

## California Cultural Data Project seeks applicants

By Lynne Heffley

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California arts and cultural organizations have a new way to measure their economic and cultural effect on the communities they serve. They are being invited to join the California Cultural Data Project, part of a state-by-state online data collection system that began in Pennsylvania in 2004 through a partnership of private and public arts funders.

The project's goal is to compile standardized data that can be tracked and analyzed internally by individual groups and also be used to define the assets, needs and contributions of the cultural community statewide. In addition, each group will be able to fill out just one online form a year that will organize its financial data to meet the varying requirements of multiple grant applications.

More than 100 local groups are already participating in the project, including East West Players, Center Theatre Group and the Long Beach Museum of Art. Organizers anticipate that by 2011 as many as 5,000 California arts organization will have signed on.

"It literally took three years to work through agreeing to agree on a common way of asking questions of cultural organizations," said Bobbie Lippman, director of the Cultural Data Project as a whole and senior officer for culture at the Pennsylvania-based Pew Charitable Trusts, which will house and administer the project for each state.

"For the first time, the data are going to be apples to apples," said Laura Zucker, executive director of the Los Angeles County Arts Commission. "It'll be the same definitions collected in the same rigorous way that will not only give us information about the whole state but will allow us to compare regions or sectors by discipline. And as more states join the project, that's going to become a more interesting national conversation as well."

California is the first Western state to sign on to the project. Maryland opted in last year, Lippman said, adding that Ohio, Illinois and Massachusetts have lined up to participate, "and we are just talking to New York."

The launch of the California project is being made possible by help from the California Arts Council, the Getty Foundation, the James Irvine Foundation, the Los Angeles County Arts Commission and the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, which have provided a total of \$2.5 million in support. More information is available at [www.caculturaldata.org](http://www.caculturaldata.org).

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