom of expression and involvement in the democratic process;
- **Social Connection:** the presence of nonprofit organizations and cultural resources that connect at an institutional level, and the level of trust and neighborhood participation that underlie face-to-face relations;
- **Environment:** the quality and risks of the physical environment—the presence of parks and open space, heat vulnerability, and environmental hazards;
- **Insecurity:** threats to physical security—violent and property crime, social tensions.





## **Understanding assets and challenges starts with listening to community members and informed partners.**

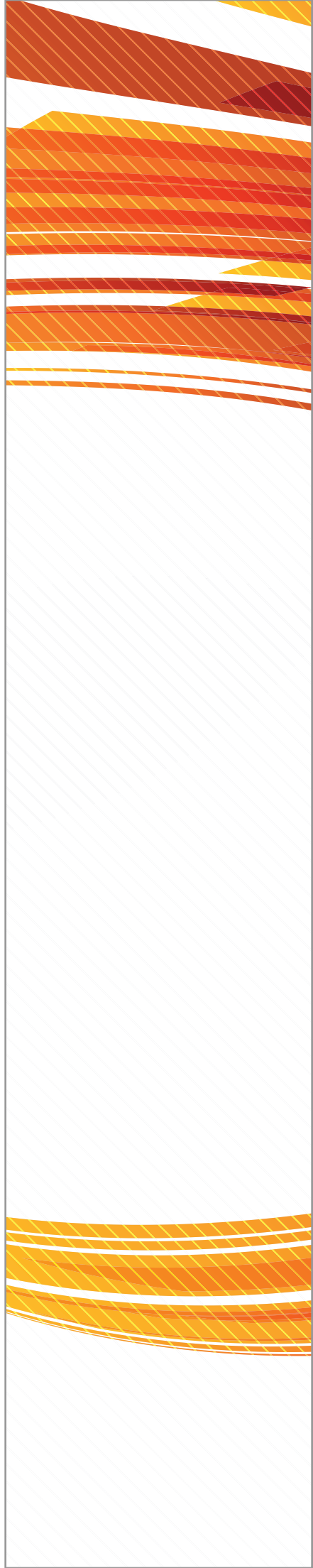
Community members and the entities they regularly interact with can be the most direct sources of information about some dimensions of social wellbeing. This is especially true for social connection (both institutional and interpersonal) and political voice, but these sources can also provide insight into health (where do people get information about health issues?) and insecurity (are parents unwilling to let children travel to the library alone due to perceptions of crime?). There are three principle ways museums and libraries learn from individuals and organizations in the community: staff observations and experience; structured input; and informed partners.

**Staff Observations and Experience:** By virtue of opening their doors to the public, museum and library staff frequently gain firsthand knowledge of challenges facing local residents, and what resources are already at hand. On the front lines, staff members often interact with local school children who can provide insight into family needs; on the other hand, the absence of certain populations may suggest targeted outreach or programming. Branch librarians often hear directly from residents about resource gaps in the form of requests for assistance finding job listings, health information, or activities for youth. Some libraries have systematized the collection of employee observations through staff intranet feedback forms, or have incorporated staff debriefing into strategic planning processes.

Primary observations as a source of information are valuable, and demonstrating responsiveness to current patrons can build credibility, but they are also likely incomplete and non-representative. Relying solely on primary observations can risk misrepresenting the nature of certain challenges or miss some altogether. It can also leave critical assets off the map. Drawing on additional data sources (e.g., secondary data sources such as the Census or local administrative databases) can help museums and libraries avoid misinterpreting, or completely missing, important assets and challenges in their communities.

**Structured Community Input:** More structured activities to gather information from the public include visioning meetings with diverse stakeholders about the role of their institution in the civic life of the community. In addition, many





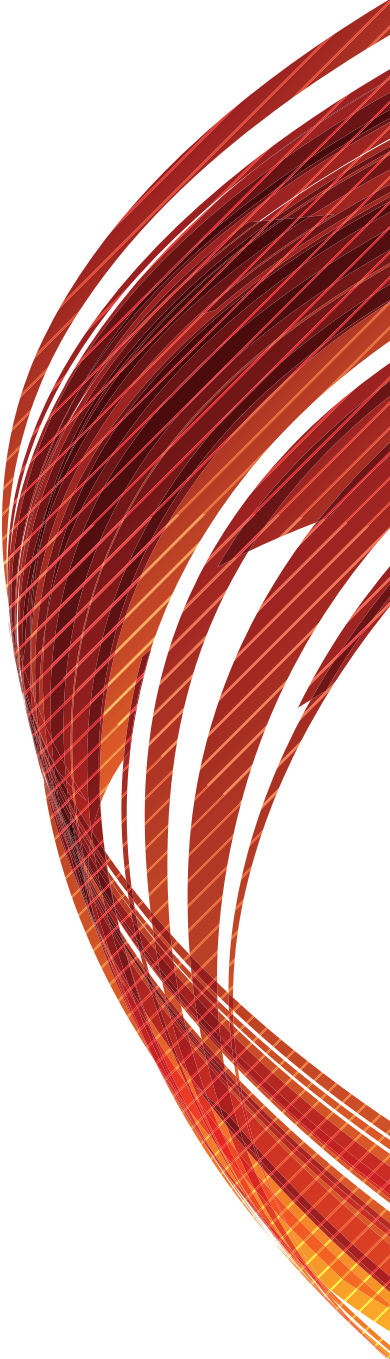
museums and libraries conduct interviews, focus groups, and field surveys to solicit feedback on their efforts, community members' hopes for the future, and what types of programming could address specific challenges. Structured input can also provide information about the community assets that residents value most highly and use most frequently. These tools can help institutions discern whether anecdotal evidence mirrors broader patterns.

Still, like staff observations, structured community input can create a partial picture. Reaching residents who are not current patrons or who don't attend public meetings is possible through targeted phone surveys and on-the-ground outreach in neighborhoods, but it is also costly and time-consuming. Still, structured community input can be useful in creating ongoing feedback and relationship building.

For example, the Arlington Public Library in Virginia relies on an active and engaged citizenry to inform institutional governance and decision-making. This tradition extends to other spheres of civic life apart from the library, and is known as the "Arlington Way." In 2012, the Participation, Leadership, and Civic Engagement (PLACE) initiative brought residents into civic conversations and decision-making during a year-long effort that included 1) creating a map of civic resources; 2) conducting a formal community-wide conversation to define roles and responsibilities and energize civic decision-making; 3) providing training on civic engagement skills for key community groups; and 4) making civic engagement a required skill for all county employees.<sup>18</sup>

The PLACE initiative highlights the complementary processes involved in identifying pressing needs and key assets. In many ways, asset mapping is a critical corollary to any needs assessment, since these assets represent available resources.

**Informed Partners:** Many museum and library leaders are directly or indirectly associated with coalitions of government agencies, local government and elected officials, cultural institutions, faith-based institutions, and other public and private institutions working to address systemic challenges facing their communities. Coalition partners may be well informed about particular areas of social wellbeing in a community, including economic wellbeing, school effectiveness,



and environmental assets (e.g., high-quality recreation centers) or threats (e.g., flood plains and air quality). In some cases, an advocacy organization will take the lead on studying a specific wellbeing concern; in others, local government will form a task force around issues like childhood poverty, workforce development, or obesity reduction, and provide reports detailing the depth and breadth of the challenge within specific local contexts.

The Children’s Museum of the Upstate (TCMU) in Greenville, South Carolina, learned about the need for financial education through its local United Way Chapter and the Greenville County Human Relations Commission (HRC). Those partners found that low-income households in the county were increasingly targeted by payday lenders, whose terms trapped them in a cycle of poor credit and growing debt. They saw a need to provide education to families on this and other financial issues to disrupt the intergenerational cycle of poverty. TCMU saw this as an opportunity to broaden its educational activities. In partnership with HRC Finances for the Family, TCMU developed a six-session program at the museum using exhibits to offer age-appropriate education to all family members. A nursery service also provides childcare for the youngest children, eliminating a common barrier to participation.

**Publicly available data and local studies can expand and refine local knowledge.**

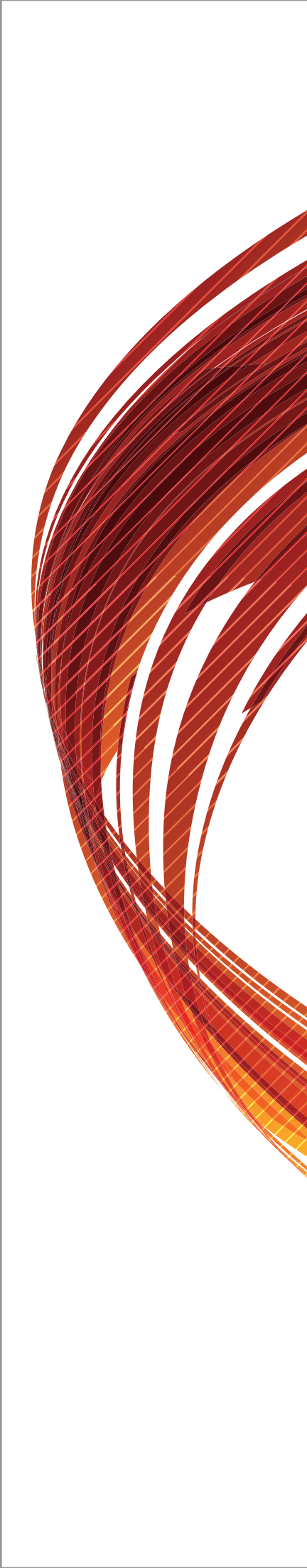
In addition to direct information from patrons and partners, there are a variety of publicly available resources that can provide museum and library officials with insight into key indicators of social wellbeing across the communities they serve. Table 1 presents a sample of public data sources that can be used to understand local indicators of social wellbeing and track community-level change. As the vision and goals for community-based projects unfold, data may be repeatedly re-analyzed as new opportunities and questions emerge. Sharing the results of these analyses with the community can foster commitment and buy-in to participate in future data collection activities.

Table 1 is organized by the four major content areas where museums and libraries tend to concentrate their work, with relevant social wellbeing dimensions in parentheses. Many of the data sources listed in Table 1 are aggregated and available to the public in PolicyMap<sup>19</sup>, a web-based mapping tool that allows

users to understand the spatial distribution of a wide range of socioeconomic, demographic, and health indicators. In addition, 30 cities nationwide participate in the National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership, which maintains up-to-date citywide profiles of key indicators that provide insight into the spatial distribution of wellbeing in these cities.<sup>20</sup>

**Table 1. Data Sources & Indicators to Measure Social Wellbeing**

Content Area (Social Wellbeing Dimension)	Indicators	Data Sources
Lifelong Learning and Cultural Engagement (school effectiveness, political voice, social connection)	School/district metrics: academic performance, graduation rates, dropout rates, truancy; adult educational attainment; percent of eligible population casting ballots; library and museum facilities; nonprofit organization locations	National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) • <a href="https://nces.ed.gov/">https://nces.ed.gov/</a> U.S. Census Bureau • <a href="http://www.census.gov/topics/education.html">http://www.census.gov/topics/education.html</a> • <a href="http://www.census.gov/topics/public-sector/voting.html">http://www.census.gov/topics/public-sector/voting.html</a> State departments of education Local school districts Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) • <a href="https://www.imls.gov/research-tools/data-collection">https://www.imls.gov/research-tools/data-collection</a> Community development and arts organizations Local boards of election
Economic Development (economic wellbeing, economic diversity, housing quality)	Poverty levels; unemployment rates; employment by sector; location of subsidized housing; homeownership; mortgage origination rates; housing cost stress; vacancy; code violations	Bureau of Labor Statistics • <a href="http://www.bls.gov/data/">http://www.bls.gov/data/</a> U.S. Census Bureau • <a href="http://www.census.gov/econ/">http://www.census.gov/econ/</a> • <a href="http://www.census.gov/topics/income-poverty.html">http://www.census.gov/topics/income-poverty.html</a> U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development • <a href="https://www.huduser.gov/portal/home.html">https://www.huduser.gov/portal/home.html</a> Home Mortgage Disclosure Act • <a href="https://www.ffiec.gov/hmda/">https://www.ffiec.gov/hmda/</a> Local court filings
Physical/Mental Health (health, physical insecurity)	Rates of physical/mental disability; drug use/addiction; diabetes; asthma; obesity; death rates; prenatal care; infant mortality; smoking; injuries and violence; crime rates—violent/property	U.S. Census Bureau • <a href="http://www.census.gov/topics/health.html">http://www.census.gov/topics/health.html</a> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention • <a href="http://www.cdc.gov/datastatistics/">http://www.cdc.gov/datastatistics/</a> State and local public health departments State and local departments of health and human services
Place-Making & the Environment (environment)	Parks and recreational space; vacant lots; flood plains; environmental risk areas	Environmental Protection Agency's Envirofacts • <a href="https://www3.epa.gov/enviro/">https://www3.epa.gov/enviro/</a> Local planning department Local parks and recreation department Local public safety departments



In Atlanta, the Spread the Word Program—a partnership between the Atlanta Children’s Museum and the Atlanta Speech School—drew on each of the processes described to develop and deliver literacy programming to underserved youth on the west side of Atlanta.<sup>21</sup> Program staff initially conducted a national literature scan on the importance of parent-infant interaction for literacy. They used publicly available and local knowledge to identify high-poverty neighborhoods where few institutional partners were engaged. And they conducted focus groups with local residents to understand what type of program delivery format and timing would best work for them. Using this process, museum staff could be confident their programming is grounded in prior programming and research, and serves their target population in a way that is responsive to their needs and availability.

**Spatial analysis of social wellbeing indicators can help institutions tailor initiatives.**

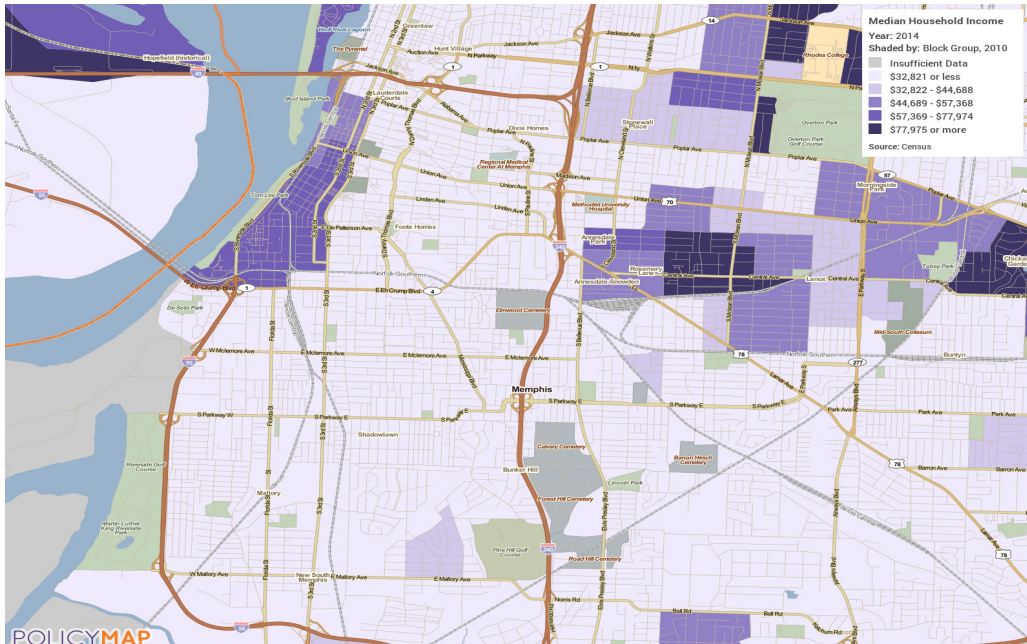
Understanding the spatial distribution of key indicators of social wellbeing can provide additional insight. Spatial analysis can identify locations where certain aspects of wellbeing (or lack of wellbeing) are clustered, or where strong levels of social connection may mitigate economic disadvantage.<sup>22</sup> Institutions can also learn about the geography of local community support networks.

For example, plotting assets such as schools, parks, transportation stops, and job training centers around their facilities on a map can help institutions understand their spatial relationship with other amenities. This knowledge can provide opportunities to capitalize on proximity, and to understand where physical barriers may prevent residents from accessing particular resources.

The Stax Music Academy and Museum of American Soul Music was built in the Soulsville area of Memphis to be a source of strength in a neighborhood suffering from major economic distress and physical disinvestment. The donors who created the museum could have opened it in Downtown Memphis but chose the site of a seminal record company that had been demolished. Co-locating the museum with the music academy was premised on the belief that the museum would spur economic development by attracting tourists and the academy would promote education and social-capital formation among neighborhood youth, creating a virtuous cycle to revive and preserve local cultural heritage. In



addition, the foundation that funds the academy and museum also established a local music-focused charter school to improve educational outcomes for local students. In this way, Stax occupies a prominent position in an evolving network of supports designed to revitalize the economic and cultural vitality of a persistently underserved community.

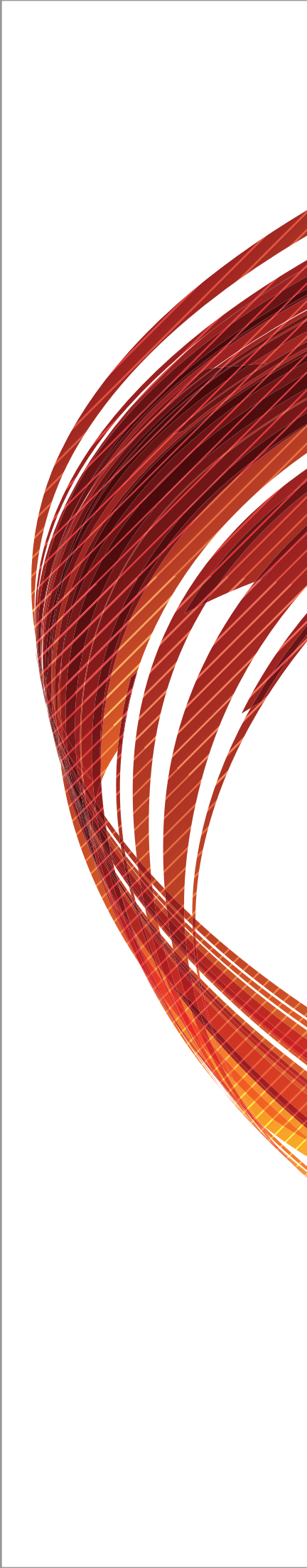


Median Household Income in Memphis, 2010-2014 (Source: PolicyMap)

## B. Evaluating Impacts: Considerations for Program Design & Assessment

Evaluating the effectiveness of programming and activities that advance wellbeing can help museums and libraries tell powerful stories about their role in communities. These stories can help institutions attract more participants, partners, and financial resources, and drive continued innovation in offerings and approaches. Evaluation is also an opportunity to learn about the institution itself—things that may be affirming, encouraging, surprising, or disappointing. Museums and libraries will get the most out of assessment when they are prepared to engage with the results and are open to findings that may challenge them to rethink dearly held programs, modes of doing business, and even their general way of being in the community.<sup>23</sup>

Ideally, the results of an evaluation provide actionable insight for institutions to more effectively meet the needs of their patrons and communities—insights that inform refinement or modification of program delivery, provide evidence of program effectiveness, and provide guidance related to the next steps for a



program going forward. Although outputs (number of participants, dollars spent) are often the most accessible metrics, there is increasing interest in learning more about outcomes (skills gained, jobs acquired, health indicators improved), which can provide helpful guidance for program adjustment.

Evaluations can quickly become very complex and quite costly. However, there are ample opportunities for museum and library staff to assess their own effectiveness that do not require expensive consultants and that provide much needed insight into the contributions their institutions make to addressing complex community needs. Importantly, evaluation is not a solely retrospective process—this section outlines considerations for staff to assess program effectiveness at multiple stages, beginning with program design and implementation.

**Situate initiative design and evaluation within a broad context.**

Evaluating the impact of community-serving programs begins with conceptual considerations in the design stage. This involves telling a reasonable story that links program components to desired outcomes (also known as a “theory of change”). The social wellbeing and collective-impacts frameworks are useful in describing the complex nature of wellbeing and placing an individual museum’s or library’s efforts within a wider network of social supports.

Consider a hypothetical example of a library mentorship program for at-risk youth. This program may be one of many activities in the community designed to address the high school dropout rate. While it is unlikely that the library alone will stop the dropout phenomenon altogether, the library can articulate its program’s contribution to reducing its size. The rationale in this case could be that the mentorship program serves students who exhibit specific risk factors associated with dropping out and are not served by other programs, and it provides meaningful connections with adults that these students otherwise lack. Crafting an account of the way participation could reduce the likelihood that students will drop out of school is a critical first step in assessing effectiveness.

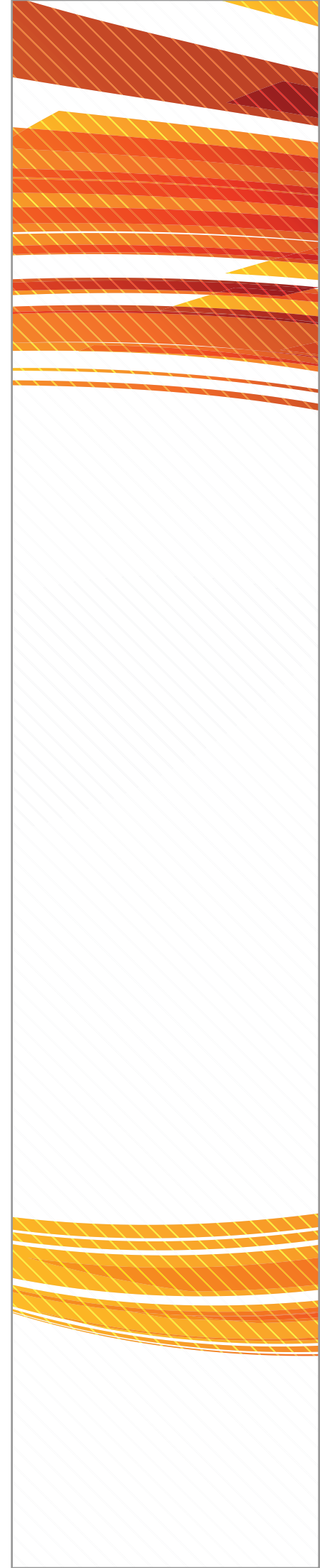
**Tracking the quality of implementation can improve program design and creates a foundation for more extensive evaluation.**

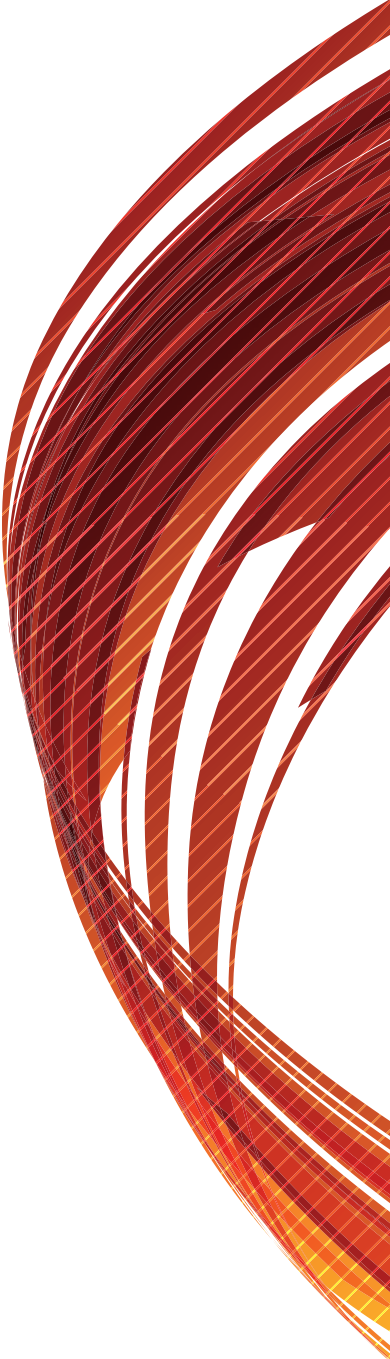
Practical evaluation considerations include assessing the nuts and bolts of implementation. With a clear sense of how an individual program or initiative could promote desired outcomes, museum and library staff can focus on how closely execution matches design, or “fidelity of implementation” (FOI).<sup>24</sup> FOI analyses, which are often linked to broader programmatic “logic models” that connect program activities to outputs and outcomes, can serve as critical intermediate benchmarks for success.<sup>25</sup> Ideally, the results of FOI assessments also provide formative feedback to guide program refinement and enhancement.

Assessing FOI involves identifying the critical components of an individual program/initiative and collecting the right data to understand whether each component is present and functioning as intended. The following types of questions typically guide FOI assessments:

- What are the key elements of the program/initiative—target populations, interventions/services provided, duration of participation (e.g., dosage)?
- To what degree are these elements consistently implemented within the program/initiative?
- Under what conditions are staff able to most successfully implement key elements of the program/initiative?
- What are the greatest barriers to successful implementation of different elements of the program/initiative?

Think back to the library mentorship program—an FOI analysis would track whether the program consistently serves the target population, if mentors are providing consistent support, whether experiences are comparable throughout the program, and if a sufficient share of mentees regularly attend and complete the program. Under these conditions, the library can reasonably assess the impact these activities have on program participants—e.g., do students persist in school toward graduation? After that step, the library can consider impacts on the broader community—e.g., how do these efforts contribute to reducing the dropout rate district-wide?





In Minnesota, the STEM Pathways Program is a pilot initiative that includes an evaluation partner tasked with helping the broader initiative refine implementation and track key academic outcomes. The partnership between the Minnesota Department of Education, Minneapolis Public Schools, the Minnesota Zoo, the Bell Museum of Natural History, the Bakken Museum, the Works Museum, and Starbase Minnesota is designed to promote underserved student achievement and long-term connection to STEM disciplines. The initiative does this by leveraging the expertise of the museum partners to provide high school students with opportunities to participate in applied, project-based STEM experiences—experiences that previous research has found to enhance student learning and engagement with academic content. The development of the initiative involved a full year of collaborative planning between partners to learn about one another, to explore the role informal STEM institutions can play to support formal STEM education, to establish common goals based on shared values, and to develop common tools and strategies for implementation.

In this example, the external evaluation was designed to understand partnership development, assess early implementation and preliminary student outcomes, and make recommendations for partnership and implementation refinement in the years ahead.<sup>26</sup> It is a mixed-method evaluation that relies on a combination of state records of student test scores to track academic outcomes, a survey to assess changes in student attitudes toward STEM disciplines, and interviews and focus groups with key informants at partner organizations and schools to assess the quality of partnership development and program implementation. While the external evaluation design may not isolate the direct impact of the program on student academic performance and attitudes, it will create a body of evidence to help improve program implementation while also highlighting benefits associated with program participation.



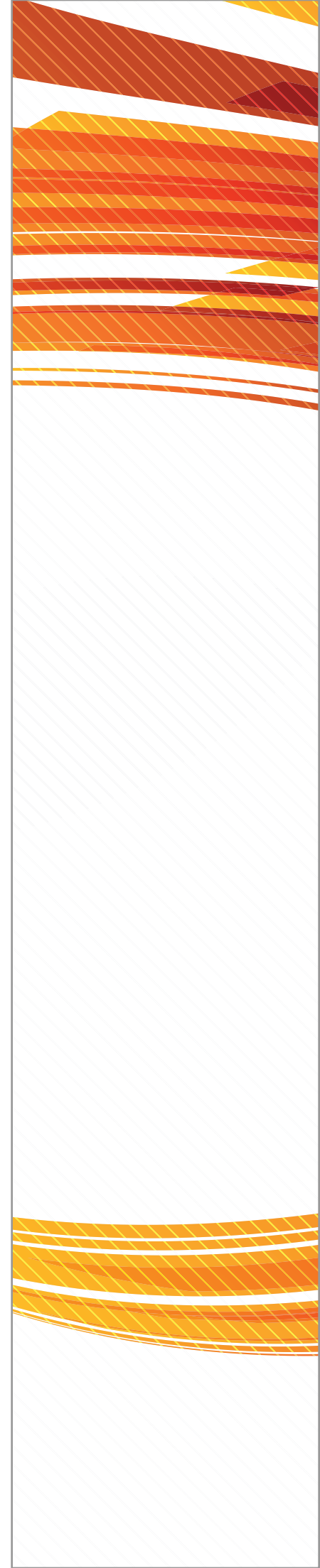
**Embrace the complexity of assessing community impact by focusing on contribution rather than attribution.**

In fields like medicine and psychology, experimental methods such as randomized controlled trials (RCT) and quasi-experimental methods designed to isolate the effect of individual interventions remain the gold standard for evidence-based research.<sup>27</sup> However, efforts by museums and libraries to improve social wellbeing, which are inherently complex, are not easily assessed using these methods. In many instances equivalent comparison groups for program beneficiaries do not exist or are not readily accessible, and randomization of program participation can be either infeasible or simply undesirable.

Many museum and library collaborations take place within larger efforts to disrupt cycles of disadvantage or address emerging challenges like growing elderly populations. These issues require multidimensional responses from numerous actors. Because museum and library programs do not exist in isolation, designing them to be evaluated in isolation may not be appropriate. Rather, an inclusionary, collective-impact perspective may be more suitable. Recent observations in the Stanford Social Innovation Review provide a useful reminder that “non-experimental methods help us learn about the effectiveness of interventions that are complex, place-based, evolving, and aimed at populations rather than individuals.”<sup>28</sup> This type of approach provides necessary flexibility but can still be rigorously assessed.

Collective-impact initiatives involve the collaboration of multiple organizations from different sectors coming together to address a specific social problem using a common agenda, coordinated efforts, and common measures of success.<sup>29</sup> Participating in a collective-impact effort also acknowledges the position museums and libraries occupy within networks of social support in their communities. Progress is tracked continually and fed back to guide strategic adjustments in programming. These efforts require long-term commitments and considerable human and financial resources but can be a good mission-fit for institutions setting out to transform their communities for the better.

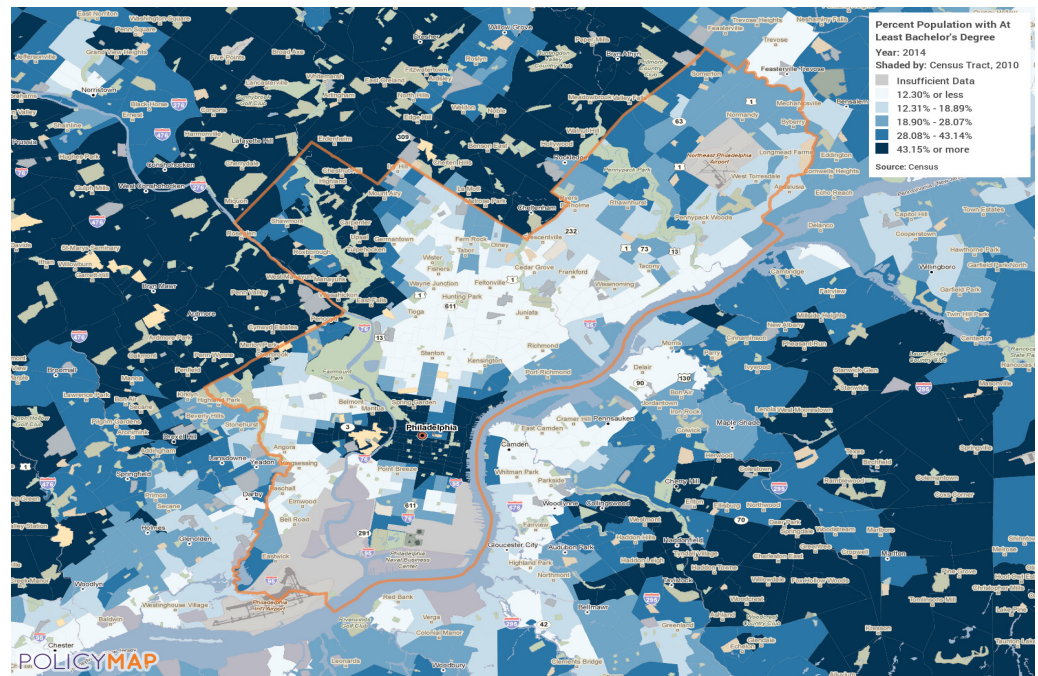
Typically, there is one entity that is the initiative’s “backbone,” tasked with keeping the work organized and on track. In some instances, museums or libraries can play this role, but more often they contribute to collective-impact initiatives as



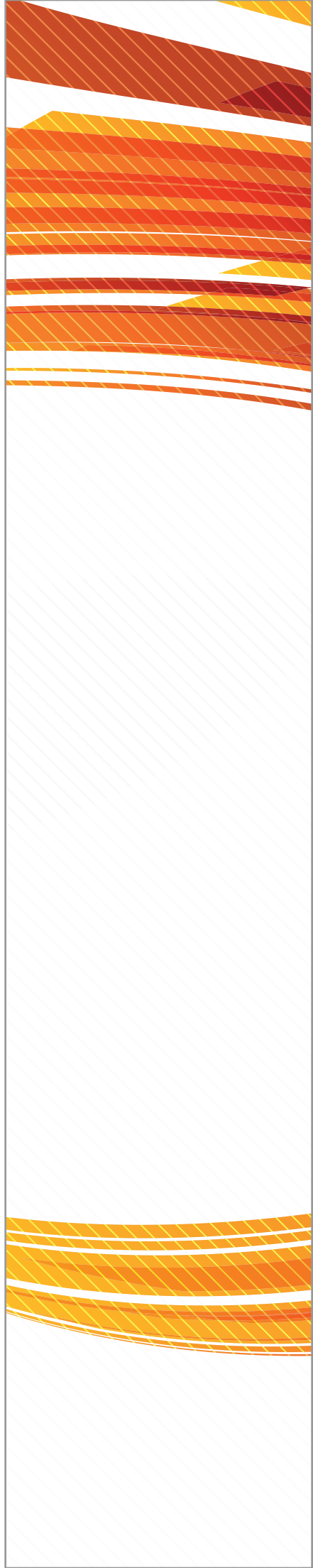
members of a broader team working together to address a common concern. As team members rather than leaders, museums and libraries can focus on their contributions without committing the considerable human and capital resources required to lead these efforts.

### ***Spotlight: The Free Library of Philadelphia***

The Free Library of Philadelphia (FLP) has taken big strides at an institutional level to change its culture toward being more community-oriented and has made an effort to conduct meaningful impact evaluation. An example of FLP’s leadership in both areas is that it has taken on the role of “backbone organization” in a formal Collective Impact effort. The Read by 4th initiative brings together more than 80 partners from across the city to support literacy among Philadelphia youth.<sup>30</sup> Entering its second year, Read by 4th remains in early stages of implementation but was designed in response to local need and with the intention to rigorously assess the quality of program implementation and outcomes throughout the life of the initiative.



Percent of population with at least a bachelor’s degree in Philadelphia, 2010-2014 (Source: PolicyMap)



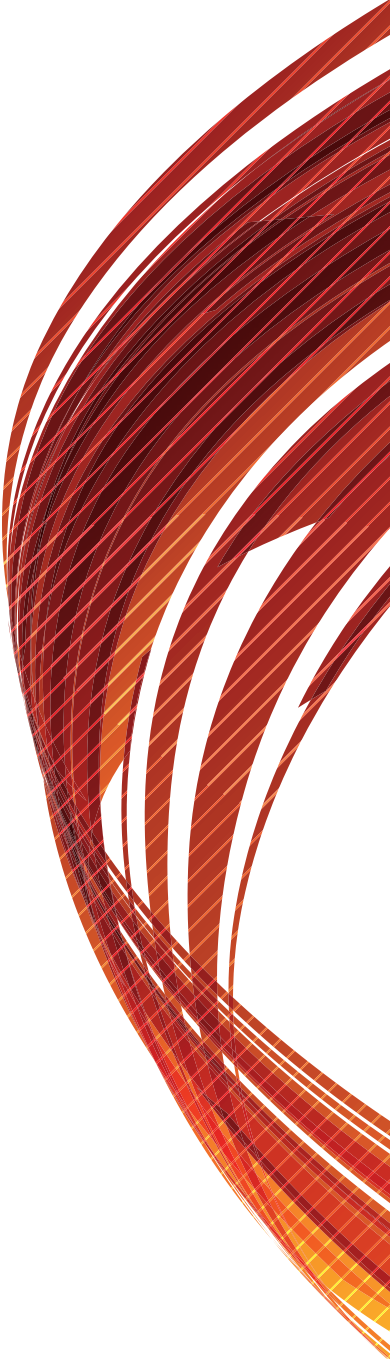
The FLP embarked on this initiative in response to a literacy crisis: Fewer than half the city’s children are reading on grade level by 4th grade. The initiative was designed to advance four key strategies that a body of research has identified as critical to developing literacy skills: 1) promoting in-home literacy development and early learning; 2) expanding summer and out-of-school learning opportunities; 3) supporting consistent school attendance; and 4) promoting evidence-based literacy instruction in schools.

Read by 4th is an example of a Collective Impact initiative through which multiple stakeholders are collaborating to create system-level changes to improve educational outcomes for city children. The dozens of organizations implementing Read by 4th share a common agenda—to substantially increase the number of Philadelphia youth reading on grade level by 4th grade by 2020. Read by 4th partners engage in mutually reinforcing activities to achieve their goals, which require long-term communication and collaboration—e.g., by ensuring that after-school and summer reading curricula are aligned with school district literacy criteria and that students get to school every day on time.

Read by 4th partners use a shared measurement system to track progress. A measurement system that includes both long-term outcomes (e.g., student reading proficiency on standardized tests) along with specified metrics to track implementation and intermediate outcomes for youth throughout the program (e.g., school attendance and reductions in summer-learning loss).

With considerable financial support from the William Penn Foundation, the FLP serves as the backbone organization for the initiative. In this position it is responsible for guiding the development and implementation of the strategic vision for the initiative, ensuring activity alignment across a diverse range of partners and their contributions to the initiative, establishing shared measurement practices among partners, building public will for the effort, advocating for policy and attracting funding.

The initiative is guided by an action framework that clearly articulates the vision of Read by 4th, the assumptions built into the design, programmatic outcomes to be achieved, and indicators to track over time to assess incremental progress toward achieving long-term outcomes.<sup>31</sup> As the initiative evolves, the support



provided by the library's leadership role will ensure the delivery of clear metrics on how well the initiative is being implemented and the progress being made toward the initiative's goals.

While libraries and museums can be catalytic partners in collective impact initiatives, observing system-level changes associated with these projects can take a long time—years, even decades. These efforts typically track some set of indicators throughout the course of the endeavor that are continually fed back into program design. Similarly, for many types of initiatives museums and libraries can identify key measures of implementation and intermediate outcomes that can be used to inform mid-stream program adjustments as necessary.

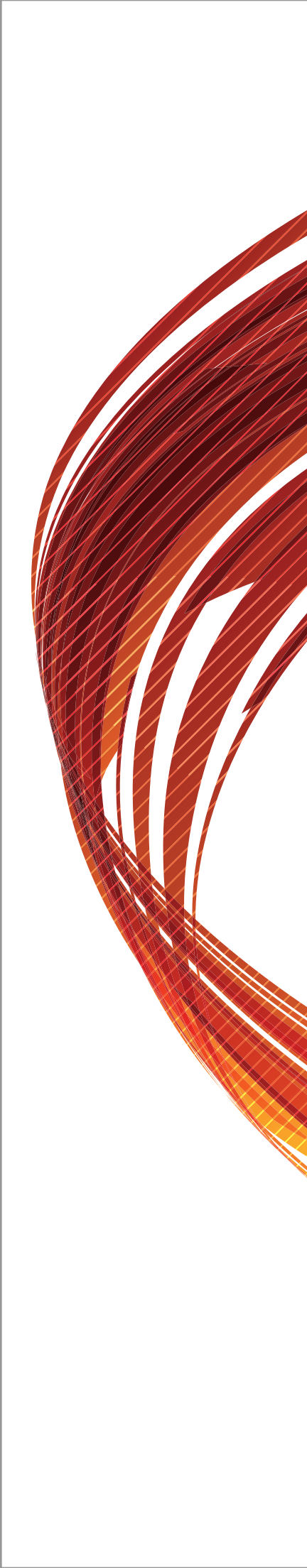
Designing and implementing collaborative efforts to enhance social wellbeing in response to identified needs that continuously feed evaluation results back into implementation can be difficult and time intensive. In addition, securing and sustaining partner and community buy-in to continue these activities over the long term requires the ongoing commitment of financial and human resources. Museums and libraries are finding they need to develop or acquire new skill sets to meet increasingly complex challenges to pursue this work. The following section reviews emerging skills and competencies museum and library staff need to enhance their efforts to spark positive change.





## IV. Building Capacity to Support and Spark Change

Credit: San Diego  
Natural History  
Museum



As museums and libraries seek to support social wellbeing, they frequently find the skills and competencies required to do this work extend beyond those commonly taught in library science and museum studies programs. Professionals in the field say that to position themselves within community networks as catalysts for change, altering ways of thinking about what they do is as important as adjusting ways of doing.

Established frameworks for “21st century skills” include areas like flexibility and problem-solving in addition to technical skills like digital literacy.<sup>32</sup> For all museum and library staff—from leadership to frontline staff—an understanding of how their individual work and collaborative efforts with other stakeholders collectively impact multiple dimensions of wellbeing is critical for leveraging new skills effectively. Museum and library staff also repeatedly highlighted the importance of a clear institutional commitment to new and expanded services as essential to their success. Without high-level support, even the most skilled individuals will have difficulty sustaining innovative efforts.

This section focuses on three types of competencies that support community-focused and catalytic work: 1) managing participatory models of community engagement; 2) subject matter expertise in dimensions of social wellbeing; and 3) technical know-how related to particular needs and interests. It also explores three key ways that institutions obtain skill sets and facilitate their use: 1) training and supporting existing staff; 2) hiring new employees with different professional backgrounds; and 3) partnering with organizations whose staff have desired skills.

## A. Participatory Models of Community Engagement

***Understanding community priorities and culture through participatory models of engagement creates opportunities for responsive and, ultimately, catalytic programming.***

A seemingly paradoxical way for museums and libraries to lead positive community change is for them to cede their role as authorities and let community members weigh in as experts on their own needs and their perceptions of local assets. This participatory engagement model has been used for decades in the city and regional planning field, and more recently in public health efforts.<sup>33</sup> This type of approach collects actionable information, empowers residents, and legitimizes official or institutional activities within communities. Museums and libraries are using this model in novel ways, and doing so requires community engagement skills and the ability to meaningfully incorporate feedback into programming.



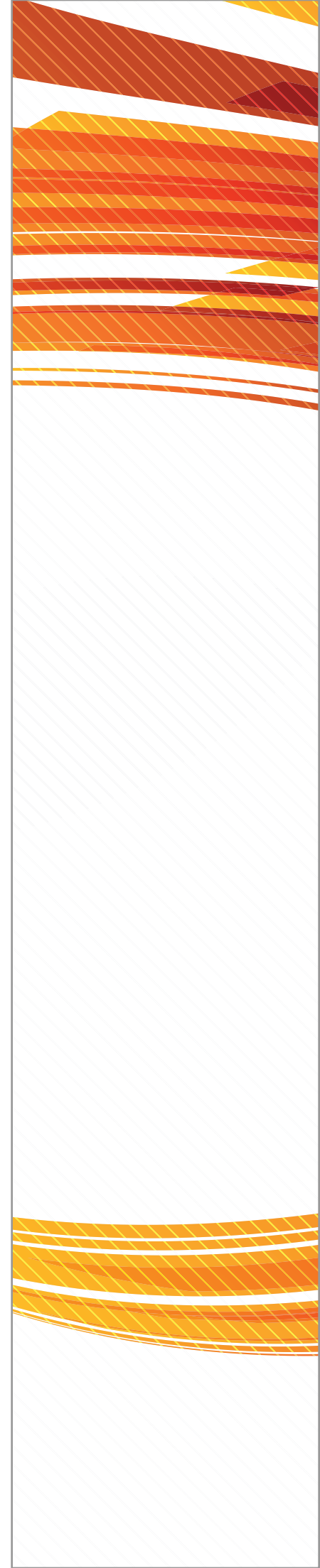
Adopting this approach does not mean that staff should not have subject matter expertise or professional museum or library training, but it is important for institutions to be mindful of how and when they act as experts. Positioning museums and libraries to both learn from and act upon participatory engagement requires openness and flexibility at the institutional level and staff who are able to form lasting relationships with stakeholders, systematically listen to and engage with the community (as objectively as possible), and recognize and respect cultural context. In certain circumstances, staff members can be process experts and allow the community members to be the content experts.

The Nurture Nature Center (NNC) in Easton, Pennsylvania, employs a deliberative democracy model, which is a type of participatory engagement that uses dialogue to move toward consensus-based decisions and actions.<sup>34</sup> NNC intentionally hired staff with community organizing and outreach experience to implement the model. When designing a program to teach neighbors about environmental risks, NNC administered a survey to gather residents' opinions about environmental topics that are important to them and to learn how NNC could deliver educational programming on those topics. Based on this feedback, NNC created the Focus on Floods campaign, which uses multimedia educational materials to teach the region's residents how to prepare for floods.

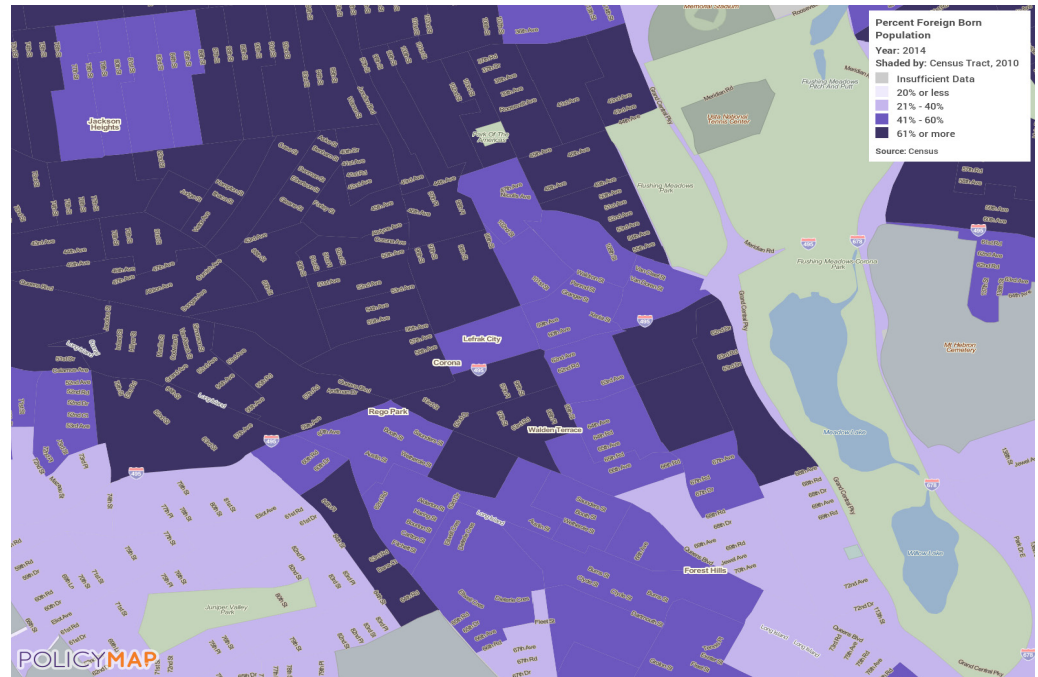
NNC's community engagement model expanded to include focus groups and public forums in community spaces in three towns susceptible to flooding. This allowed it to collect additional input and keep the public involved in decision-making about the format and content of programs. NNC also hired a science director with an environmental science degree and community outreach skills to expand NNC's work on environmental issues throughout the region. One outcome has been that residents have signed on to lead popular community tours in four neighborhoods. The tours serve as tools to maintain and increase resident involvement in civic life. Deliberative decision-making can leverage a small staff or limited program resources by enlisting residents in action around key issues to effect larger change.

### ***Spotlight: Queens Museum***

The Queens Museum in New York City, which historically focused on visual arts, established and refined a community engagement model that nourishes collaborative endeavors at the far end of the tradition/innovation continuum: The subject matter is not necessarily tied to museum exhibits, and it takes place largely outside the institution's walls. This approach is the result of an intentional



shift by museum leadership. In 2006, the museum committed to concentrating its outreach on the neighborhood of Corona, immediately to the west of their building. Corona is an ethnically diverse neighborhood with a relatively high poverty rate. The community is home to a large population of immigrants, 40 percent of whom, by some estimates, are undocumented.



Percent of population that is foreign-born, Corona, Queens, NY, 2010-2014. (Source: PolicyMap)

The community engagement staff of the museum use a community-organizing model to guide their work.<sup>35</sup> Community organizers build participatory engagement by working with citizens to identify important issues and then form strategies for group action to address those issues. While mobilizing around a specific challenge is not an appropriate mission fit for every museum or library, in Queens it has led to fruitful collaboration. Museum staff search for opportunities where they can integrate community goals (e.g., safer schools, better public transportation, revised immigration policy) with various forms of cultural activity—ranging from dance/movement to murals to protest signs. The goal is to use relationships between the museum and local communities to bring about positive change in residents' lives and to transform the relationships between the museum and residents by making the museum, to some extent, accountable and responsive to residents.

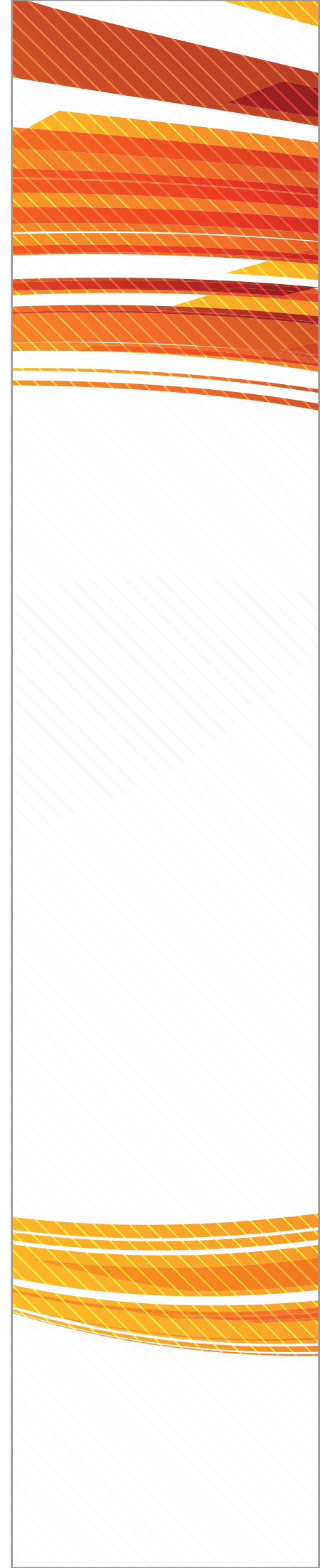


In particular, the museum staff has been an active participant in a community planning process in Corona focused on the redesign of Corona Plaza, a modestly sized public space adjacent to the 103rd Street subway stop on the #7 train line. The museum mobilized a variety of organizations through existing relationships to initiate a collaborative planning process for the plaza. The museum was also a central hub for gathering community input into the plaza design. It will continue to be involved in programming of cultural events in the plaza, health and social services provision, and community organizing and conversations. Although the full buildout of the plaza has been delayed by city contracting issues, public funds have been secured.

The museum has focused on creating fewer, deeper relationships centered on sustained engagement rather than many partnerships that may be more temporary. One example of a longtime partner is Mujeres en Movimiento (Women in Movement), which was founded by a group of immigrant women who have taken on active organizing around immigrant rights and using the arts to dramatize their agenda. Their activities led to an exhibit of immigrant rights art at the Queens Museum and a set of walking tours/performance pieces sponsored by Elastic City. At the same time, museum community-organizing staff supported the organization's effort to create protected bike lanes and traffic-calming measures for greater pedestrian and bicycle access into a local park—efforts that involved collaboration with bike advocacy organizations, such as Transportation Alternatives, as well as other immigrant rights organizations including IMI Corona and Make the Road NY.

There can be tensions between museum staff and the community, particularly around “a different sense of time.” In contrast to how a museum functions in terms of exhibit planning and grant and report writing, community engagement requires an ability to respond to the “fierce urgency of now.” Community crises do not conform to a 9 to 5, Monday through Friday schedule, which puts stress on museum staff as they attempt to serve as a bridge between the settings.

Still, by making a commitment to a particular neighborhood and deploying an adaptable community-organizing approach, the Queens Museum has built strong relationships with local entities and a sterling reputation among near neighbors. The combination of relationship-building and a willingness to take on new issues has enabled the museum to be more strategic in the work it takes on, and therefore increased the likelihood that its activities will have significant and sustained impact.





## B. Subject Matter Expertise

### **Museums and libraries can use additional subject matter expertise to enhance their impact on certain dimensions of social wellbeing.**

As museums and libraries work to promote various aspects of social wellbeing, there is demand for deeper expertise within key content areas where many institutions focus their work: lifelong learning and cultural engagement, public and mental health, economic development, and place-making and the environment. Professional preparation in fields like social work, nursing, and classroom instruction can complement participatory engagement around these content areas—bringing together cultural and on-the-ground expertise with individuals who have been trained to respond effectively. While some staff possess deep knowledge and interest in different aspects of these broad fields, new types of programs that offer higher or more specialized levels of service may require thorough and rigorous professional qualifications.

For example, professional public health expertise can help museums and libraries better serve vulnerable populations. The Pima County Public Library (PCPL) in Arizona initiated a partnership with the local health department to bring public health nurses to work with patrons dealing with homelessness and mental health issues, particularly at the downtown branch. The program was such a success—patrons valued the services, and staff reported a decline in behavioral incidents—that the program expanded to send nurses on a rotating basis to other branches to address broader public health concerns.

PCPL also partnered with the University of Arizona’s College of Nursing to further supplement the library’s public health activities. Branch librarians were getting requests for food from children and observing disruptive behavior they believed to be associated with hunger, so they turned to the university’s nursing students for help. The students’ knowledge about healthy diet, food allergies, and public health communication protocols (e.g., developing informational materials for parents and making them available in both English and Spanish) were vital to setting up the program. The student nurses helped the library write parental permission forms for youth to participate in the program and think through how to transport, store, and prepare food in a library, including accounting for dietary restrictions. The public health nurses and nursing students also share knowledge with library staff for program curriculum.

## C. Technical Know-How

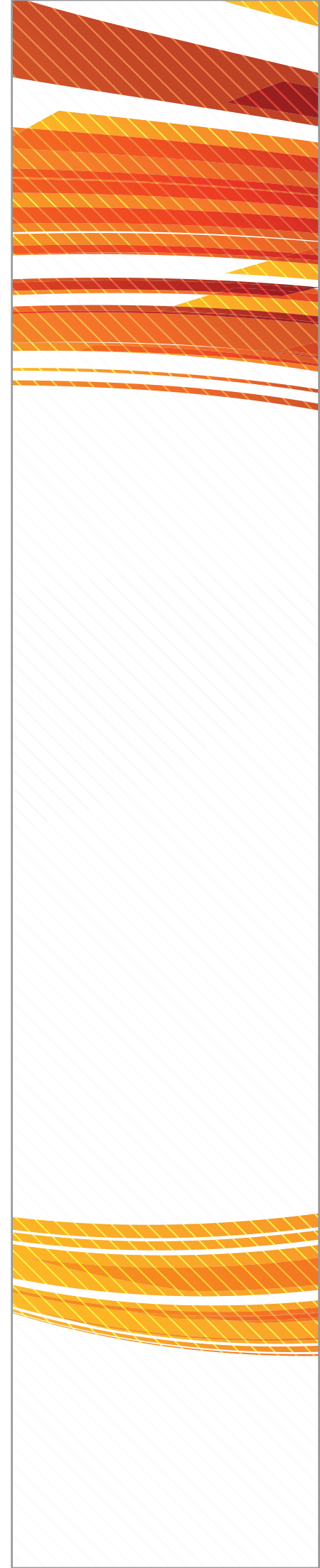
### **Multiple technical skill sets can support museums' and libraries' efforts to impact a variety of social wellbeing dimensions.**

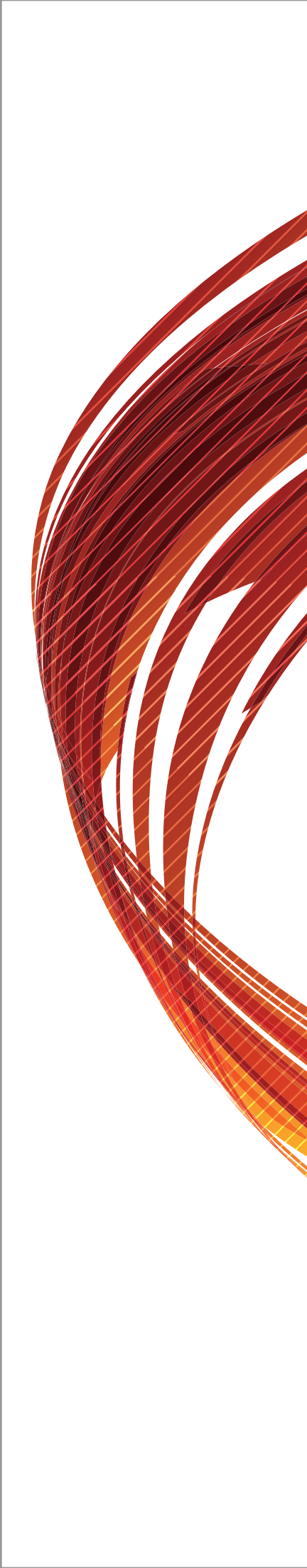
Technical skills involve specialized knowledge to perform discrete tasks, which can be as basic as setting up and using an email account, or as complex as writing grants, running focus groups, or designing program evaluations. While the technical skills required by most professional fields change over time, staff at museums and libraries are being called on to learn new skills to perform traditional job functions, and also to engage in a much wider set of activities.

Although technology is the most prominent area where staff are putting new technical skills to work—they are teaching patrons to use e-readers and 3D printers—staff are also assisting patrons with applying for government benefits, teaching food preparation, playing musical instruments, and speaking patrons' native languages. These skills build upon the core competencies of museums and libraries and can often be acquired either through training or hiring new staff. In Los Angeles, the Getty Museum's "Language through Art" program brought in local English as a second language (ESL) teachers to advise and train staff in the creation of collection-based lessons for English language learners. These kinds of technical skills enable museums and libraries to address diverse aspects of social wellbeing by enhancing patrons' access to fresh and healthy food, health care, and health insurance, and by readying patrons for employment.

In northern California, the City of Richmond Public Library (CRPL) developed the Richmond Digital Health Literacy Project to address both the divide in digital literacy and health disparities in its city. CRPL staff receive continuous training and professional development opportunities in digital literacy from the California State Library and the University of California, Davis. Staff learned how to assess learners' levels of digital literacy and facilitate classes in eight digital health curriculum topics for English and Spanish language learners. The classes range from fundamental digital literacy skills like accessing a web browser to obtaining health insurance and learning about family and emotional wellness online.

CRPL partnered with eight sites to conduct digital literacy classes in locations accessible to community members, including adult education centers, city community centers, public housing sites, nonprofit service sites, and public schools. In the first six months, 120 adults completed the class curriculum and received refurbished laptops and home internet access with a free three-month subscription. Through training staff, partnering for offsite community access, and developing an innovative health literacy curriculum, CRPL achieved measurable changes in learners' knowledge of nine eHealth Literacy Measures.





## D. Obtaining and Applying New Skills and Competencies

Museums and libraries have several options for acquiring desired skills and capacities: training in-house staff and changing their job descriptions and titles to be more reflective of adjusted priorities, hiring new employees with the right skills, and partnering with other organizations. Some combination of these approaches may be most appropriate given the mix of programs and other institutional characteristics. Institutions may also consider reorganizing departments or reporting lines to find a proper place for new skill sets.

Institution sector, size, and location can all influence decisions around skills and competencies. Libraries that are government departments may be subject local hiring freezes when budgets are tight, and civil service rules around hiring and promotion. Museums may have foundation support for a particular staff position that specifies a certain professional background. Small institutions often need each staff member to fill a variety of roles and cannot afford to have subject specialists on payroll. In rural areas, the prospective employee pools are smaller. For example, one rural librarian said it was already difficult to find job candidates with master's degrees in library science, and they had not sought out other types of degrees. In such instances, targeted training might be more feasible than hiring. Both rural and small entities may benefit from partners, when they are available, and training provided by external organizations.

Along the continuum of community-oriented collaboration, different types of efforts lend themselves to different approaches. Hiring new staff with community engagement skills is effective for core activities that take place offsite, particularly when the institution has an interest in branding these services and exercising quality control. Expanded activities on-site may require technical skills that can be gained through training, while specialized services like personal-finance education or mental-health counseling may be most effectively offered through a partnership with a local agency or volunteer providers. Expanded activities in community spaces may require a combination of enhanced in-house abilities and partner expertise.

The stage and expected lifecycle of a particular initiative are also relevant considerations when acquiring new skill sets. The use of external personnel,

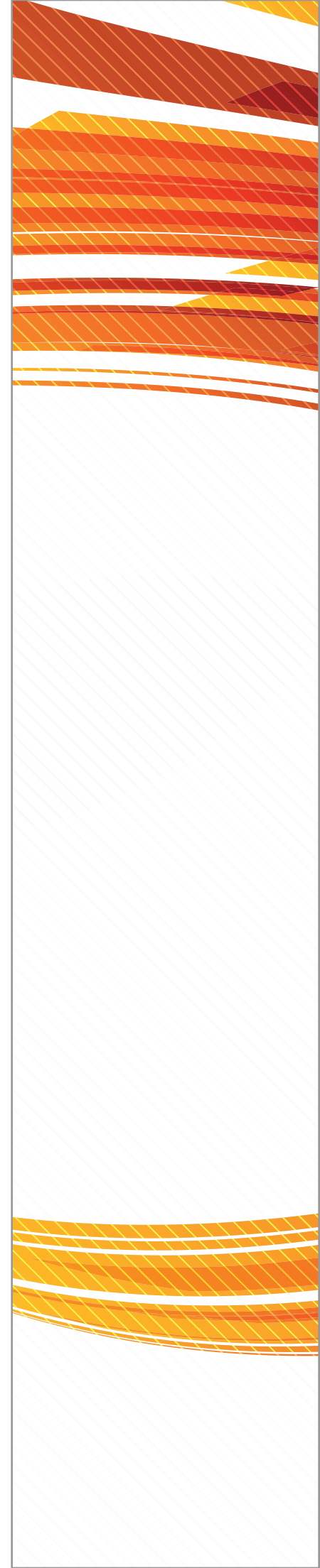


either a consultant or temporary staff, can test whether a new hire makes sense. Several library systems have hired social workers after successful trial periods. Whether a program runs for a year or becomes permanent affects the way museums and libraries acquire the skills to implement the program.

Other factors include:

- Whether skills can be taught quickly and learned well;
- Whether a skill is transferrable to other work at the museum or library;
- Whether honing the skill requires experience or mentorship from senior staff.

Each of these factors can influence the amount of investment required by a museum or library to acquire and maintain the skills needed to implement programming that will enhance social wellbeing in the communities they serve.



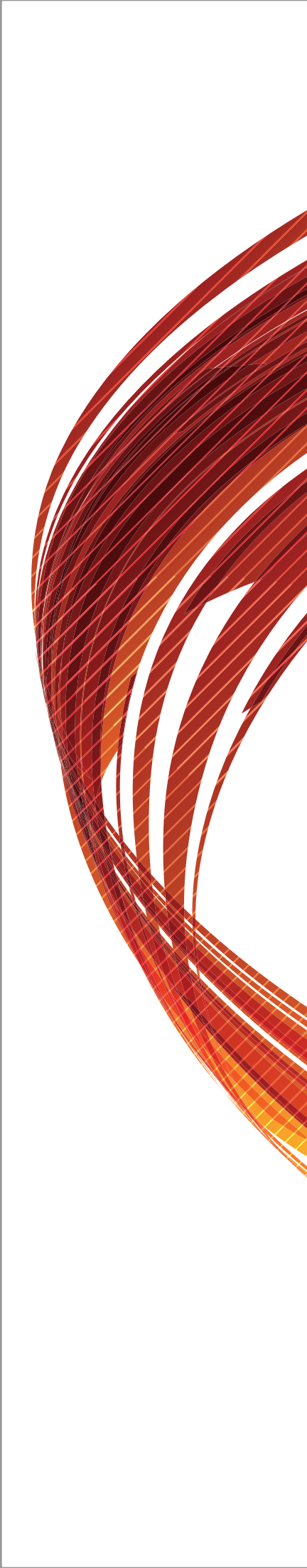


## V. Conclusion



**Children play doctor in Please Touch Museum's Children's Hospital of Philadelphia medical center exhibit. This exhibit enhances the ability of little ones and their families to learn about medical experiences through play, whether they are driving the ambulance, operating the state-of-the-art x-ray or MRI machines, or caring for a newborn in the nursery.**

**Credit: Please Touch Museum, photo by Michael Branscom**



In the 21st century, museums and libraries have been adjusting their priorities and expanding their activities in recognition of the interconnectedness of diverse community assets, needs, and opportunities. As seen throughout this document, museums and libraries are already working in innovative ways to address multifaceted community challenges, often in collaboration with partners. They are forging new ground in the services they provide to their patrons—services to help individuals develop new skills, improve physical or mental health, connect with others in new ways, exercise their political voice, and participate in making their communities better places to live.

These efforts are challenging museums and libraries to develop new ways of doing their core work such as navigating information and curating collections. At the same time, museum and library staff are developing new skills to engage deeply with local residents both within their own buildings and in community spaces.

As museums and libraries continue on this path, thinking about the contributions their efforts make across different dimensions of social wellbeing can help institutions link longstanding activities with new initiatives. In addition, understanding their efforts within a collective-impact framework can help museum and library professionals think practically about how their activities can affect their communities: there may be many circumstances where it makes sense to contribute to broader efforts and there also may be occasions for museums and libraries to be the catalytic agent that sparks change. These frameworks also provide a useful language for museums and libraries to articulate the value of their work to multiple audiences (members of the public, funders, and their own staff), and justify their decisions to pursue, or turn down, new opportunities.

Applying the social wellbeing and collective-impact frameworks to partnerships with community-based organizations, government agencies, and other cultural or educational institutions can advance the work of museums and libraries in several ways. The frameworks can help institutions strategically add “bench strength” to support new types of activities and reach people to an extent they could not do on their own. The frameworks can also help museums and libraries make the case for a seat at the table for local discussions about policy, budget, and civic priorities. Officials in both sectors acknowledge participation in such discussions can help them better serve the public and increase their own relevance. Together these approaches and activities can position museums and libraries to be co-creators of positive change in their communities.



<sup>1</sup> Anchor Institutions Task Force. (2013). *Anchor institutions: An interpretive review essay*. New York: Taylor, H. L., & Luter, G.

<sup>2</sup> Sandmann, L. R., Furco, A., & Adams, K. R. (2016). Building the field of higher education engagement: A 20-year retrospective. *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*, 20, 1-14.

<sup>3</sup> Zuckerman, D. (2013, March). *Hospitals building healthier communities: Embracing the anchor mission*. College Park: The Democracy Collaborative at the University of Maryland.

<sup>4</sup> Dubb, S., McKinley, S., & Howard, T. (2013). *The anchor dashboard: Aligning institutional practice to meet low-income community needs*. College Park: The Democracy Collaborative at the University of Maryland.

<sup>5</sup> Stiglitz, J., Sen, A., & Fitoussi, J-P. (n.d.). *Report by the Commission on the Measurement of Economic Progress and Social Progress*. Retrieved August 30, 2016, from [http://www.insee.fr/fr/publications-et-services/dossiers\\_web/stiglitz/doc-commission/RAPPORT\\_anglais.pdf](http://www.insee.fr/fr/publications-et-services/dossiers_web/stiglitz/doc-commission/RAPPORT_anglais.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Stern, M., & Seifert, S. (2013, December). *Culture ecology, neighborhood vitality, and social wellbeing – A Philadelphia project*. Philadelphia: CultureBlocks. Retrieved August 30, 2016, from <https://www.arts.gov/exploring-our-town/sites/arts.gov/exploring-our-town/files/SIAP%20CULTUREBLOCKS%20REPORT%20DEC2013%20V1.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> [www.fsg.org/ideas-in-action/collective-impact](http://www.fsg.org/ideas-in-action/collective-impact)

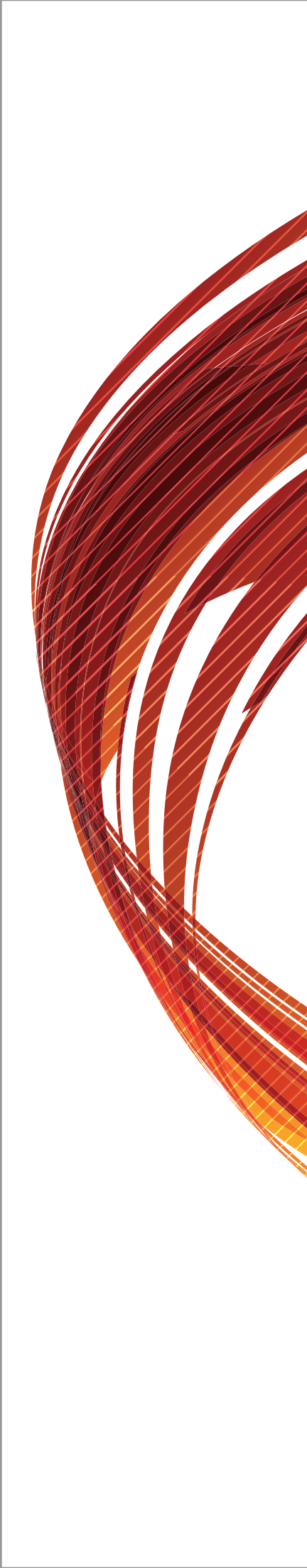
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