



**Strengthening the arts, culture and conflict transformation ecosystem**  
*Thinking together creatively about the roles of philanthropy*  
Brandeis University | Oct 30 - Nov 1, 2019

## Summary

### Background

IMPACT -- Imagining Together Platform for Arts, Culture and Conflict Transformation\* -- is a worldwide, values-driven collaboration to design and activate strategies to strengthen the *arts, culture and conflict transformation (acct) ecosystem*. The *acct ecosystem* includes individuals and organizations harnessing the creative potential of artistic and cultural practices to transform conflict by facilitating exchange of knowledge, crafting policies, documenting practices, and harnessing resources.

After gaining a picture of the strengths and needs of the *acct ecosystem* and convening a design lab, IMPACT is beginning now to implement a series of structures and processes animated by strong commitments to decolonizing values of reciprocity, inclusion and respect. IMPACT teams are fostering an infrastructure for the *acct ecosystem* that includes: advocating for the *ecosystem*, articulating ethical principles, facilitating virtual exchanges, exploring regional hubs, and much more. For more background on IMPACT, see [Imagine IMPACT](#) and [The Arts, Culture, and Conflict Transformation Field: An Emerging Story](#).

### IMPACT's Advocacy Team

IMPACT's advocacy team is focused on a widely-acknowledged obstacle to *acct's* greater efficacy: the mismatch between the potential of the *ecosystem* and the level of resources that support transformative, long-term initiatives with sustained relationships among socially conscious artists, cultural workers, and communities. IMPACT proposes addressing this obstacle by:

- cultivating relationships of trust and reciprocity amongst all the players in the *ecosystem*, including across divides in power;
- pursuing creative, entrepreneurial, and innovative advocacy strategies with multiple players in the *ecosystem*; and
- connecting with key players in related fields (such as human rights, environmental justice, sustainable development, transitional justice, arts education, etc.) to strengthen the contributions of arts and culture in service of their missions.

IMPACT is administratively housed at Brandeis University in collaboration with the NGO ReCAST, Inc. It partners with artists, peacebuilders, researchers, funders and supporters from many regions of the world. IMPACT's 18-month planning process, undertaken with Juniata College and Maseno University in Western Kenya, was supported by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

## Strategy Gathering

As a first step, IMPACT's advocacy team joined with the [International Center for Ethics, Justice and Public Life](#) and the [Sillerman Center for the Advancement of Philanthropy](#) from Oct 30 - Nov 1, 2019 at Brandeis University. This gathering brought together 20 funding professionals, artists and researchers to develop creative, feasible strategies for strengthening the *acct ecosystem*. Support for the event came from Brandeis University's Program in Peacebuilding and the Arts, the Fresh Sound Foundation, the Max and Sunny Howard Foundation and individual donors.

Participants brought decades of experience engaging in and supporting work at the nexus of arts, culture, justice, and conflict transformation. The gathering took place in conjunction with a visit to Brandeis by Dr. John Paul Lederach, a distinguished conflict transformation scholar/practitioner and senior fellow at the Humanity United Foundation. Through thinking, feeling, expressing, and moving together in large and small groups, we:

- built relationships with partners across the *acct ecosystem*
- discussed and embodied the challenges we face, opportunities we see, and our sources of power
- engaged in candid conversations about philanthropy, what is and is not working to advance systemic change, and how to build trust and reciprocity across power divides
- combined expertise, resources, and energies to begin crafting viable, robust strategies to advance the work of the *acct ecosystem*
- explored possibilities for future collaborations

## Next Steps

- Gathering at the [International Community Arts Festival \(ICAF\)](#) on March 25-29, 2020 in Rotterdam and inviting new funders and funding professionals to respond to and strengthen the proposed strategies
- Developing a [virtual learning exchange](#) primarily directed toward funding entities, raising questions and advancing conversations on topics of interest, including: questions about building long-term partnerships and alliances, assessing excellence, and advocating for the *ecosystem* within the philanthropic sector and beyond.
- Producing a report and creative communication materials to share insights and questions from the gathering at Brandeis
- Creating initial advocacy tools

## Longer term plans

- Clarifying key audiences and further developing bottom up and top down advocacy strategies
- Designing an advocacy arm for the *acct ecosystem*, and seeking resources to support it

## Additional Resources

[Session outline](#) | [Participant bios](#) | [IMPACT FAQ](#) | [IMPACT values](#) | [Imagine IMPACT \(overview\)](#)