

RISE PARTNERSHIP IN ACTION

Greater Philadelphia Cultural Alliance



Overview

Established in 1972, the Greater Philadelphia Cultural Alliance is a service organization for arts and culture in the greater Philadelphia region with more than 400 member organizations ranging from small fiscally sponsored projects to the largest cultural institutions in the area, such as the Philadelphia Museum of Art and the Mann Center for the Performing Arts.

The Cultural Alliance is further enhancing its impact as one of 15 organizations selected to participate in the RISE Partnership's "Implementation" phase.

In response to the pandemic, the organization launched the COVID-19 Arts Aid PHL Fund, a pooled emergency relief fund for local artists and arts organizations. "In total, we distributed \$4 million to more than a thousand individual artists and over 400 arts



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Allison Vanyur, Senior Programs Manager
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organizations,” says Allison Vanyur, senior programs manager at the Cultural Alliance.

Until recently, Vanyur was the program manager for STAMP, which stands for “students at museums in Philly,” a youth arts and cultural experience program that was the primary focus of the Cultural Alliance’s work through the RISE Partnership.

STAMP aims to provide Philadelphia teenagers with opportunities to engage in arts and cultural experiences through free museum admission. The program was designed by a core group of ten STAMP teen council members who served as an advisory committee for the program. Each teen was assigned to work with one or two of the approximately 25 museum partners, serving as liaisons between the Cultural Alliance and museum. The teen council members met regularly with museum staff and helped them develop teen programming, including an open mic night at the National Museum of American Jewish History and a teen photo contest at the African American Museum in Philadelphia.

One of the main projects the teen council worked on was the “Know Before You Go” video series in collaboration with nonprofit organizations Art-Reach and Philadelphia Young Playwrights. “The videos showed a museum from when you walk through the door to when you leave, to break down the barriers that – not just teens – but also families or people with disabilities, might need to know before they enter a museum space,” explains Vanyur.

As STAMP evolved over the years and the Cultural Alliance underwent leadership transitions and organization-wide strategic planning efforts, it was time to reevaluate the purpose, target audience, and impact of the program. According to Vanyur, “it was an opportunity to rethink what STAMP is and where the program fit within our Cultural Alliance priorities.”

Eventually, Art-Reach took over STAMP – a data-driven decision informed by the Cultural Alliance’s work with the RISE Partnership. First, the organization looked at program usage and attendance. STAMP started with

physical passes that were mailed to any teenager who signed up. 37,000 passes were mailed during this era, but usage across the dozens of museum partners was hard to track. In 2018, STAMP launched a mobile app, an idea of the teen council. “They made a lot of decisions about where the program should lead; they were the ones who told us we needed a mobile app, so we got a mobile app,” says Vanyur. The app resulted in over 2,000 downloads and seemed promising at first for better tracking usage and attendance, but the data ended up telling a different story.

“The first thing that RISE helped us with was data analysis from the app data; we had a lot of different spreadsheets from a lot of different staff members that we had to go through,” says Vanyur. The Cultural Alliance learned that downloads didn’t lead to more usage or better attendance tracking. “It was just really hard to tell who was using it and how often ... what we learned is that there was a kind of core group of active users that were visiting museums all the time,” explains Vanyur.

After analyzing the app data, the Cultural Alliance moved to a series of focus groups with museum partners to better understand how much

they prioritized STAMP and teen participation at their institutions. “RISE really helped us hone in on the key questions that we were asking these folks,” says Vanyur. Through the focus groups, the organization learned that museums thought about STAMP quite differently, which dictated who was the point of contact and how the museum prioritized the program. They also found that some museums already had robust teen programming and saw STAMP as a great additive, but not necessarily something they needed. For others, STAMP was their only connection to teens and they deeply valued the program, but it wasn’t resulting in a lot of young people coming through their doors.

Through the data analysis, focus groups, and an organization-wide strategic planning process, the Cultural Alliance realized they were not the most appropriate administrator of the STAMP program. “We didn’t feel that Cultural Alliance was the right organization; the program was great, but we wanted the right organization to manage it. We don’t have a direct connection to teens, we don’t have a direct connection to the school district – our primary work is through cultural institutions and that’s not where high

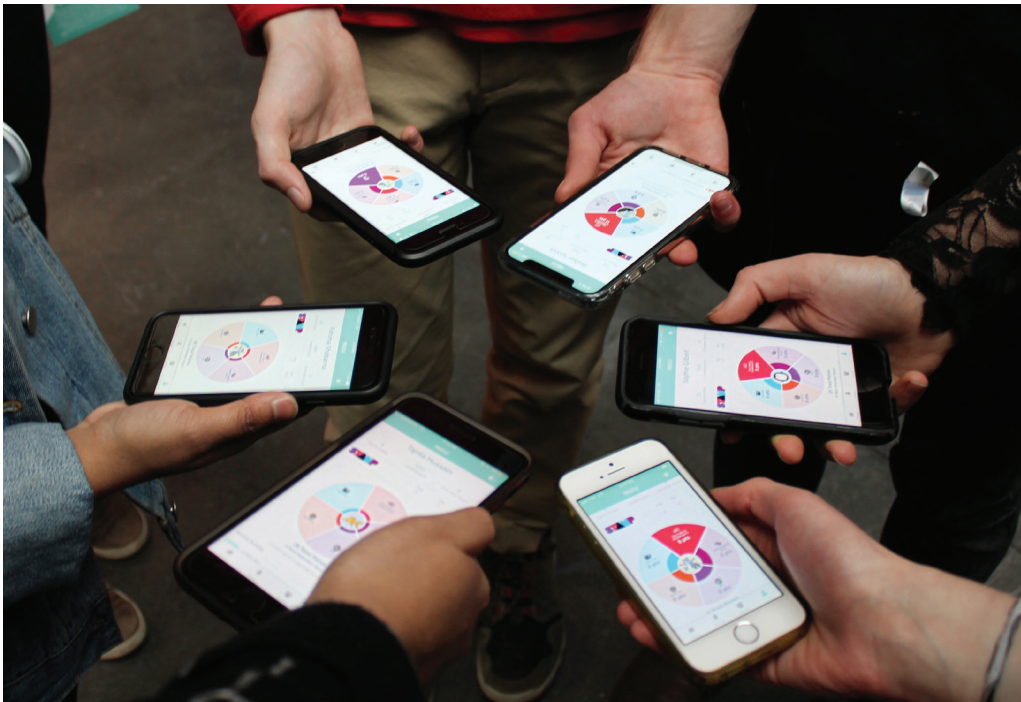


school students are getting their information,” explains Vanyur.

The Cultural Alliance worked to identify and vet organizations to take over the program. Ultimately Art-Reach, an existing partner of STAMP, decided to take over the program. Art-Reach primarily focuses on accessibility in cultural spaces and they work with many high schools, specifically special needs high schools, on accessible

field trips and cultural experiences. Given their mission, programming, and existing partnerships with school districts, it was a natural fit for Art-Reach to take over STAMP.

STAMP transitioned from the Cultural Alliance to Art-Reach in the fall of 2020, a decision that was deeply informed by data-driven learnings from the RISE Partnership. Vanyur says both organizations felt it was the right move.



Established in 2018, The RISE (Readiness, Implementation, Sustainability for Effectiveness) Partnership supports promising Greater Philadelphia and Southern New Jersey nonprofit organizations. The RISE Partnership Evaluation Funders Learning Community is the first convening supported by a network of funders in the region. The Learning Community is a collaborative effort with the Barra Foundation, Campbell Soup Company, Horner Foundation, Nelson Foundation, Philadelphia Foundation, PropelNext/Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, Scattergood Foundation, and United Way of Greater Philadelphia and Southern New Jersey, and a partnership with YaleEVAL of The Consultation Center at Yale. The Partnership provides nonprofits with resources and training to strengthen organizational effectiveness and ensure a greater impact on social, economic, health, and educational conditions in communities, including the effects of racism, intergenerational poverty and trauma.

For more information visit therisepartnership.org

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