
**SUBSCRIBER SURVEY
TRAINING MANUAL AND PROCEDURES
FOR LOCAL MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS**

Prepared by the Urban Institute

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**PERFORMING ARTS
RESEARCH COALITION**

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Association of Performing Arts Presenters • American Symphony Orchestra League
Dance/USA • OPERA America • Theatre Communications Group

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1. Introduction

1.1 Project Overview

OPERA America, the American Symphony Orchestra League, the Association of Performing Arts Presenters, Dance/USA, and the Theatre Communications Group, supported by the Urban Institute, are collaborating on a three-year effort to build the data infrastructure to meet the managerial and marketing needs of their member organizations, and the policy-oriented needs of national service organizations. Financial support for this effort is being provided through a grant from the Pew Charitable Trusts. This project will enable performing arts organizations to take a major leap forward in their capacity to collect and use data – to improve their operations, and to measure their contribution to the quality of life of audience members and to the communities of which they are a part. The emergence of a strong national partnership between the national service organizations (NSOs) and the creation of local working groups of NSO members in ten cities will provide the backbone for this effort.

At the local level, the project calls for convening working groups of performing arts member organizations beginning first in ten communities (to be phased in over a two year period). Your city (or state, in some cases) will serve as a peer leader in developing a practical, low-cost data collection process, and in developing the capacity for local administration of surveys and collaboration with other member organizations to use such data to strengthen the contribution of the performing arts in your community.

Six goals have been identified for this project – the first three are concrete and attainable during the course of the three year effort (begun in March 2001), the other three, broader and longer term in nature.

1. To revise and supplement the annual membership surveys of the five National Service Organizations, so that a core set of organizational data can be collected across major performing arts disciplines;
2. To develop, test and implement standardized audience, subscriber and community household surveys that will enable NSO member organizations to measure the outcomes of their performing arts programs and activities – and especially those dealing with the value of the performing arts to audiences and communities;
3. To build the long-term capacity of individual NSOs and member organizations to collect and analyze data, and to effectively communicate their findings;
4. To help NSO members use data collected under goals 1 and 2 to improve performing arts outcomes in their communities;

5. To begin to build a sector information system to provide timely and useful information to managers and policy-makers on the condition, activities, outcomes, and environment of the performing arts; and
6. To contribute to the creation of a more collaborative, integrated and identifiable performing arts sector at the local and national levels.

1.2 Project Partners

This project is a unique collaborative effort involving multiple national and local organizations. As this project evolves additional partners will likely be identified, such as local foundations, corporations, or university partners that might provide financial or other support to sustain project activities beyond the term of the current grant; media; and other stakeholders. Key partners currently engaged in this effort are briefly described below.

- The five National Service Organizations: OPERA America, the American Symphony Orchestra League, the Association of Performing Arts Presenters, Dance/USA, and the Theatre Communications Group. These organizations have come together under this effort as the Performing Arts Research Coalition (PARC), and are led by OPERA America.
- Local Member Working Groups: The five communities selected to participate during the first year were Cincinnati, OH, Denver, CO, Pittsburgh, PA, Seattle, WA and the State of Alaska. In each of these communities a local working group has convened, with members representing the various National Service Organizations. Five additional sites were added in 2002; they are Austin, TX, Boston, MA, Minneapolis/St. Paul, MN, Sarasota, FL and Washington, DC.
- The Pew Charitable Trusts, based in Philadelphia, PA, have provided financial support for this project under a grant to OPERA America. This grant is part of the Trusts' national cultural strategy, *Optimizing America's Cultural Resources*.
- The Urban Institute, an independent, non-profit, non-partisan research organization based in Washington, DC, is providing research support, technical assistance, and other assistance to help build the capacity of the NSOs and participating localities throughout the project period. (Appendix 1 contains a list of Urban Institute staff and contact information.)

National Service Organizations have been paired with each participating community to provide feedback and support to this effort. In addition, each community has designated a local member as the lead organization for the working group and community. This organization will facilitate communication between local members and

national partners. The table below shows these pairings for both the first year and second year sites.

FIRST YEAR SITES

COMMUNITY	LOCAL LEAD ORGANIZATION	NSO PARTNER
Alaska	Anchorage Opera	OPERA America
Cincinnati	Cincinnati Opera	American Symphony Orchestra League
Denver	Denver City Theatre Company	Theatre Communications Group
Pittsburgh	Pittsburgh Cultural Trust	Association of Performing Arts Presenters
Seattle	Pacific Northwest Ballet	Dance/USA

SECOND YEAR SITES

COMMUNITY	LOCAL LEAD ORGANIZATION	NSO PARTNER
Austin	Austin Lyric Opera	OPERA America
Boston	FleetBoston Celebrity Series	American Symphony Orchestra League
Minneapolis/St. Paul	DanceToday	Dance/USA
Sarasota	Asolo Theatre	Theatre Communications Group
Washington, DC	Wolf Trap Foundation for the Performing Arts and American University (co-leads)	Association of Performing Arts Presenters

1.3 Core Data Collection Activities

Information for this project will be obtained through the following mechanisms:

- (1) Administrative Surveys – which will track data such as the number and types of productions, attendance, ticket prices, and basic organizational financial data. Annual membership surveys for each of the national Service Organizations have been amended to collect such data in a uniform manner to facilitate cross-disciplinary comparisons.

- (2) Audience/Subscriber Surveys – which will collect information from occasional and regular arts attendees, respectively, and provide data about the demographics of those audiences, their perceptions about their experiences and how the arts are valued by individuals and their communities, attendance patterns, and barriers to increased attendance. Individual member organizations will participate in the administration of the audience and subscriber surveys.
- (3) Household Surveys – which will collect information to help understand the attitudes of those who may not attend the performing arts regularly, and to further understand why and how individuals can be motivated to become participants. A telephone survey of random households will be undertaken in each participating community by a firm hired for this purpose.

Questionnaires and administration procedures have been developed to accompany each of these data collection activities. This guide focuses on those related to the Subscriber Survey component.

1.4 Timetable

Following are some key dates to keep in mind.

Spring 2001	Pew Charitable Trusts awards grant to OPERA America.
Summer 2002	Second round communities are selected.
July 2002	Introductory site visits in 5 communities.
September 2002	Training visits on data collection procedures.
September 2002	Issue first press release and begin implementing communications strategy.
Oct.-Dec. 2002	Data collection for audience, subscriber, and household surveys.
Nov. 8-10, 2002	Second cross-site meeting (Washington, DC).
Winter 2003	Data entry and preliminary analysis.
Spring 2003	Preliminary report to Pew Charitable Trusts.

1.5 About This Manual

This manual provides a detailed overview and discussion of procedures member organizations should use to conduct their subscriber surveys. We hope most members will be able to adopt a standardized approach. However, there will be cases where the proposed model may not apply or may not be feasible to implement, and alternate arrangements will need to be made.

Throughout this manual, we will distinguish between a preferred or recommended approach and alternative procedures to be utilized when the recommended approach is not workable. Each recommended approach will be clearly noted in bold text. Alternatives will follow. In addition, this manual identifies and describes local decisions or options that communities or individual members may choose to pursue (e.g., use of incentives to encourage response).

Some of the information provided in this manual may seem quite detailed and basic. There are two reasons for this. First, in order to make sure that we do not introduce bias into the survey, it is very important that survey dissemination and collection is done in a uniform manner by all participating organizations. Specific guidance regarding how to conduct various aspects of survey administration helps ensure this uniformity. Second, the manual is intended to serve as a reference tool, so members can refer to it as needed after the training session to obtain clear and specific guidance for carrying out a particular activity.

2. The Subscriber Survey

2.1 Overview and Content

The subscriber survey is designed to obtain information that will help individual member organizations learn more about their subscribers and ultimately use this information to guide their efforts to improve their services and contributions to the local community. At the national level, such information will help national service organizations compare information across members, disciplines, and other populations (e.g., audiences and households). Several questions on the subscriber survey are repeated in the audience and household surveys to facilitate such comparisons.

The subscriber survey contains approximately 70 core questions that fit on 6 letter-sized pages. It will be reproduced on three pages with printing on both sides of the page. A small number of questions of local interest may be added based on the preferences of working groups in each community. Based on pre-test and follow-up interviews with individuals who completed the survey, we estimate completion time to be between 10 and 15 minutes.

The content of the survey can be summarized as follows:

- ❑ Subscription history and attendance patterns (4 questions);
- ❑ Assessment/perceptions of value of performing arts to individual and community (19 questions);
- ❑ Attendance/participation patterns in member arts organization performances, leisure activities, by subscriber and children of subscriber (21 questions);
- ❑ Assessment of subscriber organization (10 questions).
- ❑ Potential barriers to increased participation or attendance (7 questions); and
- ❑ Demographic information (9 questions).

This questionnaire was developed over a period of months following review of sample questionnaires provided by many of the organizations participating in this project, and multiple levels of discussion and input from a variety of individuals and groups. A working group with representation from several national service organizations and the Urban Institute worked to design and revise several drafts. The Urban Institute was responsible for conducting the pre-test and making final edits to the instrument. The final version of the core questionnaire (i.e., excluding local questions) is contained in Appendix 2.

2.2 Summary of Core Responsibilities for Members

Each member is expected to assume the following core responsibilities related to administration of the subscriber survey. Detailed discussion of each of these tasks and related sub-tasks is presented in the remaining sections of this manual.

1. Participate in training session to become familiar with basic procedures or options for administering subscriber survey.
2. Provide subscriber database to the Urban Institute for selection of random sample.
3. Consider local options (such as use of incentives) and make arrangements accordingly.
4. Undertake preparatory steps for subscriber survey administration (including training staff, obtaining necessary supplies, preparing and reproducing individualized cover letter).
5. Assemble mailing packet containing cover letter, incentive voucher (optional), questionnaire, and stamped return envelope.
6. Mail 200 surveys to a random sample of subscribers (random sample to be selected by the Urban Institute), or to all subscribers, for organizations with 200 or fewer subscribers.
7. Receive completed questionnaires and transmit them, along with survey transmittal log, by specified dates to the local lead organization to send to Highland Data Services for data entry.

Member organizations are not responsible for costs of printing blank subscriber questionnaires. Members will be reimbursed for actual postage costs of mailing survey packets, up to 97 cents per packet (based on standard first class postage of 60 cents for the mailing packet and 37 cents for return envelopes, as discussed in Section 5). Urban Institute will provide mailing labels for each member organization's sample of subscribers in the first year of the project.

Other costs, such as envelopes and production of cover letters, additional sets of mailing labels, etc., are a local member responsibility. In addition, there are a number of local options that, if pursued, may involve additional cost to be assumed by individual members, or perhaps be defrayed through the mini-grant provided to the local working group (e.g., use of incentives, mailing of reminder postcards to improve response rates, etc.).

3. Preparatory Steps

This section addresses steps that local working group members should perform or arrange *well in advance* of the dates of survey distribution. Some of these steps are optional, or there are options for the way in which they might be carried out. In these cases, a decision or action on the part of the whole working group is needed, which may require holding a group meeting or otherwise arranging for group input. Other steps will be performed by individual member organizations. Each step is discussed below, beginning with steps that may involve a group decision or action. Core preparatory steps are as follows:

1. Decide on use of incentives, and arrange for them [local option].
2. Provide database with subscriber list to the Urban Institute for drawing random sample of subscribers to be surveyed.
3. Obtain or gather supplies (envelopes for mailing questionnaire packets, self-addressed return envelopes, organization letterhead stationery, postage stamps).
4. Receive questionnaires and subscriber labels from the Urban Institute.
5. Customize wording of cover letter. Prepare personalized cover letters (optional), using merge list and letter provided by the Urban Institute, or reproduce “Dear Subscriber” cover letters.
6. Select mailing date and identify staff/volunteers needed to assemble mailing packets.
7. Prepare wording for any follow-up (reminder) postcard or other reminder to complete questionnaires (optional).

A detailed description of each of these steps and related considerations follows.

3.1 Use of Incentives [Local Option]

Incentives are frequently used to encourage higher response rates to surveys of various kinds. Use of incentives for the subscriber survey is a local option. The working group can decide that all members will use incentives, or it can decide that each member should make that decision independently. Incentives may take many forms (examples of incentives that appear reasonable for this particular survey are shown in Exhibit 3-1.)

If the working group decides that all members will use an incentive, it should also determine whether they will all offer the same incentive, and whether the group as a whole will pay for, or seek donations of, incentives. Incentives that might be donated, for example, include dinner for two at a local restaurant(s), gift certificates at local stores or services, etc. Other things to consider include whether incentives involving a drawing for a prize are to be offered for each organization; or for the community as a whole. The size and cost of the prize would influence that decision.

Exhibit 3-1 Examples of Incentives

- ❑ A voucher or coupon (included with the cover letter, or on the bottom of the letter as a tear-off segment) to be turned in for something linked to the performance or member organization (e.g., a free beverage or snack at the refreshment stand; a 10% discount on next year's subscription); a free ticket or pair of tickets to a non-subscription performance.
- ❑ An opportunity to win a prize, such as a gift certificate to a local store; dinner for two at a restaurant; a pair of tickets to an upcoming performance; a subscription to next season; a spa or health club certificate; a night or weekend at a local hotel or B&B, etc. A form for contact information (name, address, phone number) would be included with the mailing, or printed on the bottom of the cover letter as a tear-off segment, to be returned with the completed questionnaire. A drawing would be held to select one or more prize winners.
- ❑ A \$1 bill enclosed in the mailing packet.

If incentives are used, the working group or member organization will be responsible for designing and duplicating any vouchers or other forms needed, depending on whether use of incentives is handled in a centralized or decentralized way.

3.2 Provide Subscriber Database for Selection of Random Sample

Member organizations should have provided a database of their subscribers to the Urban Institute prior to the training session. These are being used to select a random sample of subscribers to receive the questionnaire from that organization and prepare labels for them for use on the mailing packet. The Urban Institute will not share the subscriber databases with anyone. We have a strong survey confidentiality ethic and strict data privacy standards, and keep data in security-controlled offices and on secure servers. **Organizations that have not provided their database to the Urban Institute by the cut-off date previously communicated may not be included in this year's subscriber survey.**

We have decided to use a random sample of 200 subscribers for all organizations that have 200 or more subscribers, in an effort to obtain enough responses to conduct meaningful analysis. This also simplifies procedures, by avoiding the use of different size samples for organizations with different numbers of subscribers. For those organizations that have 200 or fewer subscribers, *all subscribers* will receive a

questionnaire. Such organizations should still submit their subscriber database to the Urban Institute, since we will use it to provide them with mailing labels and a merge list for the cover letter (discussed in Section 3.5).

We recognize that member organizations do not need a detailed understanding of random sampling concepts to perform their role in conducting this survey. In the interests of building data collection capacity of member organizations (one of the goals of this project). Exhibit 3-2 provides a brief description of the use and importance of random samples.

Exhibit 3-2
Frequently Asked Questions about Survey Procedures

Q. Why send surveys to only a sample of subscribers, rather than all subscribers?

A. When faced with a large number of cases, researchers frequently collect data on a sample of cases rather than attempt to contact all of them. A key reason to collect data on a sample of cases is to save money. The idea is that if a small group has essentially the same characteristics as the whole population of cases, one need only learn about the behavior or beliefs of the small group in order to understand the larger group. The key to this logic is that the sample must look very much like the population, or be "representative" of it. Instead of hand-picking a group that they think is representative, organizations or researchers should randomly select cases to be part of a sample. If the randomly selected cases are truly representative of the population, then the organization can make claims about the population based on the data collected from the sampled group.

Q. What is the best size for a sample?

A. A number of factors influence the "sample size" question. Nonetheless, survey researchers have found that they can make reasonable claims about a population based on a surprisingly small number of cases. For example, national pollsters have found that they need no more than 1,500 cases to describe the distribution of attitudes and opinions for all Americans. In this case, distributing 200 surveys per organization should provide enough cases to represent the variation in subscribers for most organizations.

Q. Why does response rate matter?

A. In order for performing arts organizations to have confidence in the data from the survey, the sample needs to have the same characteristics as the population. "Non-response" to a survey is a concern because they suspect that the people who respond to a survey are different in some important way from people who choose not to respond. If this is true, then the sample will take on the characteristics of the type of people who respond to surveys, and will lack the characteristics of people who do not respond. If this problem is serious, then the sample will differ in important ways from the population, compromising the ability of the organization to make claims about the population based on the data collected from the sample. However, researchers rarely have a way of measuring if the people who respond to the survey are really different from the people who fail to respond. The best way to decrease the chances of error stemming from these potential differences is to maximize the percentage of total returns. If everyone in a sample returns a survey, then one does not have to worry whether certain important characteristics are being over- or under-represented in the study. For this reason, many studies go to a great deal of trouble to get as many people to respond to a survey as possible.

3.3 Obtain Supplies

The recommended approach for mailing questionnaires (described in Section 4) calls for the supplies described in Exhibit 3-3. In general, 200 questionnaires will be distributed by each organization, except those that have fewer than 200 subscribers.

Exhibit 3-3 Supplies Needed for Mailing Survey Packet Using Recommended Approach

Envelopes: Two envelopes are needed for each questionnaire mailed: one for mailing the survey packet, the second for use as the return envelope. The recommended approach is to use a large envelope (e.g., 9" X 12") to mail the survey packet, and a regular (#10) business envelope for the return envelope. Some organizations may already have postage-paid reply envelopes, or may wish to purchase pre-stamped #10 envelopes from the Post Office to use for reply envelopes.

Letterhead Stationery: The organization may use its regular letterhead stationery for the cover letter, or the type of paper it normally uses when generating letters by computer (for those that use the merge mailing list discussed in Section 3-5).

Return address labels or rubber stamps: In some cases the organization will need to put its return address information on the envelopes used for the mailing packet. This can be done with return address labels, or with a rubber stamp with the organization's name and address. These should be obtained by the organization in advance of the mailing, if needed.

Stamps. Postage or stamps are needed for both the mailing packet and return envelopes. If an organization uses its postage meter for mailing the survey packet, it will only need to obtain stamps for the return envelopes. The standard mailing packet requires 60 cents postage (first class) and the return envelope requires 37 cents postage. Member organizations will be reimbursed for actual postage costs up to 97 cents per subscriber surveyed (postage reimbursement procedures are discussed in Section 5). We recommend checking the amount of postage needed in advance by assembling and weighing a sample mailing packet. Some organizations may prefer to purchase pre-stamped envelopes for the return envelope (or even the survey packet, discussed under Special Cases or Exceptions, below). Since these cost more than postage alone, the additional cost will be borne by the member organization.

Some organizations may already have large envelopes with their return addresses printed on them; others may need to purchase blank envelopes and stamp them with their return address, or use a label with their return address.

Special Cases or Exceptions

(1) Some organizations may not have a supply of large envelopes (e.g., 9" X 12" or 10" X 13" envelopes), and may prefer to use their regular-size business envelopes for mailing the survey packet (as well as for the reply envelope). This has the disadvantage of requiring the organization to fold the questionnaires and related material into thirds to insert in the small envelope, thus increasing the time needed to assemble the mailing packets. This may be an important consideration for organizations that have few staff or volunteers to perform this task. Using smaller envelopes does not appear to decrease the cost of postage for the mailing packet (weight of different paper stocks for any size envelope may affect postage, however). This approach also loses the advantage of larger envelopes, which are felt to stand out in the recipient's mail, which may lead to improved response rates.

(2) Most organizations have stationery with their letterhead on it, or have an electronic template of their letterhead to use when printing letters directly from the computer. Organizations that do not have either type of letterhead do not have to purchase stationery for this mailing, but they should develop a letterhead template with their name and address for the cover letter. Most basic software packages (e.g., *Word* or *Wordperfect*) can produce a simple letterhead. Such organizations may need to leave additional advance time to learn how to set up such a template.

Additional costs associated with the options described above (e.g., pre-stamped envelopes), or even with the recommended option (e.g., purchase of large envelopes) could be defrayed by the local mini-grant, if the local working group decides to do so.

Regardless of the options selected, gathering or purchasing supplies should be done well in advance of the planned mailing date.

3.4 Receive Questionnaires and Mailing Labels

The Urban Institute will provide an adequate supply of subscriber questionnaires individualized with the names of the member organizations and community name. These will be batched with a supply of Subscriber Survey Transmittal Logs and mailing labels and sent to the lead organization for distribution to individual members. The lead organization will coordinate with the working group to determine an appropriate strategy for getting the surveys to each participating member organization. For example, once

materials are received by the lead organization, local members might be informed and make arrangements to pick up their surveys from the lead organization. Or a local working group meeting might be convened for such a purpose, or as part of a meeting to address other local business.

When the surveys are received by individual member organizations, they should be checked immediately to be sure that the organization and community names are printed correctly. Each member should check that it receives the questionnaires with its name upon receipt of the forms (well in advance of the projected distribution date).

QUESTIONNAIRES WILL BE PRINTED AND SENT TO THE LOCAL LEADS IN EARLY OCTOBER, along with mailing labels for the subscriber sample. A merge mailing list and a sample cover letter will be transmitted electronically to member organizations.

3.5 Customize and Reproduce Cover Letter

Recommended Approach: Send Customized Cover Letter in Packet

The mailing packet for the subscriber survey is intended to include a cover letter explaining the purpose of the survey and requesting the subscriber's cooperation. A sample of the basic content with suggested wording is provided in Exhibit 3-5. Member organizations should modify the wording of the cover letter to localize it, and particularly to insert examples of how the member organization or working group hopes to use the resulting information. When modifying the letter, be sure your changes do not make it exceed one page in length. Subscribers are more likely to read a short letter than a long one. Member organizations should avoid using this letter to provide information about upcoming performances or for other communication with subscribers. The cover letter should focus only on the survey.

Based on feedback obtained during our survey pre-test, subscribers identified the following as information that would likely motivate them to complete the survey:

- Acknowledgment that they are a current or recent subscriber.
- Statement that their participation in the survey is important.
- Information about how the survey information will be used, or how it will help the organization.

- A statement that the information will not be shared with marketing firms and that no additional solicitations will occur as a result of their cooperation with the survey.

We encourage members to personalize cover letters by inserting the subscriber's name and address and using their name in the salutation ("Dear Ms. Smith").

Urban Institute will provide each member organization with a mail merge list of names and addresses of its subscribers selected for the random sample, and an electronic version of the basic letter with pre-set commands to facilitate using the mail-merge function. **If this suggestion is followed, organizations will need to check that names on the letters are correctly matched to the names on the mailing envelopes during the mailing packet assembly process.** In addition to personalizing the address and salutation, organizations often use a variety of ways to personalize their mailings (such as fund-raising letters) that also can be applied to survey mailings.

Tips for Personalizing Cover Letters

- Use hand-signatures (in blue or black ink) by a high-level person who is viewed as representing the organization in its community, such as the artistic director or executive director—a name subscribers will recognize.
- Use electronic signatures if personal signatures are not possible, or have staff or volunteers sign for the official.
- Cross out the formal salutation ("Mr. Smith") and write in the subscriber's first name or nickname ("Jim") if the executive knows the subscriber.
- Add a brief hand written note urging the subscriber to reply, perhaps as a "P.S." on the bottom of the letter, or as a stick-on note on a "From the desk of..." memo. This could re-emphasize that only 200 subscribers were selected to participate in the survey, making their response particularly important.

Some organizations may lack staff capacity or technical expertise to enable them to personalize the letter, even with provision of the mail merge list. In such cases, it is acceptable to use the salutation "Dear Subscriber" (or something similar), and to reproduce that letter for all packets.

If an organization does not use incentives, the wording related to incentives in the sample cover letter should be omitted. If the incentive selected requires a coupon, voucher, or entry form for a drawing, it is desirable to provide such material as a tear-off section on the bottom of the cover letter, to reduce the number of items included in the packet. Alternatively, they may be provided as separate forms.

**Exhibit 3-5
Sample Text for Subscriber Cover Letter**

[Date]

[Insert Name]
[Insert Address]
[Insert Address]

Dear Subscriber **[OR insert subscriber name]**

Thank you for subscribing to **[organization name]** this year. We hope you are enjoying our performances.

[organization name] is participating in a national effort designed to improve and coordinate the way performing arts organizations gather information to develop persuasive arguments for increased policy support for American arts and culture. Several other performing arts organizations in **[city name]** and in other cities are participating in this effort, which is supported by a grant from the Pew Charitable Trusts. As part of this effort, we are asking selected subscribers to take a few minutes to complete the attached questionnaire and return it by **[enter date 10 to 14 days after date of letter]** in the enclosed postage-paid envelope.

Your responses will help us better understand subscribers' feelings about our performances and service, and about your interests in performing arts. This information will help us serve you better, and also will provide information to support advocacy efforts on behalf of the arts, and to inform the public and opinion leaders about the significance of the nonprofit performing arts. **[Insert organizational or local examples of how information may be used, e.g., to help select future program offerings, help make decisions about facilities]**

Please rest assured that your responses are anonymous. The information you provide will not be shared with marketing firms, and no additional solicitations will occur as a result of your participation in this survey.

[Optional] To thank you for your help, you will find a **[voucher, coupon, entry form]** on the bottom of this letter **[OR attached]** for **[identify incentive, e.g., voucher for 10% off next year's subscription, voucher for complementary beverage at the refreshment stand]**.

OR

To thank you for your help, please fill in the information requested on the entry form below **[or attached]**, and return it with your completed questionnaire to be entered in a drawing for **[identify prize(s) e.g., gift certificate to [store name] dinner for two at XYZ]**.

We appreciate your cooperation in completing the questionnaire, and look forward to seeing you at **[enter venue name]**

Sincerely,

[Enter Name]

3.6 Select Mailing Date and Identify Staff or Volunteers to Assist with Mailing

Recommended Approach: Mail Surveys No Later Than October 18, 2002

Each member organization is expected to mail its surveys to subscribers by October 18, 2002, in order to have surveys in the field as long as possible before the survey cut-off date of December 13, 2003. Each member organization is responsible for mobilizing staff or volunteers to assist with assembling the mailing packets (described in Section 4).

An organization's need for volunteers for this task will depend on availability of its own staff. It is desirable to mail all packets at the same time, or within a two or three day period; particularly if any follow-up mailing or other form of reminder is used (discussed in Section 3-7). However, all packets do not have to be assembled at once, or on the day of the mailing. Having staff assemble a modest number of packets each day may preclude the need to recruit volunteers for this purpose. It may be wise to recruit a few more staff or volunteers than seems necessary, in case there are some "no shows."

The organization should consider its space needs and constraints in determining how many staff or volunteers can reasonably work at the same time (see Section 4-2 for discussion of assembly layout). Once the staff or potential volunteers for these tasks are identified, a staff member should contact them to briefly explain the overall survey effort, the tasks they are needed to perform, the dates and times at which their assistance is needed, and how much of their time is needed at each of the dates. In calculating how much time is needed, be sure to allow some time to provide instructions on how to perform these tasks.

3.7 Prepare Wording for Follow-Up Material (Optional)

We suggest that member organizations send a reminder postcard to encourage respondents to complete and return the questionnaire. To increase survey response rates (see earlier discussion in Exhibit 3-2), it is considered good survey practice to send a second mailing or reminder to encourage survey recipients to complete and return questionnaires previously sent to them. Many individuals who receive a questionnaire in the mail may put it aside to fill in when they have more time; but some never get around to doing so. Receiving a reminder postcard may motivate them to complete and return the questionnaire. Postcards have the advantage that the recipient can readily see the reminder message without having to open an envelope and unfold a letter. They are also simpler and less costly for the organization.

If used, reminder postcards should be mailed to the entire random sample of subscribers 7 to 10 days after the initial mailing. After that, it is less likely that survey recipients would still have the questionnaire. Since there are no tracking numbers or

identification on the completed surveys, reminder postcards need to be sent to the full mailing list used for the original mailing, even though some of those subscribers may have already completed and returned the questionnaire. The text of the postcard should acknowledge that (see Exhibit 3-7). The mail merge list provided to member organizations for use in personalizing the cover letter can be used to generate a set of labels for the reminder postcard.

Exhibit 3-7
Sample Text for Reminder Postcard

Dear Subscriber: We recently sent you a questionnaire about the performing arts and your subscription to [organization name]. If you have already completed it and returned it to us, please accept our thanks for your cooperation. If not, we would greatly appreciate it if you would complete the questionnaire and return it to us no later than [enter date within one week of expected delivery]. This survey was sent only to selected subscribers, so your response is very important to us. We value your opinion, and hope to hear from you soon.

Costs associated with a reminder postcard (e.g., postcards, postage, mailing labels) are a member or local responsibility. The cost may be borne by the individual member, or the local working group can decide to use some of its mini-grant funds to defray costs of reminder mailings by some or all members.

Additional Reminder Options

Following are alternative reminder mechanisms that some member organizations may wish to use instead of a postcard reminder. Option #2 can be used *in addition to*, not just in place of, a reminder postcard.

- **Option #1 – Send a second full mailing (cover letter, questionnaire, return envelope) to all subscribers on the original mailing list.**

A second mailing is generally considered to be desirable, since the recipient may have already discarded the questionnaire sent in the first mailing. However, this option is more costly, since it requires reproducing another set of questionnaires and labels in addition to the other costs associated with the original mailing packets. These costs would be borne by the member or the local working group, if it decides to use its funds for this purpose. Organizations would need to develop a different cover letter for the second mailing, acknowledging that a previous mailing was sent and that the subscriber should only complete this questionnaire if they did not return the previous one.

- **Option #2 – Use an existing publication, such as a subscriber newsletter, or the member organization’s Website, to seek cooperation with the survey.**

Member organizations may be able to use existing print media, such as newsletters or performance programs that are distributed slightly before or during the time the survey is in the field, to inform subscribers of the survey. Such general announcements should point out that randomly selected subscribers were chosen to receive a questionnaire, and request that those who receive it cooperate by completing and returning it as quickly as possible. A similar notice might be posted on the organization’s Website. These forms of reminder have the advantage of low cost, but may not be noticed by all subscribers who received the survey.

4. Assembling the Mailing Packet

Recommended Approach: Place materials flat in a large envelope.

The recommended approach for assembling the mailing packet is to stack the cover letter, postage-paid, addressed return envelope and questionnaire, and insert them flat in a large (e.g., 9" X 12" or similar size) envelope, with the member organization's return address on the mailing envelope.

This section focuses on the preferred distribution option. Large envelopes are recommended because they have the advantage of "standing out" in the recipient's mail, attracting attention and possibly leading to a higher response rate.

Some member organizations may have considerable experience conducting surveys or other mass mailings, and may find the procedures outlined in this section to be more basic and "low tech" than those they are accustomed to using. Please keep in mind that this effort is intended to build member capacity to conduct surveys by use of a simple, low-cost survey approach. Thus, some steps described as manual procedures here (e.g., stuffing and sealing envelopes) could be handled in other ways (e.g., outsourcing to mailing houses). Member organizations should feel free to use other options than those described here, although additional costs associated with other options will have to be borne by those organizations.

4.1 Prepare for Assembly of Mailing Packets

The following are preliminary steps to take prior to assembly and distribution of mailing packets. Some of these may need to be done a few days in advance of the date of distribution (or even earlier). Other steps, such as training, may be done right before distribution begins.

1. Arrange to have a staff member trained in the survey administration procedures present to train the staff and volunteers, supervise them, answer questions or deal with any unexpected circumstances that may arise.
2. Where applicable (for example, if assembly of mailing packets will take place on a weekend), make arrangements so that staff or volunteers are able to enter the office (or other location used) at the selected time.
3. Have materials to be included in the mailing packet assembled at that location.
4. Have work surfaces set up or cleared off for use in assembling packets.

5. Instruct staff and volunteers on how to perform the respective tasks (following the task descriptions below).
6. Weigh a sample mailing packet that is identical to the packet that will be sent to subscribers to determine the amount of postage needed per packet.

Ideally, the following steps should be performed in advance, to speed up the assembly process. However, they can be performed at the time the packets are assembled if preferred.

7. Prepare return envelopes. Apply first-class postage (unless pre-stamped envelopes are used), and put the member organization's return address information on the envelope. The latter can be handled by using labels (such as return address labels the organization has in stock, or preparing computer generated mailing labels for this purpose,) or by using a rubber stamp to insert the name and address. The return envelope address should include organization name, address and "Attention of [insert name]" to be sure that the questionnaires do not get lost within the organization, or delivered to someone who does not know what to do with them.
8. Affix subscriber mailing labels to envelopes used for the mailing packet. If individualized letters are used, be sure to keep envelopes in alphabetical order once the labels are affixed, since the letters will be generated in alphabetic order.
9. Affix stamps to mailing envelopes (unless a postage meter is used). Although some organizations may commonly use bulk mail to reduce postage costs, we recommend first class mail, which is believed to increase response rates.

4.2 Assemble Mailing Packets

Assembling mailing packets can be viewed as an assembly line process. To facilitate assembly and help ensure that nothing is left out of the packet, lay out the items to be assembled in the sequence in which they are to be inserted in the mailing envelope. Ideally, a large table or other flat surface should be used for this purpose.

A variety of factors should be considered when deciding how to lay out material for assembly, including space limitations, the number of staff or volunteers involved in the process, and whether some steps were done in advance (e.g., labels and postage may have been affixed to mailing envelopes previously). Since it is not possible to address all variations here, following is a basic scenario for laying out materials for mailing packet assembly, to illustrate the approach.

1. Cover letter
2. Separate voucher, coupon or entry form for incentive (if any)
3. Stamped return envelope
4. Questionnaire
5. Mailing envelope (with postage and label already affixed)

Persons engaged in the assembly process may want to experiment a bit to find the easiest and quickest approach to assemble mailing packets. Following are the basic steps for assembling and inserting materials into the packet.

1. Assemble items 1-4 in that order (cover letter, voucher, etc. [if any], return envelope and questionnaire);
2. Check that the name and address on the cover letter matches that on the mailing label on prepared mailing envelope (OR affix the mailing label that matches the name and address on the cover letter to an unlabeled envelope);
3. Insert the material (unfolded) into the mailing envelope and seal the envelope; and
4. Place postage on mailing envelope (unless previously done) or run through postage meter.

The sequence may be broken into logical groups of substeps assigned to different individuals. For example, one person might assemble the items (step 1), while another inserts them into envelopes, seals them and applies postage.

Alternative Approaches to Assembling Packets

There may be some organizations that prefer, or need to use, one of the alternative scenarios described below.

□ **Alternative #1 – Use a regular size business envelope for the survey packet.**

Some organizations may not have a supply of large envelopes and may not want to purchase them for this mailing. In such cases, the organization's regular business envelopes can be used for the mailing packets. The key difference is that the materials to be inserted will have to be assembled and then folded in thirds before inserted them into the envelope. Postage costs for the regular size envelope appear to be the same as for the large envelope. Similarly, organizations that have a supply of 6" X 9" mailing envelopes may wish to use them in place of the larger envelopes. This alternative would entail folding materials in half before inserting them into the envelope.

□ **Alternative #2 – Use “Dear Subscriber” cover letter.**

If an organization is not able to personalize the cover letter for each subscriber (as discussed in Section 3-4), the step of matching the cover letter to the mailing label is not necessary.

5. Mailing and Postage

5.1 Mailing the packets

Packets should be mailed as soon as possible after assembly, but **no later than October 18, 2002**. Ideally, all packets should be mailed on the same day, but if that is not possible for some reason, it is acceptable to mail them all within a two to three day period.

5.2 Mailing Reminder Postcards

If the member organization decides to use the optional reminder postcards, they should be mailed 7 to 10 days after the initial mailing (as discussed in Section 3.7).

5.3 Reimbursement for Postage Costs

Member organizations will be reimbursed for actual postage costs, up to a maximum of 97 cents per mailing packet (60 cents for the mailing envelope and 37 cents for the return envelope). The lead organization will receive funds for this purpose through OPERA America. The Urban Institute will calculate the maximum amount each member organization may receive for postage based on the number of its subscribers randomly selected for inclusion in the survey.

Member organizations are encouraged to seek postage cost savings where possible, such as by using existing stocks of prepaid reply envelopes, and simply bill for actual costs. Similarly, those who have encountered higher mailing costs, for example because they purchased pre-stamped envelopes, or used heavy weight letterhead or envelopes, should report those costs to the local lead organization (even though they will not be reimbursed for them through OPERA America). It will be helpful to the project to develop a sense of the range of costs associated with member organization mailings to inform decision-making about conducting surveys next year, as well as to report to the NSOs and to Pew Charitable Trusts.

The local lead organization will provide information about procedures for requesting postage reimbursement.

6. Handling Completed Questionnaires

6.1 Receiving Returned Questionnaires

Since the return envelopes will be addressed to the member organization, each member should alert their staff who receive, deliver and open mail that the questionnaires will be arriving and where they should be routed within the organization. The return envelope should have the name of a person or department, perhaps saying "Attention of" [insert name].

6.2 Transmitting Questionnaires to Lead Organization and Data Entry Firm

Recommended Approach

Each organization is responsible for collecting returned questionnaires and transmitting its returned questionnaires to the local lead organization. Completed questionnaires received by November 22, 2002 should be sent to your local lead organization on that date; questionnaires received after November 22 should be submitted to your local lead on December 20, 2003.

Local leads will be asked to forward batched questionnaires to Highland Data Services approximately one week following the November and December deadlines.

If you wish to keep copies of the completed questionnaires for your own use, please make such copies before sending them to your local lead. (These copy costs are a member responsibility.) Urban Institute will develop a procedure for sharing data with individual organizations, after data entry and data cleaning activities have taken place. (Refer to Section 7 for more detail.)

A sample of the log member organizations should complete with each transmittal of subscriber questionnaires is provided on the following page. It includes basic identifying information about your organization, the date on which the subscriber questionnaires were mailed; the time period during which these completed surveys were received, and whether incentives and/or reminder postcards or other reminders were used. It includes space for you to provide additional observations to improve the process in the future or to comment about any problems you encountered. This information is very important to help us learn about your experience and to make necessary adjustments to improve future efforts.

SUBSCRIBER SURVEY TRANSMITTAL LOG

Please complete a new survey log for each set of subscriber surveys. Place the completed log and corresponding surveys into an envelope, write your organization's name on the envelope, and forward the envelope to your local lead organization.

Submit completed questionnaires received by November 22nd on that date, and submit those received after November 22nd on December 20th.

Please attach a copy of the cover letter that accompanied the surveys with the first set of completed surveys.

ORGANIZATION INFORMATION

<u>Organization Name:</u>			
<u>City:</u>			
Name of Person Overseeing Survey:		Phone Number:	

SURVEY DETAILS

Number of Surveys Mailed:		Number of Completed Surveys Enclosed:	
Date of Mailing:		Date of Reminder Mailing (if any):	
<u>Dates these surveys were received:</u>	From / / to / /		

Please indicate which of the following apply to this survey (check all that apply):

	We sent a reminder postcard
	We sent a second full mailing of the questionnaire
	The survey was publicized through a newsletter or another mechanism
	Incentives were used to encourage subscribers to complete the survey

Please describe any special circumstances or particular problems you encountered:

7. Next Steps

7.1 Within Two Weeks of Site Visit Training

Immediate steps to be pursued by member organizations by themselves, or possibly in coordination with the full working group include the following:

- Obtain supplies.
- Develop cover letter.
- Identify volunteers or staff.
- Provide feedback on how your organization is represented in current draft of audience survey.

These activities should ideally take place within the next two to three weeks to permit actual mailing of the subscriber survey to be completed by October 18, 2002. Please review this manual for a description of other optional preparatory tasks, such as use of incentives or reminder postcards.

7.2 Data Entry and Analysis

Based on the current timeline, subscriber survey data collection activities should be complete by the end of December 2002. Highland Data Services will oversee data entry and forward data to the Urban Institute for analysis and dissemination. Questionnaires received after the January cut-off date may not be included in this round of analysis.

Individual databases will be made available to each member organization for local use, once data entry and basic cleaning activities are complete. Preliminary findings will be shared and reviewed during spring of 2003.