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# Assessing the Fundraising Impact of power2give on Local Arts Councils

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May, 2016

To the Dean of the Graduate School:

We are submitting a thesis written by Diana M. Berti entitled *Assessing The Fundraising Impact of “power2give” On Local Arts Councils*. We recommend acceptance in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Arts Administration.

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ASSESSING THE FUNDRAISING IMPACT OF *power2give* ON  
LOCAL ARTS COUNCILS

A Thesis  
Presented to the Faculty  
Of the  
College of Visual and Performing Arts  
In Partial Fulfillment  
Of the  
Requirements for the Degree  
Of  
Master of Arts  
In  
Arts Administration  
Winthrop University

May, 2016

By

Diana M. Berti

## Abstract

Nonprofit arts organizations, like all nonprofit organizations, are always in search of a fundraising “silver bullet.” Does a program or product exist that raises more money, engages more donors, and minimizes effort and expense? The Arts & Science Council in Charlotte, North Carolina launched a new online crowdfunding platform in 2011 hoping to do just that. *Power2give* was designed specifically for nonprofit arts organizations to add crowdfunding to their fundraising arsenal. The platform was designed to be an inexpensive and easy to use option for local arts councils to adopt for their communities. Now four years later, *power2give* has expanded to 24 communities and raised over \$6 million for arts organizations. This thesis offers the first in-depth look at how *power2give* is being used by arts organizations and local arts councils across the nation. Is it a fundraising “silver bullet,” or just another passing trend?

### Acknowledgements

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## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

The United States descended into an economic recession beginning in December 2007. The economy rapidly declined throughout 2008 and conditions continued to worsen into the summer of 2009 (Ramos, 2013). This economic downturn had wide reaching effects into the nonprofit industry in America, and there is much evidence to suggest that arts organizations were among the most affected nonprofit organizations. A 2011 study by the Nonprofit Research Collaborative indicated that arts organizations saw a 38% decline in contributions, the largest decline reported by any nonprofit sector. Adding another burden to arts organizations was the significant decline in the value of endowments, with some endowments losing up to 40% of their pre-recession value (Penero, 2009). A 2009 article from James Panero explains, “Commonly, arts institutions and foundations draw their endowment income based on a rolling average of income over several quarters. The last three devastating quarters are only now becoming a significant part of the average” (Panero, 2009). So while giving levels continued to decrease in 2008, 2009, and 2010, arts organizations saw little help on the horizon as they braced themselves for endowment income to drop sharply in 2010 and 2011.

The arts community in Charlotte, North Carolina was particularly hard hit by this series of events, as they had long relied on the leadership and generosity of two mammoth banking institutions headquartered there: Wachovia and Bank of America. In fact, Charlotte has been home to one of the nation’s largest local arts councils for many years, the Arts & Science Council (ASC). Founded in 1958 to run a consolidated United



Arts Fund (UAF) drive, the ASC also served as a clearing house for cultural events. In the ensuing five decades, the ASC had grown to become one of the largest local arts councils in the nation, with its 2007 annual fund campaign raising just over \$11.5 million. The largest portion of campaign funds, \$7.8 million, were raised from workplace giving campaigns at Bank of America, Wachovia, and dozens of other corporate headquarters and businesses based in Charlotte.

This corporate giving tradition received a tremendous shock in 2009 when Wachovia, newly shod of its chief executive and “teetering on the brink of insolvency,” was purchased by San Francisco-based Wells Fargo (Frazier, 2011). Wachovia’s demise, Bank of America’s troubles, and the impact of the economic downturn was felt deeply throughout the business community in Charlotte and, consequently, had a profound impact on arts fundraising for several years. In 2009, the ASC’s workplace giving campaign was slashed nearly in half, generating only \$4.4 million. The entire 2009 campaign raised a mere \$7 million, 37% short of the \$11.2 million goal. Workplace giving would continue to suffer for the next several years, with the 2010 and 2011 campaigns remaining flat at the \$4.4 million mark.

While arts organizations and the nonprofit sector as a whole scrambled to cut budgets and examine creative solutions for meeting their fundraising shortfalls, a game-changing new fundraising practice was emerging in the political arena. The recognition of crowdfunding as an effective fundraising tool began in 2008 with the overwhelming success of online fundraising efforts for Barack Obama’s presidential election campaign. Obama used crowdfunding to raise \$500 million through online donations, twelve times as much as John Kerry raised in 2004. Most of these donations were in increments of

less than \$100 (Hill, 2009). Obama's use of the Internet has been compared to a change in politics on the scale of how John F. Kennedy changed the way that television is used in political campaigns (Hill, 2009).

The advantages of crowdfunding were quickly apparent before the primaries ended. During January of 2008, Obama was able to raise \$32 million, significantly more than Hillary Clinton's fundraising total of \$13.5 million during the same time period (Morris, 2008). The reason Obama was able to raise so much so quickly is that he could ask the same supporters to give small amounts again and again. The traditional campaign fundraising model, which is also used in the nonprofit arena, focused on raising the maximum allowable donation from the small pool of its largest donors first. In contrast, crowdfunding focuses on collecting smaller gifts from many donors. By January of 2008, 62% of Hillary Clinton's donors had already given the maximum contribution, while only 44% of Barack Obama's had given the maximum (Morris, 2008). Obama's crowdfunding approach has been compared to "rapid fire" because of its agility and ability to "reload" the coffers quickly (Morris, 2008).

Following the overwhelming fundraising success of the Obama campaign, it did not take long before nonprofit organizations, for-profit ventures, and even individuals were using crowdfunding to support a variety of projects and purposes.

At the forefront of the new crowdfunding movement was Kickstarter, a crowdfunding website that launched in 2009 and had quickly become the most successful online crowdfunding platform. More than \$1 million was pledged to projects on the site each day (Malone, 2012). Kickstarter can be used to fund nearly any type of creative project based in the United States or the United Kingdom. Kickstarter (2013) defines

creative projects as being “in the worlds of Art, Comics, Dance, Design, Fashion, Film, Food, Games, Music, Photography, Publishing, Technology, and Theater” (Creator Questions section, para. 8). Since launching, more than \$450 million has been pledged by 3,000,000 donors to fund more than 35,000 creative projects (2013). In a startling comparison, journalist Noreen Malone reports, “Kickstarter is now on track to funnel out nearly twice as much money as the National Endowment for the Arts” on an annual basis (Malone, 2012). However, it is important to note that Kickstarter can be used by for-profit entities and individuals as well as nonprofit organizations.

Back in Charlotte, as they began to recover from the impact of the economic recession, leadership at ASC observed that while individual artists and other creative workers were capitalizing on the growing crowdfunding movement through the use of sites like Kickstarter, nonprofit arts organizations were missing the trend and not increasing their use of technology to augment fundraising efforts. The ASC decided to research the available crowdfunding models and eventually determined that they could deliver a much better platform that specifically catered to nonprofit arts and cultural organizations, and development for *power2give* began. Belcher recalled that ASC was interested in launching its own crowdfunding site because leadership recognized the need to diversify its revenue stream, as many prudent organizations looked to do after suffering the sharp declines in contributed revenue during the recession. With *power2give*, ASC leadership saw an opportunity to generate income through user fees (L. Belcher, personal communication, January 28, 2013).

*Power2give* has established its platform model by scaling the website to specific communities. When the website launched in 2011, only arts organizations in the

Charlotte metropolitan area who have been funded by ASC within the last three years were eligible to post projects. After a four month pilot phase in Charlotte, *power2give* expanded to two additional locations in December 2011. In 2012, *power2give* expanded to twelve host cities. As of early 2016, *power2give* shows 18 active communities that have posted more than 2,300 posted projects which have generated \$6.2 million from 27,000 donations (2016.)

It is fitting that the newest innovation for local arts councils, *power2give*, was developed in the state of North Carolina, which boasts the nation's richest history of local arts councils. North Carolina became home to the nation's first local arts council in 1949 when the Arts Council of Winston Salem and Forsyth County was founded from seed money provided by the local Junior League (Shelley, 2008). Moving ahead to 2005, Americans for the Arts reported that there were more than four thousand local arts agencies across the United States and ninety in the state of North Carolina alone (Shelley, 2008). Mission statements and purposes vary from council to council, but it is generally agreed upon that local arts councils strive towards attaining the following objectives:

Strengthening existing cultural institutions with new support dollars, public relations and more audiences; assisting school systems to improve education through arts in education programs; assisting individual artists; making opportunities in the arts widely available to all constituencies – ethnic, racial, or social; and integrating aesthetic concerns into the decision-making process of local governmental agencies (Gibans, 2006).

It is easy to see how developing *power2give* fits within the generally agreed upon objectives of local arts councils by “strengthening existing cultural institutions with new support dollars” (Gibans, 2006).

What is yet to be answered is how well *power2give* is supporting this objective. There is considerable literature available on crowdfunding, including its growth and statistical trends, as well as practical information and suggested best practices for all types of organizations and individuals wanting to conduct online fundraising. However, since the world of crowdfunding extends beyond nonprofit fundraising to individuals, for-profit entities, and political fundraising, much of the available literature is not applicable for nonprofit arts organizations. Further, no research exists on the particular impact of *power2give*, as it is a relatively new tool only being used by a small number of local arts councils at present. The purpose of this research is to provide a meaningful, practical analysis of a new fundraising product that arts councils can use as they are deciding how to expand their portfolio of fundraising tools.

In particular, this research is directed at reviewing the fundraising success of *power2give* in communities outside of Charlotte, NC. ASC is one of the nation’s largest local arts councils and one of only a few with the capacity to launch a project like *power2give* on a national scale. It is more helpful to a broader span of local arts councils to research and document the results from more commonplace smaller and mid-sized local arts councils. The local arts councils reviewed in this thesis were selected to show results from mid-sized organizations operating with a variety of annual budget sizes (ranging from \$1.3 million to \$6 million) and different lengths of experience with *power2give* (ranging from less than one year to nearly three years).

Research for this thesis on *power2give* employed a mixed method approach. Annual reports, council websites, and other documents were reviewed to understand the context of each organization's history, granting strategy, and record of fundraising success. Telephone interviews were then conducted with professionals at the selected local arts councils that use *power2give*. The professionals completing the interviews had varied amounts of tenure in their positions, ranging from one year to nine years. They held a variety of roles within their organizations, including Director of Development, Chief Grants Officer, and Director of Grant Services and Arts Education. Interviews were conducted between June and September of 2015, and interviews lasted between 25 and 45 minutes. The phone interviews were not recorded but supplemented with handwritten notes taken during the calls. Supporting documents, reports, and follow up questions were exchanged via email. Handwritten notes from the calls along with the supporting documents and other resources were consulted during the analysis and writing. Interview questions, provided as Appendix A, were selected to provide both quantitative and qualitative assessments of *power2give*.

This research indicated that *power2give* best serves smaller to mid-sized arts organizations as a way to build their fundraising capacity and provide the necessary tools for launching a fundraising campaign, including an online portal for making gifts, an easy-to-use template, and in most cases, personal support and training from the local arts council. *Power2give* has been described as an "equalizer" for arts organizations that serve minority populations, both racial minorities and other marginalized populations, who work outside of the mainstream arts genres and audiences. When used correctly, it is an important new fundraising tool that can help local arts councils embrace

crowdfunding as a viable fundraising strategy, helping the organizations they serve improve their financial sustainability.

## CHAPTER 2 BEST PRACTICES

Before looking specifically at the impact of *power2give* on the local arts councils that have been selected for this study, it is necessary to establish the best practices for attaining funds by using crowdfunding. To determine these best practices, there are a plethora of resources available online in the news media, weblogs, and at nonprofit organizations that study and promote the practice and professionalism of crowdfunding. In a review of the available literature, the recurring theme throughout is that the best practices for all methods of fundraising also apply to crowdfunding.

An article by Erin Morgan Gore and Breanna DiGiammarino featured on the *Stanford Social Innovation Review* weblog notes that crowdfunding campaigns require a significant investment of time and effort as well as the full support of an organization's staff, board, and donors in order to be successful (Gore, 2014). Gore and DiGiammarino also recommend securing at least 30% of the fundraising goal within the first 48 hours of launching a crowdfunding campaign, noting, "Donations by existing donors serve as proof points of an organization's value, helping to more quickly recruit new contributors from those who trust your donors' decisions" (Gore, 2014).

In the *Kickstarter Blog*, a weblog curated by Kickstarter staff, successful project posters were invited to share their advice for reaching fundraising goals. Several of the contributors noted the importance of telling the organization's story and why the program



will make a difference. The contributors also stressed the importance of a professional and clearly stated proposal (Ung, 2014).

Another proven component of a successful crowdfunding campaign is the inclusion of a video appeal. Kickstarter notes that 80% of the projects posted on its website feature videos, and that the few projects that do not include a video have a lower rate of success (Kickstarter, 2014). Beth Kanter, co-author of *The Networked Nonprofit*, notes in a presentation at the University of Iowa that crowdfunding projects that include a video raise 115% more money than campaigns without a video (Kanter, 2015).

Having established that the best practices of more traditional fundraising methods also apply to crowdfunding, it is also necessary to consider what benchmarks should be measured to determine local arts council's fundraising success with using *power2give*. Jeffrey Haguewood, co-founder of several nonprofit software platforms including eTapestry and Bloomerang, presents a list of key data points that all fundraising programs should be capturing on his weblog for Sidekick Solutions. Haguewood recommends reviewing the average gift size and the number of gifts contributed (Haguewood, 2013). The average gift size and number of gifts will be recorded for each organization participating in this study.

Following this review of best practices and key data points for assessing a crowdfunding campaign's success, the five local arts councils participating in this research project were interviewed regarding their community's success using *power2give*. Following the interviews, posted projects from each community, including both projects that received full funding and projects that did not receive full funding, were assessed for their efficacy in using the established best practices.

### CHAPTER 3 ATLANTA, GEORGIA

The City of Atlanta Mayor's Office of Cultural Affairs (OCA) was one of the first *power2give* clients, launching its site in August 2012. The office was established in 1974 within the department of Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Affairs. When Mayor Kasim Reed took office in January 2010, OCA leadership knew there was an opportunity to request increased funding for the arts because of the mayor's vocal support for the arts. OCA staff was seeking justification for requesting a budget increase, and *power2give* provided that justification. In the year that *power2give* launched in Atlanta, an increase of \$250,000 to the grants budget was designated as matching funds for *power2give* projects. It should be noted that this new funding was just one of the budget increases that OCA enjoyed during Mayor Reed's tenure. In the fiscal year that ended June 30, 2009, the year before Mayor Reed took office, the office's annual grants budget was approximately \$470,000; by 2014 the annual grants budget had grown to \$2,160,031.

OCA's generous supply of matching funds was the largest reported by the five communities interviewed, and not surprisingly, *power2give* has demonstrated the greatest fundraising successes in Atlanta. OCA's FY2014 annual report notes that between FY13 and FY14, funds raised through *power2give* increased by 46%, from \$387,078 to \$563,292. The annual donation amount increased from \$95 to \$183, the number of campaigns that were fully funded rose from 78% to 87%, and the number of donations of \$100 or less decreased from 84% to 72%. In its first two years of operations, more than \$950,000 was raised.

OCA implemented *power2give* to spur individual giving to the arts, aiding one of its stated goals to “support the arts community of Atlanta” (2013). The unintended result was that *power2give* proved to be most powerful and most utilized by smaller and mid-sized arts organizations in Atlanta. *Power2give* was embraced by organizations lacking dedicated development staff and/or possessing very limited resources for their fundraising efforts. Many of the organizations that have successfully used *power2give* did not have an annual fundraising campaign in place prior to the launch of *power2give*. They found that *power2give* was a wonderful resource for raising much-needed funds as well as for telling their story to a far larger audience.

In a survey OCA conducted with Atlanta arts organizations, respondents clearly preferred using *power2give* over other crowdfunding websites. Nearly twice as many respondents reported that they had used *power2give* over Kickstarter and Indiegogo. Further, twice as many of the organizations said that they would recommend *power2give* over the other crowdfunding websites.

Lena Carstens, OCA Program Manager for Arts and Education Services, was interviewed about *power2give*'s impact in Atlanta and the unintended benefits that the platform provided. Carstens was quick to point out that the true success stories are the smaller organizations. Carstens cited the Urban Youth Harp Ensemble as a prime example. When the Urban Youth Harp Ensemble posted its first project on *power2give*, the organization curated a fledging Facebook page with only 43 likes. After posting several successful projects on *power2give*, the organization's Facebook page boasted 487 likes, a more than ten-fold increase. More importantly, the organization has raised \$35,000 through five fully funded projects posted on *power2give*. With its 2013 IRS

form 990 reporting just \$112,000 in gross receipts, it is easy to see how a successful \$5,000 project on *power2give* would make a significant impact on the organization's financial sustainability.

At the other end of the spectrum, Atlanta's largest arts organizations showed little interest and little success in using *power2give*. Carstens cited as one example a project posted by the High Museum of Art that only raised \$40. The High Museum of Art is one of Atlanta's largest arts organizations, with a \$25,000,000 budget reported in its 2012 IRS form 990, and yet it raised less than \$5,000 through *power2give*. Carstens suggested several reasons that larger organizations like the High Museum would not have success with *power2give*. First, the museum has fully staffed marketing and development departments. To have success posting a project on *power2give* or on any crowdfunding platform, it is crucial that marketing and development coordinate their efforts on the campaign, and larger organizations with larger staffs face more difficulty coordinating across departments. Second, because *power2give* focuses on securing gifts of less than \$100, investing the time and effort to make a campaign successful is a difficult sell both internally and externally at a larger organization. Internally, staff members who are tasked with raising thousands or millions of dollars do not see their efforts put to good use to focus on one \$5,000 project. When they are regularly soliciting and receiving gifts of \$10,000, \$25,000, or more from individuals, it is difficult to justify spending extra time and effort on securing a \$100 donor. On the other side of that perception is the external view. The average visitor to a large organization like the High Museum, who sees a world-class facility and \$25,000,000 budget, would understandably feel that a \$50 or \$75 donation would not make even the smallest impact on museum operations.

However, Carstens noted that two of Atlanta's larger organizations are having success using *power2give* for very specific programs. Atlanta's Center for Puppetry Arts has an annual operating budget of approximately \$4,300,000 and listed five marketing staff members and six development staff members in its most recent annual report (Anthony, 2015). The Center for Puppetry Arts has posted 6 projects on *power2give*, all of which received 100% funding and raised \$45,000 for the center. Four of the six projects requested funds for the center's field trip program. The project description noted that gifts of \$100 underwrite the expenses for two classes to participate in Create-A-Puppet workshops. In spite of the organization's larger size, the Center for Puppetry Arts has found a way to make smaller gifts meaningful by providing a tangible, specific description of what the donors will be funding, and results have indicated that this appeal is working. The Center's most recent annual report showed that donors giving between \$50 and \$149 annually make up their largest donor segment, with more than twice the number of donors at that giving level than all other giving levels combined. By contrast, the Atlanta Ballet found success with *power2give* after learning from early mistakes and might be described as the "most improved" poster on *power2give*. One such early crowdsourcing project from Atlanta Ballet was "The Point of Pointe Shoes," which asked donors to contribute towards the cost of purchasing pointe shoes for company dancers. The project description noted that a gift of \$75 would purchase one pair of pointe shoes for a dancer, but it also noted that the organization spends approximately \$100,000 on pointe shoes annually, while the project goal was just \$5,000. The project raised only \$350, a mere 7% of the goal. Even though the project included a video about how pointe shoes are made and interesting facts about the history of pointe shoes, how dancers break

in a new pair, and how long a pair will last, it would appear that this project simply did not resonate with patrons. Since learning from its early, unsuccessful attempts, Atlanta Ballet has since raised full funding for two projects on *power2give*. Atlanta Ballet's best project example was Wabi Sabi, an initiative created by a company dancer that featured free performances of new dance works in public settings like parks. The Wabi Sabi project has been posted twice on *power2give*, with a \$5,000 request receiving fully funding, and a \$10,000 request receiving 86% of the goal. The Wabi Sabi project description differed from "The Point of Pointe Shoes" in several key ways. First, the description was briefer. Atlanta Ballet reduced the text from 613 words in "The Point of Pointe Shoes" description to 300 words in the Wabi Sabi description. Secondly, the Wabi Sabi video was created by the Atlanta Ballet and featured photos and video clips of Wabi Sabi performances in public parks along with an interview with Wabi Sabi founder John Welker. In contrast, the video used with "The Point of Pointe Shoes" was an excerpt from a television show and contained no local context or specific references to Atlanta Ballet. Third, the Wabi Sabi project was intended to fully fund the cost of the choreographers, which was listed at \$5,000. By contrast, "The Point of Pointe Shoes" project would only fund 5% of the annual expense the company incurs to purchase pointe shoes. By selecting an expense that could be fully underwritten with \$5,000, potential donors could appreciate how their funds would provide exactly what was needed for the Wabi Sabi program.

Going forward, Carstens reported that OCA intends to continue hosting *power2give* and provide matching funds as a part of its mission to support local arts organizations. Its leadership felt that the platform is an important tool for promoting

racial and cultural equity within Atlanta's arts and cultural landscape, and that *power2give* serves as an equalizer by directing more investment in underrepresented organizations. Carstens noted how *power2give* differs from many of the traditional, panel-reviewed sources of revenue available to arts organizations, such as grants. In Atlanta, the projects that have been funded represent and serve more diverse communities than OCA's flagship grants program and the larger organizations that receive those grants.

## CHAPTER 4 PALM BEACH COUNTY, FLORIDA

The Cultural Council of Palm Beach County was founded in 1978 largely due to the efforts of a local resident, Alexander Dreyfoos, a nationally renowned arts advocate, inventor, business owner, and philanthropist who also chairs the board of The Raymond F. Kravis Center for the Performing Arts (2016). The council manages a \$3.5 million annual tourism development fund from Palm Beach County and other public sources which is partially distributed in grants to local flagship cultural organizations and partially used for advertising and other promotional initiatives to boost tourism. The council raises additional revenue through private contributions, which include grants, donations from individuals, and both cash and in-kind sponsorships.

The Cultural Council launched *power2give* in September 2014. In the first nine months since launching local arts organizations have posted 37 projects, and 17, or 45%, were fully funded. In total, these local organizations received gifts from 441 donors, 215 of which were new donors. The average new gift reported by the local arts organizations is \$58, which is higher than the national average. The higher average is attributed to the fact that some of the organizations participating have used *power2give* as their first method of soliciting members for donations.

Jan Rodusky, Chief Grants Officer, was interviewed regarding the community's success with *power2give*. Rodusky said that Palm Beach County's experience with *power2give* echos that of other communities in that the platform is primarily and most



successfully used by smaller and mid-sized arts organizations. An example cited in the council's 2014 annual report is "Operation: Happy Feet," a project posted by the Lake Worth Playhouse, a nonprofit community theatre funded under the council's mid-sized organization category. The project request was for \$4,430 to replace the rehearsal hall floor, and the project received full funding. On the other side of the spectrum, Rodusky reported that the Kravis Center, which reported \$25 million in revenue in 2014 (Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, 2016), has not participated in *power2give*. Rodusky noted that the center's donor list boasts more than 20,000 contributors, and she surmised that Kravis Center staff would consider posting a \$5,000 or \$10,000 project on *power2give* as a poor return on its investment of time and effort.

The Cultural Council of Palm Beach has taken one significantly different approach in its support of *power2give*. The other four arts councils interviewed notify local arts organizations when matching funds become available. This notification encourages organizations to post projects when they know that the gifts they secure will be matched. By contrast, the Cultural Council of Palm Beach does not announce when matching funds become available, instead opting to quietly award the funds to those organizations that have active projects posted at the time that the matching funds become available. Rodusky explained that it is important to the council that there are always multiple projects posted on the site as continuous use of the platform supports the council's efforts to raise matching funds. To date, the Cultural Council of Palm Beach County has raised \$100,000 in matching funds to distribute to successful projects. This is the largest amount of matching funds raised from private sources that was reported by the councils that were interviewed, which suggests that Rodusky's strategy is working.

With Palm Beach County just concluding its first year of using *power2give* in 2015, the long-term value of the platform is yet to be determined. However, Rodusky reported that the initial year of use indicates that *power2give* is a great tool for smaller organizations that have smaller donor databases. She noted that the local arts organizations have responded to *power2give* “very positively,” and that “six to ten new people attend” each *power2give* training session offered. Rodusky believed that the council will continue to provide the platform for the benefit of arts organizations in Palm Beach County. Further, in spite of the council’s success securing matching funds, Rodusky did not consider the matching funds as a critical component of the platform’s success. Rather, Rodusky said that the availability of matching funds is a training issue: local arts organizations need to become used to the idea that they should be posting projects as they have them ready instead of waiting until an announcement is made about matching funds.

## CHAPTER 5 INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA

The Arts Council of Indianapolis came into being in 1987. From the 1970s, when an earlier arts council dissolved, until 1987, Indianapolis was the nation's largest city that did not have a local arts council (Arts Council of Indianapolis, 2016). In 1987, the council contracted with the City of Indianapolis to regrant \$500,000 to local arts organizations. In 2014, the council's grants budget totaled just over \$1,400,000. The Arts Council's mission is to "foster meaningful engagement in the arts by nurturing a culture where artists and arts organizations thrive" (Arts Council of Indianapolis, 2016). In addition to its granting program, the council owns and operates two exhibition and performance venues, the Indianapolis Artsgarden and Gallery 924.

The Arts Council of Indianapolis elected to contract with *power2give* to provide project grants to local arts organizations. The Arts Council already had well established grant programs to provide general operating support and support for individual artists. Council leadership viewed *power2give* as a way to broaden granting capacity while also promoting collaboration among local arts organizations. The arts council requires a simple vetting process for organizations that want to post projects on *power2give*. While they do require that organizations have 501c3 status, they do not limit *power2give*'s use solely to arts organizations, a policy embraced by several of the arts councils interviewed. As long as the project is arts-based, nonprofit organizations with other missions, such as healthcare or economic development, can also post projects. However, only arts

organizations that are part of the council's annual grants program are eligible to receive council matching dollars for their projects.

Since launching *power2give* in 2012, 224 projects have been posted, and 68 projects, or 30%, have been fully funded. More than \$210,000 has been raised to date, with \$46,000 raised from 468 gifts in 2014 alone. Since launching, the arts council has raised more than \$60,000 in matching funds for projects posted on *power2give*. However, 83 projects, or 37% of posted projects, have received less than 10% of the requested amount of support.

Ernest Disney-Britton, Director of Grant Services, was interviewed regarding the council's experience with *power2give*. Disney-Britton discussed the council's use of *power2give* as the central focus of #Give2ArtSoul, a special month-long giving effort aimed at building a sense of camaraderie among arts organizations. The most recent event, held in February 2015, was considered a success by the arts council, though the fundraising results recorded on *power2give* indicate only mediocre success. Still, Disney-Britton noted that the event has become the annual, primary promotional effort for *power2give*.

The arts council provided matching funds for the #Give2ArtSoul campaign as well as significant marketing support, including radio advertising, a kickoff event, weekly competitions, and a designated honorary chair. The arts council convened monthly meetings of organizations that participate in #Give2ArtSoul, and the group meets for the six months prior to the kickoff. The arts council has tried to make the event more fun for arts organizations by adding weekly competitions and games, as Disney-Britton said, to "put the 'fun' back in 'fundraising.'"

The arts council scheduled the first #Give2ArtSoul to coincide with the national effort Giving Tuesday, which is held on the Tuesday immediately following Thanksgiving weekend. The attempt was not deemed a success, and so the event was moved to February, which increased the fundraising results, though only marginally. Disney-Britton attributes the move to February as a part of #Give2ArtSoul's increased success, because it did not compete with Giving Tuesday. However, of projects tagged with #Give2ArtSoul on *power2give*, 27 of the 85 posted projects were fully funded, a rate of 31%, which showed no improvement over the overall success rate in Indianapolis.

When asked about giving trends the council has observed in Indianapolis, Disney-Britton reported that organizations are receiving half of the funds from existing donors and half from new donors. This percentage is lower than the national average reported by the Arts and Science Council, which is 60% new donors and 40% existing donors. Regarding the success of larger versus smaller and mid-sized organizations, Disney-Britton reported that the organizations in Indianapolis that have the most fundraising success with *power2give* have an annual operating budget in the range of \$75,000 to \$3 million. He provided an example of a large organization that possesses the largest marketing staff of any arts organization in the area and possesses approximately 15 development staff members, yet has continually failed to generate more than 5% of requested funding for a *power2give* project. Disney-Britton discussed how the organization has one dedicated staff member who posts the *power2give* projects but struggles to get the marketing assistance needed to make the project succeed. Disney-Britton also noted that classical music programs tend to receive less support than other projects, regardless of the size of the organization that is posting the project. He

speculated that this may be due to the tendency of classical music organizations to rely on a more mature audience and patron base, but there was no data available to support this hypothesis.

Disney-Britton reported that the arts council's greatest challenge with *power2give* has been the council's own limited capacity to raise matching funds. He noted the lack of large, Fortune 500 corporations in the Indianapolis area and the historical difficulty the arts council has had securing corporate sponsorships. The arts council has always been primarily publicly funded, since it was established by the mayor. The organization has no culture of philanthropy and has a weak record of raising funds from individuals and private foundations.

Though the fundraising results have not been exemplary, Disney-Britton reported that the arts council has been very pleased with the service and training they received from *power2give* staff. They found the pre-launch training to be helpful, and continue to find service to be responsive. The arts council continues to repeat pre-launch training on a monthly basis for groups interested in posting their first project on *power2give*. The arts council also hosts periodic "Power Hour" events, where all registered users of *power2give* are invited to meet together and compare notes on strategies that have helped their organizations conduct successful campaigns. However, Disney-Britton noted that he has heard several comments from local arts organizations that *power2give* is lacking certain capabilities such as the prominent links to share projects on social media that other crowdfunding platforms like Kickstarter possess. He felt that *power2give* is about three years behind other leading crowdfunding platforms in regards to its usability. He was hopeful that ASC's new partnership with Fractured Atlas will help the platform

“catch up” with its counterparts, and he indicated that the arts council will continue to use *power2give*. He felt that the platform fulfills an important part of the council’s strategy to serve smaller and mid-sized arts organizations.

## CHAPTER 6 COLUMBUS, OHIO

The Greater Columbus Arts Council (GCAC) was formed in 1970 as a brainchild of the Cultural Affairs Committee of the Columbus Area Chamber of Commerce. The agency was incorporated in 1973, the same year that they first contracted with the City of Columbus to distribute grants to local arts organizations (Greater Columbus Arts Council, 2016). Growing from a \$50,000 contract in 1973 to more than \$2,000,000 in public funding today, GCAC works to fulfill its mission of: “Through vision and leadership, advocacy and collaboration, the Greater Columbus Arts Council supports art and advances the culture of the region. A catalyst for excellence and innovation, we fund exemplary artists and arts organizations and provide programs, events and services of public value that educate and engage all audiences in our community” (Greater Columbus Arts Council, 2016).

Ruby Harper, Grants and Services Director for GCAC, was interviewed regarding the council’s experience with *power2give*. Harper’s nine-year tenure at the arts council provided key insight into the agency’s renewed focus on grantmaking and leveraging audience awareness to support financial sustainability for arts organizations in Columbus in the wake of the Great Recession. Harper began by noting a 2010 effort for the arts council to realign its grantmaking strategies more closely with broader community goals. She said the arts council was looking for the right opportunity to leverage donors and build audience awareness. The council also wanted to strengthen its presence throughout



Franklin County, as they were previously a strong service provider within the city of Columbus, but less present outside of the city limits. Harper's recollections are echoed on the GCAC website, which states that two studies completed in 2012 "point to a need for GCAC to focus on its mission as a granting agency and its current work to secure a lasting arts funding solution that will make the entire Columbus cultural community more vital" (2016).

The council identified *power2give* as the right opportunity to help fulfill this effort and launched the website in the fall of 2013 with \$60,000 in matching gifts secured from corporate sponsors. The Arts Council imposed few restrictions on the types of organizations that can post projects on *power2give*. The main restriction is that an organization must have 501c3 status; however, the arts council will gladly work with a group or an artist that has a fiscal sponsor, and Harper noted that council staff is always very careful to show that a fiscal sponsor is involved in the project listing. Since going live, 77 projects have been posted on the website. 26% of the posted projects received the full funding amount requested, while 33% received less than 10% of the requested funding. This lukewarm success rate for *power2give* in Columbus was reflected in Harper's remarks about the first year of the website's use.

The council learned from its first year of experience with *power2give* that many local arts organizations needed extensive education on how crowdfunding works and what best practices should be used to create a successful crowdfunding campaign. Harper noted that the projects with a low response rate were posted by organizations that made little effort to implement a comprehensive campaign. She said that some organizations believed that sending one email to their constituents would be enough to

raise the funds, and that a more comprehensive plan would not be necessary. She also noted that some organizations had competing projects take their focus away from their *power2give* project.

As in many of the other communities that have been studied, Harper also agreed that larger organizations in Columbus – as in other cities – were not using *power2give*. She noted that for Columbus, a larger organization is one with an annual budget of \$5,000,000 or more. She suggested that those organizations are too “bureaucratic,” and that they don’t want a *power2give* project to compete with their established donor programs that have well-defined giving levels and benefits. Harper asserted, however, that the determining factors in any organization’s success with *power2give* were its level of engagement, expertise, and facility with social media.

Another challenge for GCAC has been providing matching funds. Harper reported that at the conclusion of the first year using *power2give*, a report was submitted to the sponsors who provided the initial pool of matching funds. Unfortunately, no sponsors renewed their support, which Harper attributed to the council’s lack of fundraising capacity. Harper was hopeful that this trend will change due to the council recently hiring its first Director of Development whose goal will be to secure funds that are not as readily available for an individual arts organization. The Director of Development will focus on securing larger, more collaborative funding opportunities, such as National Endowment for the Arts grants and other federal grants. Within this charge Harper believed the new Director of Development’s efforts will also enable the arts council to secure more matching funding for *power2give* projects.

Another drawback Harper noted is that *power2give* has not affected the council's strategic goal to improve its services to arts organizations outside the city of Columbus. Harper said the council has struggled to recruit organizations in the county to use *power2give*. She noted that at the Arts and Science Council's request, GCAC opened *power2give* to organizations in surrounding counties, but that effort has had little success attracting participation. While this request from ASC was not outside of GCAC's mission, which states that the arts council "supports art and advances the culture of the region," it would seem that fulfilling the request was not a high priority for the council, and Harper said that no resources were allocated towards the effort (2016).

At the time of the interview, there were no active projects posted on *power2give*. Harper said the council does not have the capacity to recruit more project participants, and she knew several organizations were waiting to post projects until the following month, when active projects would be eligible to receive matching funds that the council had recently secured. Though the arts council has struggled to secure matching funds beyond the first year, \$10,000 is earmarked in the program budget so that at least a small portion of matching funds are available each year for *power2give* projects. The arts council's matching funds provide \$0.50 towards every dollar that an organization raises on *power2give*. However, the council-provided matching funds were not the sole incentive to recruit participation. Harper reported that some organizations decided to post projects regardless of the availability of matching funds, and other organizations independently secured their own matching funds.

Since launching *power2give*, the arts council has been challenged to combat the incorrect assumption that *power2give* cannot be used to fund projects related to arts

education. This assumption comes from the policy that the arts council does not grant funds for arts education through its contract with the city. As *power2give* is not funded by the city, *power2give* projects are not restricted by the city contract. Harper has spoken to a number of schools' parent-teacher organizations about the availability of *power2give* as a fundraising tool, and her conversations have resulted in several organizations posting projects on the website.

In contrast to the Indianapolis council's effort to connect *power2give* with the national effort Giving Tuesday, GCAC has yet to attempt any cross-promotion of *power2give* with other collective giving days. A new effort was planned to begin in the fall of 2015. The arts council hosted a meeting for organizations with an annual budget of less than \$500,000 to discuss how they can leverage national giving efforts, in particular Giving Tuesday, to maximize fundraising success with *power2give*. Harper also reported that the council has planned a second effort in the summer of 2016 to coincide with Columbus Big Give, a local collective giving day.

Not all of Harper's feedback on *power2give* was negative. Harper said that much of the anecdotal feedback she has received from local arts organizations that use *power2give* has been positive. Harper has tried to work closely with arts organizations that are using *power2give*, and reported that she has personally advised the participating organizations both before they launch projects and at the mid-point of their campaigns. Harper reported that the arts council doesn't have the capacity to provide regularly scheduled formal training sessions, but they have promoted the webinars that are available through ASC and Fractured Atlas.

One organization Harper noted that had success with *power2give* is the Actors' Theatre of Columbus. It has posted two projects that met their goal and raised a combined \$10,312 for the organization. The Theatre's projects highlighted many of the noted traits of a successful crowdfunding campaign, including clever project titles such as "EN GARDE!!! We Need Dangerous Things to Play With!," simple benefits that can be fulfilled at no cost or with very minimal cost, and humorous, brief videos outlining the need.

Despite the seemingly mixed reviews, Harper reported that *power2give*'s impact in Columbus has met expectations for leveraging donors and building audience awareness, though improvement was still needed on expanding the council's presence outside of the Columbus city limits. Council leadership felt *power2give* is not a long-term solution to the issue of sustainable funding for the arts in the greater Columbus area. Harper anticipated that the arts council would sponsor *power2give* for an additional three to five years as long as the program continued with the same level of success. If results indicated that the program was not a success, the council may drop its commitment sooner.

## CHAPTER 7 RALEIGH, NORTH CAROLINA

The United Arts Council was founded in 1962 as the Raleigh Cultural Center, which later became the Wake County Arts Council. When the organization merged with the Capital Area Arts Foundation in 1989, the organization was renamed United Arts Council of Raleigh and Wake County and became the official arts agency for Wake County, as recognized by Wake County Commissioners.

The United Arts Council's greatest efforts are put towards arts education and granting. The Council funded 321 arts education programs in 140 schools in 2014. Most of the council's granting is focused on arts education, with total allocations topping more than \$1,000,000 in 2014.

The United Arts Council was one of the early participants in *power2give* and launched in 2012, yet only 24 projects have been posted, the fewest projects of all communities that were interviewed. Sarah Morris, Development Manager, was interviewed regarding the community's use of *power2give*. The United Arts Council has been unique in its approach to *power2give* in that the council has never provided matching dollars for projects posted on the website. Further, the arts council has never offered formal training opportunities, though Morris noted that she has made time to teach each organization how the platform works and how to use best practices for a successful campaign. Like many of the other communities studied, the arts council has also imposed few limits on the organizations that may use *power2give*, mainly requiring

that an organization have 501c3 status. The arts council has made *power2give* available to arts organizations as well as cultural and historical organizations. Even schools are permitted use the platform, as long as the project they are posting is based in the arts.

The success of *power2give* in Raleigh appeared grim based on the posted results. Only 3 of the 24 projects received full funding through *power2give*, though Morris noted that several projects received full funding through other sources, even though the contributions were not recorded on *power2give*. From those few organizations that have posted projects, Morris reported that the council heard mainly negative feedback. Chief among the complaints were the plethora of other platforms to choose from for launching a crowdfunding campaign, the difficulty organizations faced when using *power2give*, and the unwelcome realization that a significant amount of work was required to ensure a crowdfunding campaign's success. Based on these comments, Morris reported that many organizations have experienced a "harsh dose of reality" when their campaigns failed, not realizing that launching a crowdfunding campaign without utilizing best practices would not equate to overnight fundraising success.

Morris' perspective on *power2give* was unique among the interviewees because the United Arts Council is the only council studied that has used the platform to post its own fundraising projects, posting two successful projects in the last year. In what might be considered counterintuitive for crowdfunding, Morris found that the most successful method for soliciting donations for the council's *power2give* projects was to have personal conversations with prospective donors. In fact, one of the council's projects was an example that Morris referenced of a project that was fully funded through channels outside of *power2give*. Having the experience of posting her own project and

running a crowdfunding campaign gave Morris additional insight into how local arts organizations have felt about using the website. Morris reported that in her experience as a project poster, it was difficult to engage potential donors to click through to the *power2give* page on the council's website. She also noted the difficulty of promoting the project through social media, since the arts council did not have many likes on its Facebook page. At the time of the project posting, Facebook used the number of likes to determine the prominence of an organization's postings on its followers' newsfeed. Organizations with few followers tend to have their posts overlooked unless they pay to "boost" the posts through Facebook's advertising channels.

While it would seem that *power2give* has been far from successful in Raleigh, Morris said that the arts council will continue to sponsor *power2give* and will continue to use the website to post its own fundraising projects. She was looking forward to the changes coming to the platform in 2016, in particular the more modern look of the new site, and said that the current site looks "dated." She said the arts council intended to relaunch efforts to promote *power2give* as a fundraising resource in January 2016, after the planned website redesigns and streamlined interface launch.



## CHAPTER 8 CONCLUSION

### **Lessons Learned from *Power2give*'s Early Years**

Through interviewing key stakeholders in these communities, it has been determined that while *power2give* can be a highly useful tool to build the fundraising capacity of smaller arts organizations when used with the established best practices for crowdfunding, the platform is not a substitute for a well-established annual fund program. When used effectively, *power2give* can significantly increase an organization's capacity to complete smaller capital projects, such as upgrading sound equipment, purchasing musical instruments, or making basic building repairs. Equally important is the observation from Lena Carstens in Atlanta: *power2give* is a powerful "equalizer" that allows organizations to appeal directly to their constituents who care the most for their mission and bypass the bias and subjectivity of many traditional funding sources for arts organizations, such as peer reviewed grants panels. On the other hand, *power2give* has proven that it is neither a substitute nor an enhancement to a larger or more mature organization's annual fund program. *Power2give* does not replace the traditional annual fund program, defined by specific donor benefits, distinct donor levels, and a comprehensive plan for acquiring and retaining donors. Another key theme from the participant interviews is the need for much training and assistance for arts organizations to utilize the platform to their best advantage. Local arts councils can play an important

role in leading organizations to embrace the platform by offering training sessions, one-on-one guidance, matching funds, and marketing support.

### ***Power2give's New Future with Fractured Atlas***

Overall, the arts councils interviewed were satisfied with *power2give* and ready to welcome the changes to the platform that are planned thanks to a new partnership with Fractured Atlas. ASC and Fractured Atlas announced a partnership in early 2015 that would transition the platform's operations, maintenance, marketing, and fiscal sponsorship to Fractured Atlas. Fractured Atlas is a nonprofit organization whose mission states that the agency "empowers artists, arts organizations, and other cultural sector stakeholders by eliminating practical barriers to artistic expression, so as to foster a more agile and resilient cultural ecosystem" (Fractured Atlas, 2015). The organization runs on a member model and currently boasts more than 33,000 members. A large portion of Fractured Atlas' business is fiscal sponsorship, where it provides a legal mechanism for individual artists or unincorporated organizations to raise tax-deductible donations without having 501(c)(3) status. In its history Fractured Atlas has served as the fiscal sponsor for more than 3,650 fundraising projects that raised over \$75,000,000 for members.

Beginning in late 2015, Fractured Atlas planned a series of upgrades to *power2give's* design and functionality. The more immediate planned changes included improving the overall look and use of the website to align the platform more fully with other common crowdfunding sites such as Kickstarter. Another planned upgrade was launching a functionality for donors to create their own account on *power2give* in order to view their donation history and later, download tax receipts on demand.

Beyond upgrading *power2give*, Fractured Atlas viewed the opportunity to take over *power2give* as a way to grow the field of arts and cultural fundraising and offer assistance to artists and arts organizations on a national scale. Fractured Atlas leadership believes it is part of its mission to assist organizations and artists with building “holistic and sustainable” fundraising practices, and that its role goes beyond maintaining the *power2give* platform. Beginning in 2016, Fractured Atlas planned to offer weekly webinars for *power2give* project posters to learn more about fundraising. Later updates planned for the platform include more tools to educate users on common fundraising methods, including techniques for writing appeal letters, hosting an event, researching grant opportunities, and identifying prospective donors. Fractured Atlas also lowered the administrative fee from 12% to 7% and added the option for donors to choose to fund the 7% administrative fee instead of having it removed from their contribution. In the two years that Fractured Atlas has provided this option on its online giving portal, over 90% of donors have opted to cover the administrative fee. Another added feature of the new and improved *power2give* was its capacity to integrate with Artfully, Fractured Atlas’ customer management software that can help artists or organizations track their history and communication with a donor over time.

It was undoubtedly the right decision for the Arts & Science Council to partner with Fractured Atlas to improve its capacity to enhance and maintain the usability and relevance of the platform. In today’s age of rapidly changing technology, ASC rightly recognized that an outside partner with specific expertise would be needed to keep pace with the ever changing nature of the online world. A helpful contribution to the field would be a follow study in three to four years after the partnership between ASC and

Fractured Atlas is firmly established, and local arts councils have become fluent using the new features and upgraded functionality.

### ***Power2give's Context within the Changing Technological World***

*Power2give* has established itself as a useful new addition to the array of tools available to arts organizations to increase revenue. Examples provided from the arts councils interviewed demonstrate the range of the platform's functionality, from helping organizations make their first appeals to their audience base, to helping organizations secure needed funding to complete smaller capital projects. Further, *power2give's* swift expansion is an indication of arts organizations' growth in the use of digital tools for fundraising as well as other areas of administration. *Power2give's* success is just one suggestion that the technological changes that have been a hallmark of the 21<sup>st</sup> century are becoming increasingly integrated into all aspects of work and society. Arts organizations must learn to use new technologies and adapt them to fit their needs in order to keep pace with our rapidly changing world.

## APPENDICES

### **Appendix A** **Interview Questions**

1. Please describe your organization's fundraising plan - strategies, funds, initiatives.
2. Please describe your organization's granting strategy.
3. Please share your organization's fundraising totals for the last three years
4. Please share your organization's granting totals for the last three years.
5. How has adding *power2give* to your fundraising strategy improved your ability to fundraise?
6. Have you experienced an increase in new donors? Has the increase been significant?
7. Have you experienced an increase in smaller gifts (less than \$100)?
8. Have there been unexpected challenges or setbacks to using *power2give*?
9. How have the arts organizations in your community responded to using *power2give*?
10. Have the arts organizations in your community experienced a positive or negative impact on their fundraising efforts since using *power2give*?
11. Have they seen increases in new donors and/or smaller gifts?
12. Have you found the service at *power2give* to be responsive?
13. Did you find the pre-launch training to be sufficient and relevant?

**Appendix B**  
**Table B1: *Power2give* Results by Arts Council**

<b>Arts Council Interviewed</b>	<b>Fiscal Year 2014 Annual Budget</b>	<b>Cumulative Number of Posted Projects at Time of Interview</b>	<b>Percentage of Fully Funded Projects</b>	<b>Council Provision of Matching Gifts</b>	<b>Council Provision of Training</b>
City of Atlanta's Office of Cultural Affairs	\$3,477,227	216	78%	Yes	No
Cultural Council of Palm Beach County	\$5,989,870	37	45%	Yes	Yes
Arts Council of Indianapolis	\$3,133,012	224	30%	Yes	Yes
Greater Columbus Arts Council	\$6,000,366	77	26%	Yes	No
United Arts Council (Raleigh, NC)	\$1,287,213	24	12%	No	No

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