

# CHORAL FIELD-BUILDING ORGANIZATION STUDY:

• SUMMARY REPORT •



Final Report for Distribution  
2/7/17

Barbershop Harmony Society  
American Choral Directors Association  
Chorus America

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The organizations participating in this study gave generously of their time and expertise to provide the information summarized in this report. Their thoroughness and patience in responding to requests and engaging in ongoing communication about the work of their organizations is deeply appreciated and truly made the study a pleasure to conduct.

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## INTRODUCTION

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In recent years, a network of choral field-building organizations across North America and around the world have increasingly become engaged in collaborative and mutually supportive conversations and activities, culminating in an innovative “Choral Ecosystems” conference at Yale University in early 2016. Of particular interest to this group of field-building organizations are questions related to the collaborative possibilities that may exist among them and the collective impact that may be possible through them. How might they work better together, and what might they be able to accomplish together?

As a continuation of this collaborative work, the Barbershop Harmony Society, the American Choral Directors Association, and Chorus America have partnered together to undertake a descriptive “mapping” of the work of these and other choral field-building organizations operating in North America and in other parts of the world. True to the collective interests of these organizations, this mapping project is animated by the following series of guiding questions:

- ☐ What is the collective programmatic work of these choral field-building organizations?
- ☐ Who are these organizations – descriptively, structurally, operationally, and programmatically?
- ☐ What challenges do these organizations face in implementing their work?
- ☐ What new opportunities and trends are shaping the work of these organizations into the future?

As answers to these questions come into clearer focus, the collaborative work already begun among these organizations may be further enriched and may be more intentionally and strategically targeted to maximize both the marshaling of these organizations’ individual resources and the impact of their collective work for the persons and communities they serve. This report will provide answers to these questions, summarizing the data collected through the Choral Field-Building Organization study.

## PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

The list of organizations participating in this project was determined through two means: (1) drawing on the list of field-building organizations already engaged in the choral ecosystems work (e.g., participants at the Yale gathering); and (2) other field-building organizations not previously involved but that were identified by project partners as serving an “aggregating” function for choral- or music-based individuals or groups.

With the common criterion of their aggregating function, this list of field-building organizations is incredibly rich in its scope and diversity. Organizations span from small, non-profit organizations operating with no staff to large national corporations with hundreds of staff and millions of dollars in revenue. They cover genres from barbershop to jazz to collegiate glee to classical, and serve functions from education and competition to research and advocacy. Even with this wide diversity among them, their work at times is remarkably similar, and the challenges they face and hopes they pursue are far from unique. In other words, the diversity among them helps ensure breadth in studying them, while the commonalities among them help ensure focus and depth.

The final list of organizations contacted, engaged with, and reported on for this study include the following 29 organizations:

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|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> American Choral Directors Association                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Intercollegiate Men's Choruses                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> American Guild of Organists                           | <input type="checkbox"/> International Federation of Choral Music          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers | <input type="checkbox"/> Jazz Education Network                            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Barbershop Harmony Society                            | <input type="checkbox"/> National Association for Music Education          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Broadcast Music Inc.                                  | <input type="checkbox"/> National Association of Music Merchants           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Choral Arts Initiative                                | <input type="checkbox"/> National Association of Schools of Music          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Choral Canada   | <input type="checkbox"/> National Association of Teachers of Singing       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Choristers Guild                                      | <input type="checkbox"/> National Collegiate Choral Organization           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chorus America  | <input type="checkbox"/> Retail Print Music Dealer's Association           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> El Sistema USA  | <input type="checkbox"/> Sweet Adelines International                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> GALA Choruses   | <input type="checkbox"/> The Contemporary A Cappella League                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gospel Music Workshop of America                      | <input type="checkbox"/> The Contemporary A Cappella Society               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hal Leonard Corporation                               | <input type="checkbox"/> National Convention of Gospel Choirs and Choruses |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Harmony Inc.  | <input type="checkbox"/> World Choir Games/Interkultur Foundation          |

The project developed for the mapping of these organizations was conducted from September through October, 2016. Data collection, analysis, and reporting followed a 6 ½ week project timeline, and utilized the methods described in the following section.

## METHODS

Once the above organizations were identified and the sample list was finalized with the project partners, the collection of data from each organization proceeded through three distinct phases, each with its own unique strengths and limitations for the purposes of this study.

### *Phase One: Online Research*

First, each organization was extensively searched and studied through its online footprint, including (primarily) its website, its social media accounts, online performance videos and audio, and 990 tax form or other available financial statement or report. Even the smallest organizations with the most limited capacity had an online presence to contribute to this first phase of the project, resulting in at least some amount of data collection for all 29 organizations in this initial phase of the project.

Somewhat surprisingly, many of the organizations boasted broadly and minutely detailed websites, including detailed information on board governance, finances, programming, and organizational history. In at least two cases, in fact, organization contacts felt their websites were so thoroughly detailed and accurate that there was little else they could share in the context of a survey or interview (in the researcher's estimation, such statements in these two cases were not far from the truth).

Though mostly completed in the first few weeks of the project, this online research continued to serve as a fact-checking and verification tool in subsequent phases of the project (e.g., verifying a board president's name, double-checking a detail of organizational history).

### *Phase Two: Survey Research*

To supplement the first phase of online research, and to help gather more detailed and exact organizational information, an online survey was developed with the guidance and review of Barbershop Harmony Society project partner Kevin Lynch. The questions on this survey focused on descriptive information (e.g., number of staff, number of constituents served), programmatic information (e.g., primary programs, developing programs), as well as strategic information (e.g., peer organization collaborations, evaluation-related activities). Information that was already widely available through the first phase of online research was not requested in this phase, in order to reduce survey length and avoid data duplication. A full list of the survey questions is provided in the appendix at the end of this report.

The survey was distributed to primary organization contacts via email, with a link to the survey provided in the body of an email that also described for participants the purpose of the study and the intended deliverables of the study. Responses to the survey, initially, were very slow. After repeated email reminders, direct follow-up contacts with each organization and, in a few cases, conducting the survey over the phone with a contact, 23 of the 29 organizations responded to the survey, for an 79% response rate. One organization declined participation in the survey due to organizational standards that prohibit staff from providing public statements on behalf of the organization. Another organization refused to participate in the survey, opting instead to participate in the interview phase of the study (described below). The remaining two organizations were non-responsive to repeated and varied communication attempts.

### *Phase Three: Interview Research*

Finally, to further supplement and enrich the data collected through the first two phases of the study, a third phase of qualitative interview research was conducted with the majority of the participating organizations. Questions in this phase of the study were more open-ended and unstructured, allowing space for individual organizations to speak from within their own unique contexts and interests, while still adhering to a common basic structure for the interview – (1) what are the programmatic priorities of the organization; (2) what challenges is the organization encountering; (3) what are the future strategic directions for the organization; and (4) what major social trends are impacting the work of the organization. In addition to these common discussion topics, information left unanswered for each organization in the earlier phases of the project were further explored in this third phase.

Invitations for interviews were sent to organization contacts first via email, and subsequently via a combination of email and phone communications. As with the survey phase of the study, organization contacts were slow to respond to the third phase requests for interviews. After repeated and varied communication attempts with each organization, interviews were successfully scheduled and conducted with 18 of the 29 organizations, for a 62% interview response rate. Three of these organizations included interviews with two persons, bringing the total number of persons interviewed up to 21. In addition to the three organizations that did not respond to the online survey, several other organizations simply were

less willing to participate in the interview phase of the study and expressed their desire to end their participation having completed the online survey portion.<sup>1</sup>

### *Data Analysis*

The data collected through the above methods were stored and organized using several different tools serving different unique purposes. First, as data on each organization were gathered over the several weeks of the project, they were iteratively summarized and organized into a profile document for each organization. Second, a spreadsheet was created and maintained for housing the organizations' quantitative and categorical data, for easier sorting and organizing over the course of the project. Third, the qualitative interview data were uploaded into the ATLAS.ti qualitative analysis software for thematic analysis and coding, and the quantitative and categorical data were uploaded into the SPSS quantitative analysis software for descriptive and basic correlational analyses. Each of these data organization and analysis techniques have supplemented the others and have helped to provide a more extensive and robust summarization of the data collected through the above three phases.

## DESCRIPTIVE ORGANIZATIONAL DATA

Though all of the organizations selected for inclusion in the choral ecosystems project have a shared focus on the aggregation of choral- or music-related groups or individuals, they span a wide range of sizes, structures, operational activities, and programmatic priorities. This section of the report briefly describes these participating organizations, providing an overview of operational structure, finances, geographic focus, and communication activities. The data summarized in this first section are more than mere descriptives, of course, and directly bear on the capacity of these organizations to carry out their work. As many participants have shared, the size of an organization's staff and its annual revenues, for example, partly dictate what it is able to accomplish and the particular barriers it encounters. Such descriptive details, in other words, should not be overlooked.

Turning first to operational structure, summarized in Table 1 on the following page, these organizations range in governing board size from as few as 6 board members to as many as 36 board members, with a median board size of 14 members. Though staff size ranged widely from 1 staff member to 475 staff members, most organizations reported staff sizes on the lower end of the range, with a median reported staff size of 10. Five of the participating organizations reported having no staff, operating instead through the work of volunteers, contracted management services, or their board of directors.

Also summarized in Table 1, these organizations tend to focus their programming and services on either individual constituents (e.g., directors, administrators, choristers), group-based constituents (e.g., choruses, educational institutions), or some mixture of both individuals and groups. For several of the more retail-based organizations, this distinction was not determined. These organizations leaned slightly more in favor of serving individual-based constituents, with 11 organizations falling into this category, compared to 7 group-based organizations and 8 mixed constituent organizations.

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<sup>1</sup> A diminishment in engagement at this phase of the study is understandable and to be expected. Compared with the efficiency and convenience of participating in an online survey, a phone interview is a bigger "ask" for participants, being both more time-intensive and more challenging to schedule and conduct, particularly for those organizations previously less engaged with the ongoing choral ecosystems project.

*Table 1. Operational Structure, Sample Distributions.*

Variable	No. of Orgs	Min.	Max.	Median
Board size	27	6	36	14
Staff size	22	1	475	10
Individual-based orgs	11			
Group-based orgs	7			
Mixed orgs	8			

Those serving individual constituents reported serving as few as 24<sup>2</sup> individuals and as many as 750,000 individuals, with a median individual constituent base of 6,020. Those serving group-based constituents reported serving as few as 21 groups and as many as 7,500 groups, with a median group constituent base of 500.

## FINANCIAL ANALYSIS

Financial data for most of the participating organizations were collected from their most recent publicly available 990 tax form. In several cases, organizations did not have an available 990 form but instead reported financial data through an annual report or other financial statement. A few organizations either were not comfortable with sharing this information and/or were reportedly well underneath the minimum revenue amount required for tax reporting and therefore declined to share.

Among those 24 (83.8%) organizations for whom financial data were available, revenue totals ranged widely from as low as \$6,000 annually to just over \$1 billion. As with the above board and staff data, average total revenue for these organizations skewed to the lower end of the range, with a median total revenue of \$812,841.

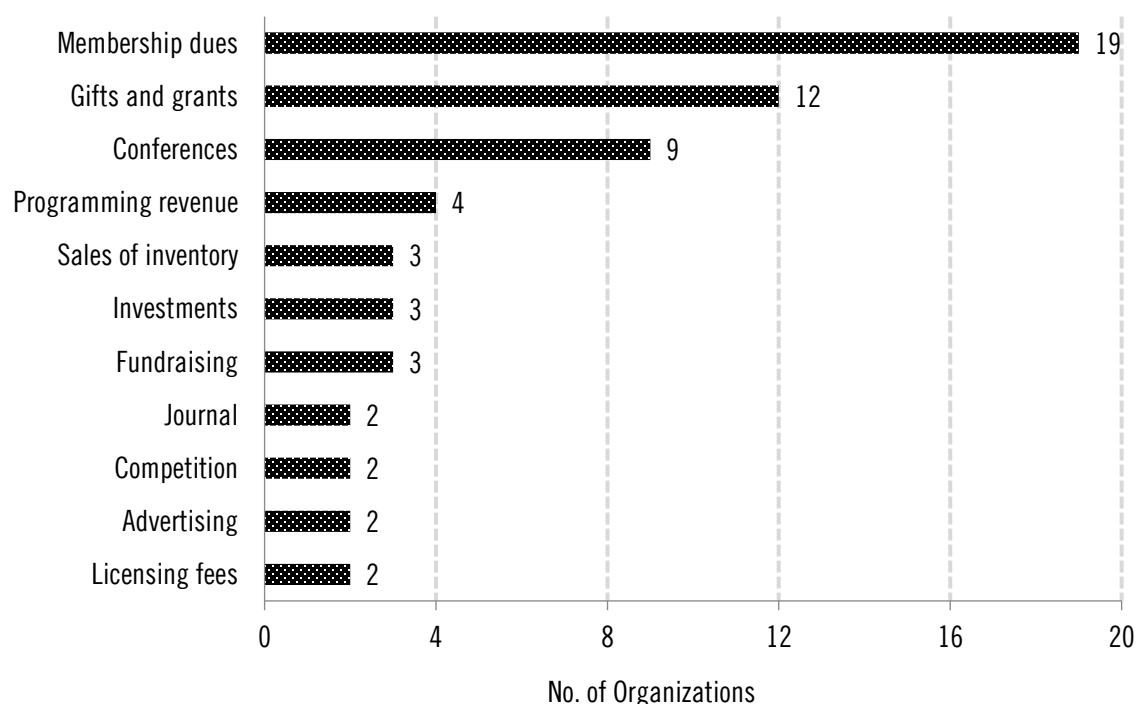
Primary drivers of these revenue figures, or those factors that most heavily comprised organizational revenues, were an important focus of this financial analysis. Revenue factors that comprised a third or more of an organization's total revenue were categorized as a "primary driver" and were aggregated for collective analysis. Illustrated in Figure 1 on the following page, "membership dues", "gifts and grants", and "conferences" were the most common revenue drivers among these organizations.

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<sup>2</sup> This figure most likely reflects the number of performers serving in that particular organization rather than constituents served. The next lowest reported number of individual constituents was 450.



Figure 1. Distribution of Primary Revenue Drivers.

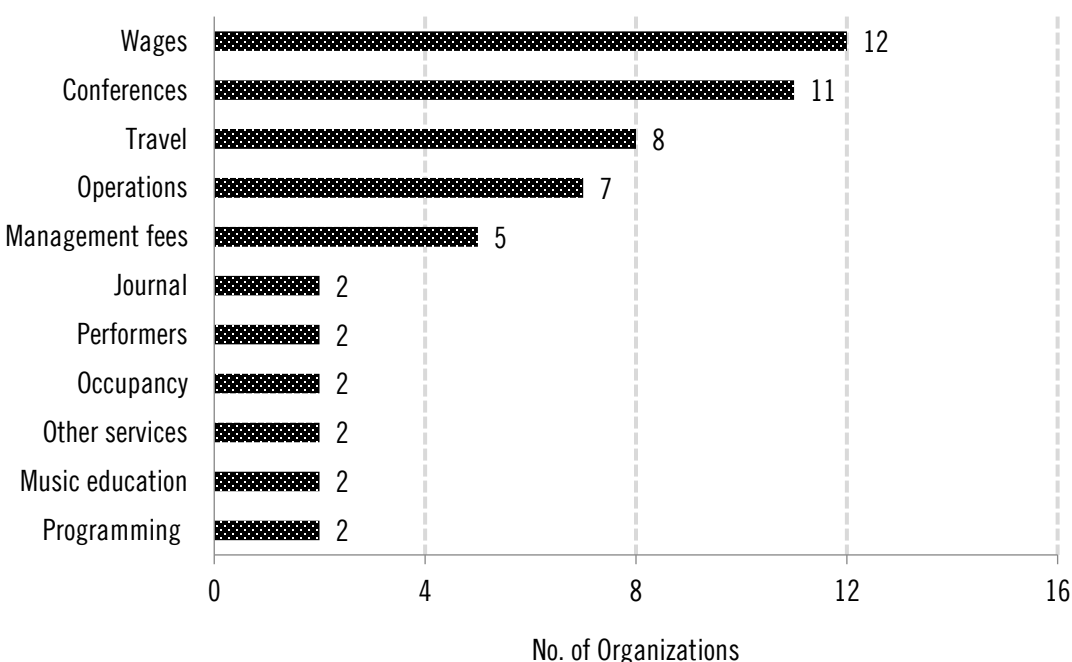


Looking next at total expenses reported among these same organizations, expense totals ranged just as widely from as low as \$18,495 to as high as more than \$124,000,000 with a lower-range median total expense among these organizations of \$779,393.50.

As with organizational revenues, the primary drivers of expenses, or those factors which most fully comprise the reported expenses of these organizations, were collected and aggregated for analysis. Shown in Figure 2 on the following page, three of the five most common expense drivers – “wages”, “operations”, and “management fees” – were associated with organizational operations. Expenses related to facilitating conferences (the most common programmatic activity among these organizations, as described later in the report) were the second most common expense driver, while “travel” for staff or others was the third most common.

Finally, financial analysis also included an examination of the organizations’ net assets (not depicted in a graph). Among those organizations reporting total assets (n=20), figures ranged from \$18,504 to \$31,897,091, with a median reported net assets of \$288,666.

Figure 2. Distribution of Primary Expense Drivers.



## GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION

Operationally, 27 of the 29 organizations (93%) are located in the United States, reporting either a headquarter facilities in the U.S. or a dispersion of staff or board members across the U.S. One organization, Choral Canada, is operationally located in Toronto, Ontario, and the World Choir Games/Interkultur organization is operationally located in Fernwald, Germany.

Though these organizations operationally are located mostly within the U.S., programmatically their foci are somewhat more widely scattered. In their reported programming, as well as in their reported organizational structures (local chapters or regions through which they implement their programming), these organizations report the following geographic distribution:

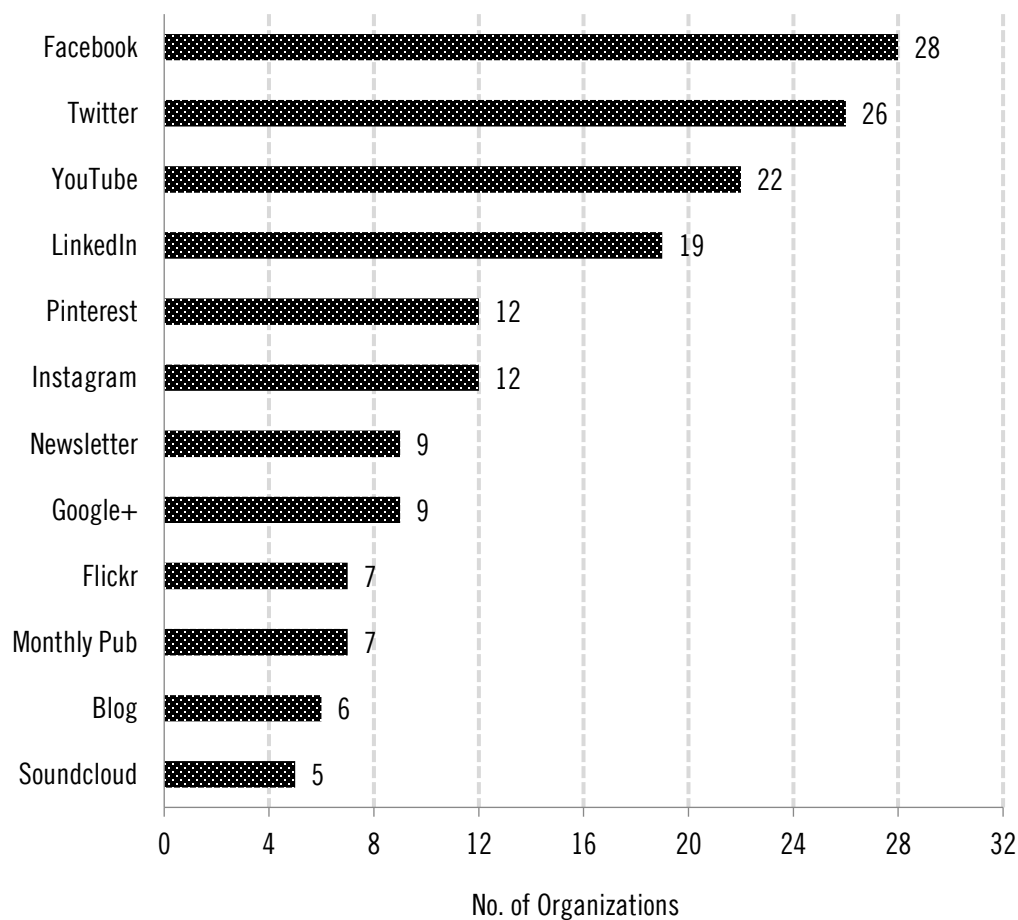
- ☐ 19 organizations report programming in the U.S.
- ☐ 9 organizations report programming in Canada
- ☐ 9 organizations report programming internationally, in the broadest sense
- ☐ 5 organizations report programming in Europe
- ☐ 3 organizations report programming in Asia
- ☐ 3 organizations report programming in Australia
- ☐ 2 organizations report programming in New Zealand
- ☐ 1 organization reports programming in Africa
- ☐ 1 organization reports programming in Mexico

## COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

With such widely dispersed programming and organizational structures, these organizations have come to rely more and more on digital and other communications to connect with members, promote organizational activities, and build networks of support. Searching organization websites, conducting social media searches, and reviewing membership communication-based benefits (e.g., monthly newsletter as a promoted membership benefit), communication channels were recorded and aggregated for analysis.

Some organizations still utilize more traditional communication channels like the member newsletter, monthly publications, and (becoming increasingly more “traditional” or “outdated”) online blogs, while many have established a broad social media footprint. As Figure 3 below illustrates, these organizations have almost unanimously adopted social media communication channels such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, prominently promoting these channels through their websites and discussing them in interviews as strategically critical tools for reaching diverse (and especially younger) constituents.

*Figure 3. Distribution of Communication Channels.*



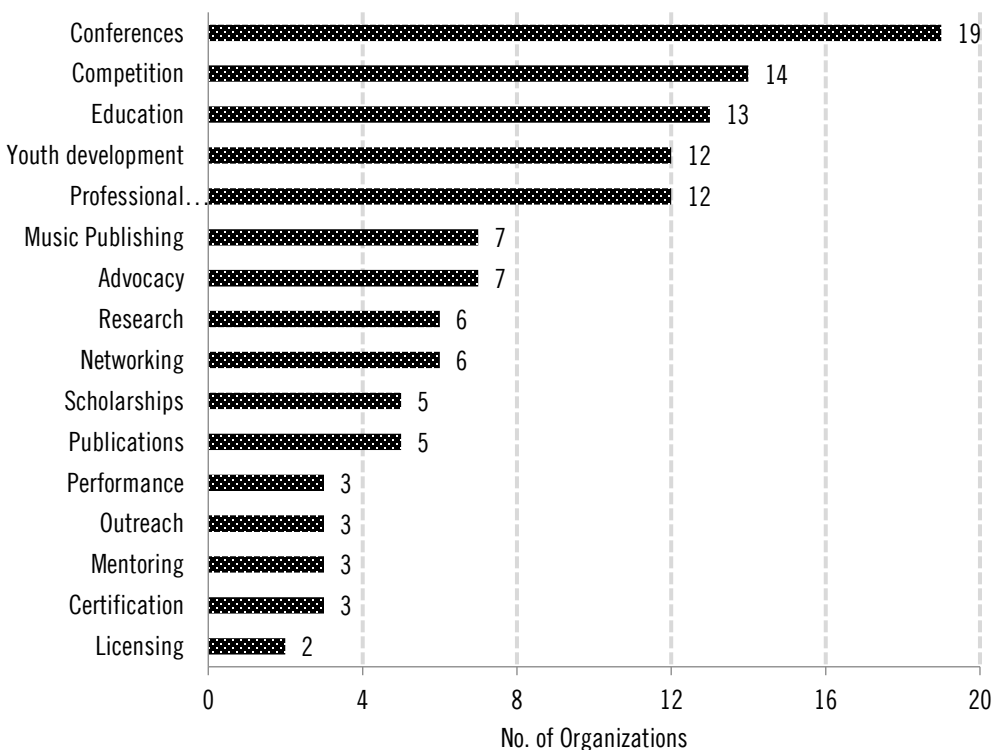
## MAJOR PROGRAMMATIC ACTIVITIES

While these organizations serve a diverse range of niche constituents and musical genres and purposes, from barbershop to jazz to gospel to organists, they share remarkably common approaches to achieving their programmatic goals. In their online communications, organizational documents, survey responses, and interview discussions, these organizations and their representatives describe a common set of activities that comprise their major organizational programming and services. These activities were categorized and aggregated for analysis, and are summarized in Figure 4 below.<sup>3</sup>

Most typically, organizations advertised or reported hosting conferences of various types and formats (e.g., national conferences, regional conferences, niche group conferences). As will be discussed in a later section of the report, these conferences can serve different purposes dependent upon the type of constituent served by the organization. Though not as frequently, organizations also cited youth development, professional development, and education as common programmatic activities.

Within these listed programmatic activities there are important distinctions in the ways in which the activities are intended to serve the organizations' constituents and ultimately make an impact in the organizations' stated goals. We will turn in the next section to more fully examining these distinctions.

*Figure 4. Distribution of Major Programmatic Activities.*



<sup>3</sup> The distinction of “major” activities is an important one, as a matter of emphasis. Some organizations may engage in all of these activities to varying degrees, but some activities are far more peripheral for those organizations than the activities that they would say make up their organization’s main areas of work (their “bread and butter”, if you will).

## PROGRAMMATIC OUTCOMES

Finally, when asked to report on the measured outcomes achieved through their programming, these organizations provided a variety of responses, though very few indicated that they are currently tracking programmatic outcomes defined in terms of measured change in persons or social conditions (e.g., tracking changes in directors' skills or confidence before and after their engagement in professional development programming). For group-competitive organizations looking to improve performance quality in a particular genre of music – such as the Barbershop Harmony Society, Harmony Inc., or Sweet Adelines – a robust judging system may be used to allow the organizations to track chorus and quartet scoring over time, and to see whether performance quality is improving over time.

Several organizations described their outcomes in terms of membership growth or retention, funding growth, or member attendance numbers at events or programs, while a handful of organizations acknowledged that their organization currently does not track outcomes and is developing their capacities in that area. At issue for some of these organizations is the reality that they lack the capacity, knowledge, or resources to meaningfully engage in ongoing evaluation practice. Indeed, issues related to capacity will be highlighted in the remainder of the report below, as many of the participating organizations struggle in various ways to have the capacity to implement their programming or even to perform daily operations.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> A recent “State of Evaluation” report conducted in 2012 by Innovation Network, Inc. found that, among a large sample of non-profit organizations in the U.S., only 28% of organizations were determined to have “promising capacities and behaviors” to meaningfully engage in evaluation practice, and that more than 70% of the organizations spent less than 5% of their annual budget on evaluation practice.

## PROGRAMMING ECOLOGICAL LEVELS

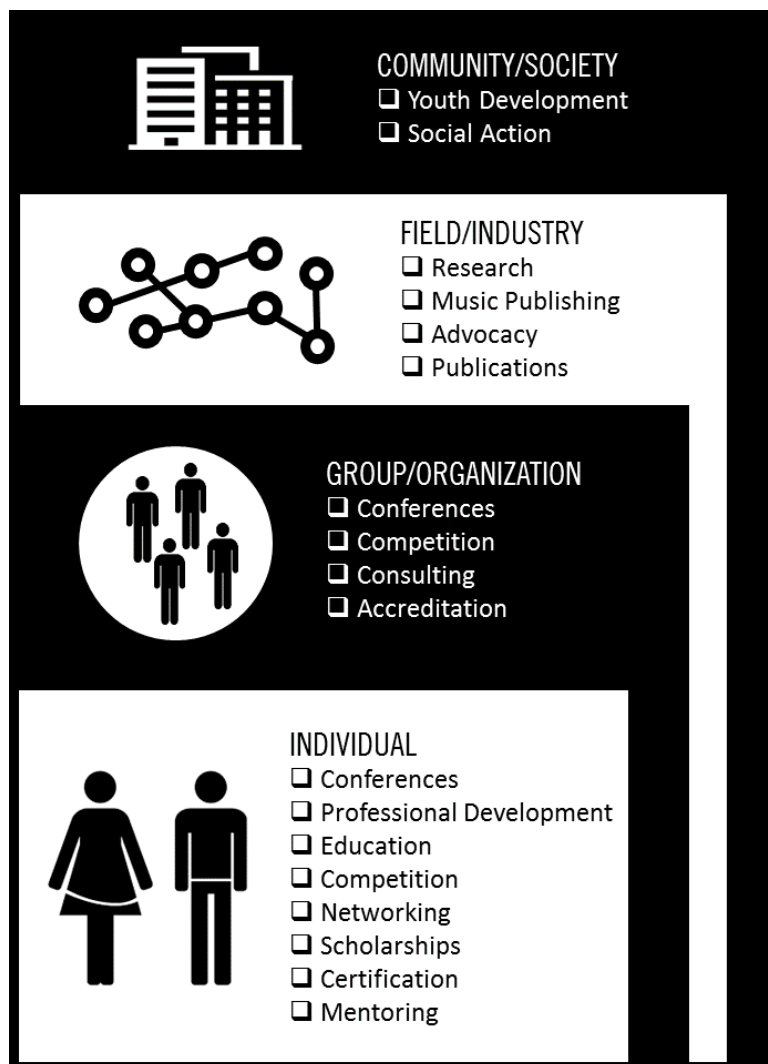
In the spirit of the “ecosystem” interests that served as the catalyst to this project, the full array of programming offered by the participating organizations is perhaps best depicted and understood as a programming ecology, or a series of levels at which programming may occur, from the level of the individual person up to the level of our broader communities or society. Such a “multi-level” analysis of programming is supported by decades of psychological and social intervention research and theory that has established the importance of programming not just solely toward the individual, but also toward the environment within which the individual has their living and being.<sup>5</sup>

Depicted in the graphic just below, the organizations participating in this study offered a wide range of programming activities targeted at each of the major ecological levels. Most typically, organizations offered programming targeted at the individual person, from professional development activities to

networking opportunities among individuals, all targeted at improving the capacity of the individual person to engage in their musical practice.

Organizations also report offering programming at the group or organization level, serving the needs of choruses, consulting with organizations that need development or operational assistance, and other group-based services.

These organizations are also engaging in higher ecological levels of programming, working to improve their wider musical field through research activities and knowledge generation, or offering broader-reaching services to their surrounding communities or society. Each of these ecological levels will be examined below, providing a comprehensive view of the full landscape of the programmatic work of these organizations.



<sup>5</sup> Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecology of human development and, more recently, Tseng and Seidman’s (2007) ecological model are good beginning points for this research.



## INDIVIDUAL

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conferences       | <input type="checkbox"/> Networking    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prof. Development | <input type="checkbox"/> Scholarships  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Education         | <input type="checkbox"/> Certification |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Competition       | <input type="checkbox"/> Mentoring     |

Most frequently, participating organizations describe programmatic activities that are targeted at the level of the individual person – activities designed to educate, equip, engage, or otherwise build the capacity of the individual person to excel in their musical practice of interest. Such individuals may include directors, musicians, choristers, administrators, among other professionals engaged in the music and choral spheres. Importantly, though targeted directly at the individual person, these activities may have further reaching intended outcomes, as with director-based programming intended to ultimately impact choruses, or administrator-based programming intended to improve the functioning of their organizations. As far-reaching as they may be intended, their direct engagement with and building up of the individual person is the common binding feature among them.

## CONFERENCES

Most common among these organizations' individual-level activities is the conference model of programming, defined here as a gathering of individuals for several days to engage in a variety of activities that in different ways enrich their capacity to engage in their musical practice. It may be more accurate, then, to describe the conference as a collection of activities rather than a single activity in itself, as indeed the conference often includes many of the other activities included in this list, being at the same time an opportunity for professional development, education, competition, and networking, among other things.

**Choral Canada's** "Podium" program exemplifies this type of activity, a national conference offered by the organization over the past several decades for the purpose of equipping conductors and administrators, among others, with conducting and other professional skills needed in their musical practice (e.g., "conducting technique" and "use of technology", two session topics offered at the 2016 Podium). These conferences also offer individuals opportunities to connect with product vendors, to shop and purchase materials needed for their musical practice, or to simply meet and connect with peers. In other words, the conference offers myriad opportunities for individuals gathered in one place for several days to engage and grow in their practice.

**GALA Choruses** is another organization that offers regular conferences, with a leadership conference offered for board members, artistic directors, and executive directors featuring workshops on topics related to organization administration (e.g., membership and marketing). Future conferences will also begin to include special sessions for performers, with sessions on vocal performance and other performance-related topics.

Other examples of these individual-based conferences include: the **Jazz Education Network's** annual conference, featuring workshops, panel discussions, mentoring clinics, and performances; the **National Association of Teachers of Singing's** national conference, featuring classes, demonstrations, and lectures

designed to improve teachers' capacity to serve their students; the **Barbershop Harmony Society's** regional and national conference opportunities; and the **National Collegiate Choral Organization's** biennial conference, featuring performances, interest sessions, and panel discussions targeted at educating and equipping choral conductors.

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Sometimes featured at conferences, though perhaps functioning best and most intensively as a stand-alone, distinct programmatic activity, "professional development" was cited by many of the organizations as opportunities for professional members (or non-professional members interested in development opportunities) to develop skills and capacities in their areas of musical practice. Important to professional development programming is the notion that strong leaders produce better choruses, organizations, schools, and so on. Interfacing at the level of individual leaders or professionals, then, is for many organizations a strategically efficient means of improving larger systems beyond those individuals.

The **Barbershop Harmony Society's** Harmony University illustrates this type of activity, as a program targeted at improving directors' (and other music professionals') capacity to lead in their area of practice. Courses at Harmony University are strongly skills-based, with courses for directors focused on conducting and rehearsal techniques, and musical score study, in addition to courses offered for singers, arrangers, and administrative leaders.

Connected with the BHS's Harmony University program, the **Harmony Inc.** organization has initiated a new fundraising campaign intended to pay the way for an increased number of chorus directors to Harmony University over the next five years to receive the skills development described in the preceding paragraph. The fundraising campaign is motivated by the belief that stronger directors make stronger choruses, making director professional development one of the key strategic initiatives for the Harmony Inc. campaign into coming years.

Other examples of professional development opportunities include **The Contemporary A Cappella League's** leadership retreats, intended to provide a cappella group leader training and group management resources, as well as the **National Association for Music Education's** "All In" program featuring workshops and other skills-building opportunities intended to help good music teachers become great music teachers.

## EDUCATION

In addition to the more hands-on and skills-based focus of professional development activities, many organizations also offer more general knowledge-building and learning opportunities on subjects and issues of interest to musicians, directors, administrators, and other individual members. Of growing interest to organizations in this area of programmatic activity in particular are possibilities for utilizing **online technologies** for offering distance learning opportunities more efficiently and to a more widely dispersed membership audience.

**Chorus America**, for example, has recently expanded its Chorus Management Institute to include the e-Chorus Management Institute, an online format for providing members with information on topics including fundraising and marketing & communications. They also offer an online learning portal featuring



60-90 minute webinars, featuring sessions like “Understanding Audiences: Intrinsic Impact” and “Research Your Chorus Should Know About”.

The **Contemporary A Cappella Society** offers CASAcademy, an online education portal advertised as “the comprehensive site for learning about a cappella online”. Offerings through this portal include instructional videos and educational booklets, with topics ranging from “Recording 101: The Basics” to “Vocal Percussion Technique” to “High School A Cappella”.

## COMPETITION

Competition, generally, is utilized by many of these organizations as a means of sharpening members’ performance or musical talents, advancing their professional careers, or giving them wider public exposure. While these organizations often offer large-scale group-based competitive events featuring choruses and quartets, a number of them also offer individual-level competitive programs for composers, performers, and other professional members, often with a focus on student or youth competition.

The **American Guild of Organists**, for example, offers a multitude of competitive opportunities for individual composers and performers, including: (1) the Ronald G. Pogorzelski and Lester D. Yankee Annual Competition focused on selecting a new organ composition each year to be premiered on the Indiana University of Pennsylvania house organ; (2) regional competitions for young organists under the age of 24; (3) the National Young Artists Competition in Organ Performance; and (4) the AGO National Competition in Organ Improvisation.

The **American Choral Directors Association** similarly offers a number of opportunities for individual professionals, including perhaps especially young and up-and-coming professionals, to compete for development and national recognition. Their Raymond W. Brock Student Composition Competition is intended to acknowledge outstanding student achievements in choral composition, in addition to promoting student engagement in the ACDA organization. Their Student Conducting Awards, likewise, are offered to promote both individual student achievement and engagement in ACDA.

## NETWORKING

For many of the organizations, one of the key benefits of the widely used “conferences” model is the opportunities it provides for networking among individual members and choral leaders. The opportunity for directors to gather with other directors, for example, allows for the exchange of best practices and resources among these individuals. Increasingly, these organizations are looking beyond the conferences model for networking and looking to new online technologies for fostering connections across larger distances and between different cultures.

The **National Association of Music Merchants**, for example, offers its NAMM Young Professionals program, specifically focused on building networks of peers among young members interested in developing connections and building a career in the music industry. NAMM promotes this program as not only an opportunity to connect with others professionally, but as an opportunity to “build solid business relationships that can turn into lifelong friendships”.

**Chorus America's** "Peer Learning Forums" program further exemplifies this type of program. Meeting both online and in-person, these peer groups are intended to give administrative leaders, conductors, and other professionals the opportunity to gather with others who share "similar professional attributes" to share resources and best practices and to build networks of professional exchanges and relationships.

The **Interkultur Foundation**, finally, engages its members in networking activities with a very intentional focus on helping members to span across cultures and engage with other members from around the world and from a variety of different musical expressions and genres.

## SCHOLARSHIPS

Another more direct way in which these organizations engage at the individual level of programming is through the direct provision of funds through which individuals are better able to engage in educational or professional activities related to their musical practice. Distinct from competitions that are more performance- or achievement-based, these activities seem more focused on investing in individuals who show promise or potential for future performance and achievement.

The **Jazz Education Network** offers a number of scholarship opportunities intended for high school students performing or interested in studying jazz, college students who are engaged in jazz studies, women who are studying jazz at the college level, and individuals training in specific jazz instruments (as with their scholarship opportunity for jazz bassists).

Some scholarships offered by these organizations may be less education-focused and more program-focused, as with the **Retail Print Music Dealer's Association's** RPMDA Scholarship program. In recognition of print music industry pioneer Ed Adams, this scholarship program is intended to help fund print music professionals' attendance at the organization's annual convention and thereby enrich their education and professional development in the field.

## CERTIFICATION

In addition to providing development opportunities that help enrich individuals' professional capacities, some organizations themselves may serve to directly establish the individual's status through professional or other certification. Such certifications may help to advance the individual's position within the organization itself, providing opportunities for taking on greater leadership responsibilities, or it may have more far-reaching effects in helping to establish the individual within a larger field or industry.

The **Sweet Adelines International's** certification programming is one example of how an organization might structure this type of activity at the individual level. Intended to enrich both the individuals' lives and the Sweet Adelines International organization, the certification program offers certifications for directors, international faculty (designed for learning teaching techniques), and international judging (designed to produce professional judges for the organization's competitive programming).

The **Choristers Guild's** "Choristers Guild Institute" is another strong example of this type of individual-level activity. Intended to "strengthen directors' musical and pedagogical skills and to equip them to effectively integrate children in worship", in addition to addressing the recognized need for professionalization in the field, the Choristers Guild certification program offers specializations in (1)

Creative and Purposeful Integration of Children in Worship, (2) Music Teaching Skills, (3) Choral Methods, (4) Effective Organization of a Children's Music Ministry, and (5) Personal Musicianship.

## MENTORING

Finally, less commonly these organizations offer mentorship-based programming, assigning younger or newer individual members to older or more senior members for educational and/or professional development purposes. **Jazz Education Network's** recently created "Mentor Program", to cite one example, offers opportunities for student jazz musicians to learn on a one-on-one basis from a master-level student. The **Threshold Choir** organization uses mentoring activities somewhat differently, as an onboarding program for new choir directors to learn the Threshold model and processes from a more senior member of the organization. This mentorship process most typically occurs through distance online and phone communications, and focuses on advice, resources, and guidance the senior member may be able to pass on to the newer member.



## GROUP/ORGANIZATION

- ☐ Conferences
  - ☐ Competition
  - ☐ Consulting
  - ☐ Accreditation
- 

While many organizations focus at the level of individual members as an indirect and often more efficient path to improving larger groups and organizations, many of them often will also take a more direct path to these groups and organizations, providing choruses or institutions with direct consultations, opportunities for training and competition, and other resources that bypass the individual member for more direct group engagement. The line between individual- and group-level activities can often be blurred in instances where both levels are simultaneously addressed at a single conference, for example, or when the emphasis at the individual level is on group-level implementation (as with director training, for example). Nonetheless, there exists among these participating organizations clear instances in which group-level engagement is an important and distinct strategic focus.

## CONFERENCES

Though discussed above at the individual level, it is important to note that some organizations' regional, national and annual conferences will also explicitly target and serve choruses and other groups rather than or in addition to individual members. While these conferences also feature individual-based workshops (e.g., director training), their programming also features important opportunities for choruses and other groups to collectively engage in performance, training, and education.

**Intercollegiate Men's Choruses** serves as an example of an organization that has transitioned from using its annual gatherings primarily for individual-level education and skills-building to now being a primarily group-based, non-competitive gathering in which singing groups perform both for and with one another. Compared to older iterations of this event, conductors now rarely attend without their own singing group in tow, and the event now prominently features group performances, a collective singing combining all of the groups (the most recent event concluded with 400 men singing on stage together), and opportunities for conductors and singers alike to listen to and read through new compositions.

Other large national conferences represent more of a mixture of both individual- and group-based programming. **Choral Canada's** Podium conferences, discussed in the individual section above, also feature opportunities for choirs, including their National Youth Choir, to perform public concerts and engage in reading sessions. The **American Choral Directors Association's** national conferences likewise feature public performances by choral groups alongside individual-level education and training opportunities. The **Barbershop Harmony Society** and **Chorus America**, as well, offer conferences/conventions that provide important opportunities for choruses and quartets to engage in public performance. As one organizational leader shared during an interview for this project, these public performances should not be underestimated in the value they bring to a choral group – in some cases an

invitation to sing at a large national conference can bring wider public notice and esteem, as well as serve as a “peak” moment in that group’s ongoing work in developing their collective musical practice.

## COMPETITION

For many choral and singing groups, the primary vehicle through which they develop their musical practice is their ongoing engagement in the competitive systems established by some of the participating organizations. Perhaps especially for those participating organizations that value the advancement of a particular genre or form of musical performance, competitions provide the opportunity to evaluate and provide feedback for the improvement of performing groups, as well as to protect the standards for, and encourage engagement in the ongoing advancement of that musical genre. In contrast to individual-level competitions which may be more submission- or exam-based, group-based competitions may take on a more performative nature, in some cases unfolding on the stage of a large, widely promoted national venue.

The barbershop-based organizations participating in this study provide some of the clearest examples of the type of group-level activity. These organizations exist in part, as one interviewee put it, to create and develop quartets and choruses in the barbershop style of music. Local barbershop chapters and performances certainly are instrumental in this process, though one could argue that it is the competition stage through which the process is most directly (or at least publicly) encouraged and evaluated. The **Barbershop Harmony Society** provides one clear example of this programmatic activity, through its international chorus and quartet competitions and collegiate- and senior-level competitions. BHS has also developed a robust adjudication system to support its competitive activities that has been adopted by other organizations (e.g., Harmony Inc.). **Sweet Adelines International**, to cite another example, promotes its annual chorus and quartet contest scores as an indication of organizational success in advancing the genre of barbershop singing.

The **World Choir Games/Interkultur** organization also strongly exemplifies this type of activity at the group level, boasting up to 14 international choir competitions and festivals hosted by its organization on an annual basis. While Interkultur choral competitions also focus on advancing the choral art form and providing fair assessments of choral performance, they have also adapted into their programming the “Olympic ideals” of encouraging international unity and peace through a shared appreciation of musical performance.

## CONSULTING

In only a few instances, a participating organization has established a program for providing direct consultation to member choruses or institutions, focusing on those choruses or institutions requiring development in critical operational or structural areas (e.g., strategic planning, board development). In these instances, the organization has partnered with a cadre of industry leaders and experts that it can deploy to assist member choruses and institutions with their particular needs.

**GALA Choruses** is one strong illustration of this type of group-level activity, with its “GALA 411” consulting program. Member choruses requesting a 411 consultation may focus on a range of topics focused on

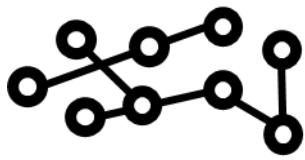
organizational development and health, including performance-based topics (e.g., vocal technique, choreography), fundraising, social media strategy development, and board and staff relationship issues.

The **National Association of Schools of Music**, likewise, offers to member institutions access to a group of consultants who visit their institutions and provide guidance on various areas of institutional development, including: accreditation, institutional development, internal reviews, facility and equipment reviews, and state reviews.

## ACCREDITATION

Finally, at least one participating organization has established an accreditation system through which member institutions may seek formal affiliation and recognition as adhering to important industry standards for education and practice. In some ways similar to the certification programming offered by organizations at the individual level, this type of activity offers to its group-level members a recognized legitimacy and raises their status as institutions of music higher education.

In this area of activity, the **National Association of Schools of Music** represents the accrediting authority and facilitator for its approximately 651 accredited institutions. Along with membership opportunities for individuals and the above-described consultation services for member institutions, NASM helps to establish national standards for degree and credentialing programs in music and music-related disciplines.



## FIELD/INDUSTRY

- ☐ Research
- ☐ Music Publishing
- ☐ Advocacy
- ☐ Publications

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For a number of the participating organizations, strategic priorities and programmatic interests go far beyond the individual members and groups they directly serve to include a focus on the larger musical genre or field or industry within which those individuals and groups are situated. In these cases, organizations' resources are deployed in ways that advance the *collective* interests of all of those members and individuals in their shared musical practice (however that may be defined), establishing an infrastructure for that musical practice to occur, or promoting larger public buy-in to the value of that musical practice, among other foci. At a higher level of the programming ecology, these field/industry-level activities are intended by organizations to produce benefits that help bind together those individual members and groups with whom they are associated.

## RESEARCH

Some of the participating organizations described engaging in field/industry-level work through conducting or somehow arranging research-related activities relevant to a defined area of musical practice or interest. Distinct from educational practices focused on providing existing information to members, research-related activities seek to generate new information that may enrich current understandings of a particular field of musical practice, suggest new directions for strategic and programmatic planning, or contribute to a broader public awareness of the work of that organization and its members.

**El Sistema USA** is one of the participating organizations that clearly demonstrates the value of research-related work at the field/industry level. Through their recently created annual "census report" process, El Sistema USA gathers descriptive data on the El Sistema-inspired programs operating within the U.S., with the intention of using these data to enrich current understandings of the work of their member programs. This research, as they put it, "when presented in context with the powerful and unquantifiable aspects of music making instill confidence of a different kind and deepen the understanding of our field." They also offer, through their website, access to existing research reports and data that help generate understand and promote the value of El Sistema-inspired work.

**Chorus America** is another organization that points to its research activity as an important contribution to the wider field of choral music practice. Their series of "chorus impact studies", conducted in 2003 and again in 2009, has provided compelling evidence for the value of choral groups in developing "good citizens" who are positive and civically engaged in local community life. The **National Association of Schools of Music** collects annual statistical data from its member institutions, which it uses to create field-wide statistical reports as well as customized statistical reports for individual institutions on request.

## MUSIC PUBLISHING

For some of the participating organizations, preserving and growing the total catalogue of songs associated with a particular genre or musical style is an important focus of their work in advancing their particular musical field or industry of interest. These organizations might serve as the central hub of music publishing activity for their field, or they might otherwise encourage and foster the ongoing creation of new pieces of music through competitive or collaborative commissioning programs.

The **Barbershop Harmony Society** boasts more than 7,000 titles in its music publishing catalogue, a warehouse of music that includes free downloadable sheet music for choruses and quartets, barbershop tags, and music arrangements that can be purchased through their online marketplace. Additionally, the organization's online music publishing portal connects members with learning tracks, historical music archives, and resources for connecting with music arrangers for creating new pieces of music not already included in the organization's extensive catalogue.

**Intercollegiate Men's Choruses** serves a similar function for the field of collegiate men's glee clubs, offering to members a catalogue of more than 150 pieces of music arranged specifically for the "TBB" format of men's singing (the TBB format reportedly represents only 3% of the wider choral singing music catalogue, making this organization's catalogue a strong selling point to potential members). IMC also works to add new songs to their catalogue on an ongoing basis, as well as promote the songwriting and arranging work of up-and-coming composers and arrangers working in the TBB style.

Finally, a few organizations engage in new music commissioning competitions and related activities to encourage the development of new music for the field. The **American Guild of Organists**, for example, facilitates new organ solo music composition through its annual competitive process, and the **National Collegiate Choral Organization** similarly commissions and performs new collegiate choral pieces.

## ADVOCACY

As will be discussed in a later section of the report, professionals working in the arts in some cases feel as though there is declining public interest in their particular area of music practice, or feel that other funding or educational areas take priority over the arts in public resourcing decisions. Some of these organizations may perceive the need, then, to help preserve their larger field or industry by serving as a public voice for the value and continued need for that field or industry. Other organizations, while they may not perceive a field or industry crisis, may still engage in large-scale public awareness campaigns to generate greater interest and engagement in their musical practice.

The **National Association for Music Education** is strongly associated with this type of field-level activity, engaging in advocacy at both the educator level and the larger national political level, all in the interest of preserving and advancing the field of music education and the work of local music educators. At the educator level, NAFME provides resources (e.g., talking points, data, anecdotes) that individual music educators can use to advocate for their work within their own institutions or local communities. At the national political level, they engage in direct lobbying to influence legislation that may have long-term impacts on the field of music education, as with a recent bill they lobbied to promote the arts as a core subject for a "well-rounded" education.



Other organizations, including the **American Choral Directors Association**, **Chorus America**, and **Choral Canada** are positioned as public advocates for the value of choral singing (and the arts more generally) to human thriving and community. The ACDA Advocacy Statement, for example, resolves that “all citizens of the United States of America actively voice affirmative and collective support for necessary funding at the local, state, and national levels of education and government to ensure the survival of arts programs for this and future generations”.

## PUBLICATIONS

Finally, a handful of organizations boast impressive scholarly and otherwise field-wide publications that serve as the scholarship and information hubs for their respective fields or industries. These publications advance important field-specific theoretical work, research, news, and event promotions that help enrich the knowledge base of their constituents.

The **American Choral Directors Association** publishes their industry-leading *Choral Journal*, featuring peer-reviewed scholarly articles, reviews of books and choral works, as well as columns on industry best practices and ideas. The **National Association for Music Education**, similarly, offers a list of publications to its members, ranging from peer-reviewed academic journals like the *Journal of Research in Music Education* and the *Journal of Music Education*, to more professional-based publications like the *Teaching Music* magazine and *General Music Today*. Finally, **Chorus America’s** *The Voice* quarterly magazine offers members industry news, as well as advice and commentary related to chorus administration.

The **International Federation of Choral Music**, to cite another example, offers to members its *International Choral Bulletin*, billed as the “official voice of choral music around the world”. Published in multiple languages, it contains research and other information on choral music from around the world, provides discussion on various choral topics (e.g., music education, repertoire), and contains a calendar of festivals, competitions, and other events happening around the world.



## COMMUNITY/SOCIETY

- ☐ Youth Development
- ☐ Social Action

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Though far less frequently than they do at the lower levels of the programming ecology, participating organizations also advertise and report activities that are intended for a much broader social impact beyond even the interests of their own particular field or industry or the members and groups they serve. These organizations, it seems, are increasingly beginning to ask whether and how they might be able to actively serve and improve their surrounding communities and society, beyond the intrinsic value they believe their musical practice already provides.

On this latter point, it is important to stress that, for most of these participating organizations there is a long-term, intrinsic social value in the work they do to support individual-, group-, and field-level musical practice. These organizations encourage and enable the performance of music across a variety of genres and venues, and this musical performance is a vital part of human development and of a healthy society. Acknowledging this broader impact of these organizations, this section focuses specifically on programmatic activities that are more *directly* targeted at community or social service and intervention.

[While directly targeted activities at this level are scarce in the participating organizations' *current* programmatic activities, a number of organizations are reportedly headed more in this direction in their strategic planning and future programming. This will be discussed in greater detail later in this report.]

## YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Child and youth education and development is one area where these organizations may be able to make an impact in local communities and in the broader society, though an important distinction has to be made. Some organizations support child and youth education and musical performance, though they explicitly do so as an avenue for developing future engagement in their particular area of musical practice (so these activities may fall more appropriately under member education or development). A few organizations, on the other hand, promote these activities as a benefit for child and youth development more generally and for the betterment of society, without an explicit interest in gaining future membership or engagement.<sup>6</sup>

**El Sistema USA** is perhaps the clearest example of this type of society-level programming, with its targeted focus on improving the lives of children and youth living in underserved communities across the U.S. through engagement in musical performance and education. Specifically, their mission is to “help [youth] develop essential life skills and the habits of mind they need to lead successful lives”. This outward-facing mission stands in contrast to the stated mission of other organizations focused on advancing a particular form of music or supporting performers and leaders associated with a particular form of music.

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<sup>6</sup> To further complicate this distinction, some organizations may not separate membership and more general youth development so neatly, arguing instead that membership is in itself an avenue for healthier development.

## SOCIAL ACTION

A more general outreach-orientation was advertised and reported by a small handful of participating organizations, showing evidence of society-level activities occurring and targeting a mixture of community, social, and environmental issues.

**Threshold Choir** is one participating organization that appears to have social awareness and engagement deeply embedded into its programmatic DNA. Its primary programmatic focus – performing for persons who are in need of end-of-life care – is oriented toward human/social service. The organization has implemented, and is still developing, other channels for engaging Threshold choirs in social service and action, including recent international visits to elephant sanctuaries for the purpose of advocating for improved human-animal relationships, and developing programming targeted at other “threshold” areas of society (e.g., persons transitioning from prison back into community life).

The **Barbershop Harmony Society’s** “Outreach Grants” program provides another example of this level of activity, with their “innovation grants” in particular aimed at social intervention “for key groups, including: at-risk youth in underserved communities, Veterans and wounded warriors, [and] Alzheimer’s patients”.

## ECOLOGY OF FIELD-BUILDING PROGRAMMING

Taking altogether the levels of programming described in the sections above, a picture begins to emerge of how choral- and music-based field-building organizations support the full ecology of individuals, groups, fields, and communities engaged in musical practice, and of how those levels and activities interact with one another. This ecology of field-building programming is illustrated in Figure 5 on the following page (with Figures 6-9 detailing the organizations engaged in programming at each of the ecological levels).

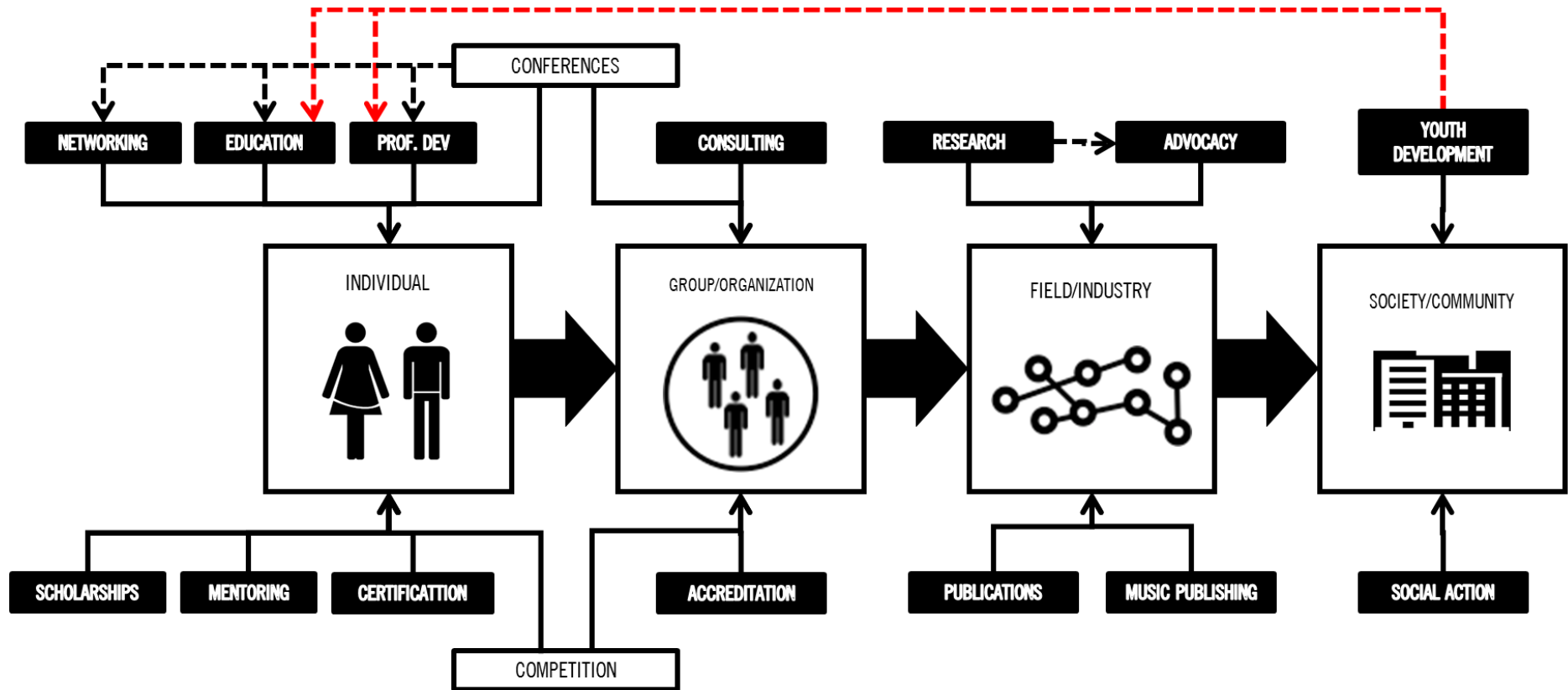
If a collective programmatic theory may be suggested by these participating organizations, it is that professional and human development at the individual level leads to stronger and more fully developed groups and organizations (“strong directors = strong choruses”). In turn, more fully developed groups and organizations contribute to a stronger and more vibrant musical field or industry and, as many of the participating organizations have suggested, a vibrant musical field or industry contributes to a healthier, thriving community and society. This latter point may be articulated as the belief (in some cases substantiated by research collected by the organizations) that there are measured positive psychological and social benefits from engaging in choral singing and other forms of musical performance. This building from the level of the individual to the level of society/community is depicted in the illustration below in the forward movement from the left side of the illustration to the right side.

Programmatically, each of the activities described in the preceding section are placed in the below illustration and are shown feeding into the ecological level(s) at which they are targeted. A few more nuanced dynamics depicted below should be noted:

- ☐ Conferences and competitions both are targeted at the level of the individual and/or at the level of groups or organizations.
- ☐ Conferences often serve as channels through which other programmatic activities are offered, namely education, professional development, and networking.
- ☐ While research often is targeted directly at enriching the musical field or industry, it also serves more indirectly to support advocacy activities that also advance the musical field or industry.
- ☐ Youth development activities in some cases are targeted at the level of society or community (as with El Sistema USA’s youth programming), but in other cases it also serves the purpose of educating or developing young members within an organization.

It is important to note that the below depiction of the ecology of field-building programming is a depiction of the programming that currently exists, to the best of the data that have been collected for this study. It is not a depiction of the successes of that programming, or of the extent to which different activities at each of the levels differentially influence program outcomes. It also is not a depiction of the programming that may exist in the future among these organizations, and indeed many of the participating organizations are engaging in strategic planning and actively developing new lines of programming that could dramatically alter the below ecology. It is to some of these additional considerations that we will now turn.

Figure 5. Ecology of Field-Building Programming.



Moving from left to right, this chart illustrates the ecological levels of field-building organizational programming from the level of the individual to the level of the broader community or society. The major programmatic activities that feed directly into those levels are connected to the levels with solid black arrows. Dotted black arrows illustrate indirect links between programmatic activities, while red dotted lines illustrate activity that connects indirectly between different ecological levels.




-  Direct activity link
-  Indirect activity link
-  Cross-level activity

Figure 6. Individual-Level Programming Ecology.

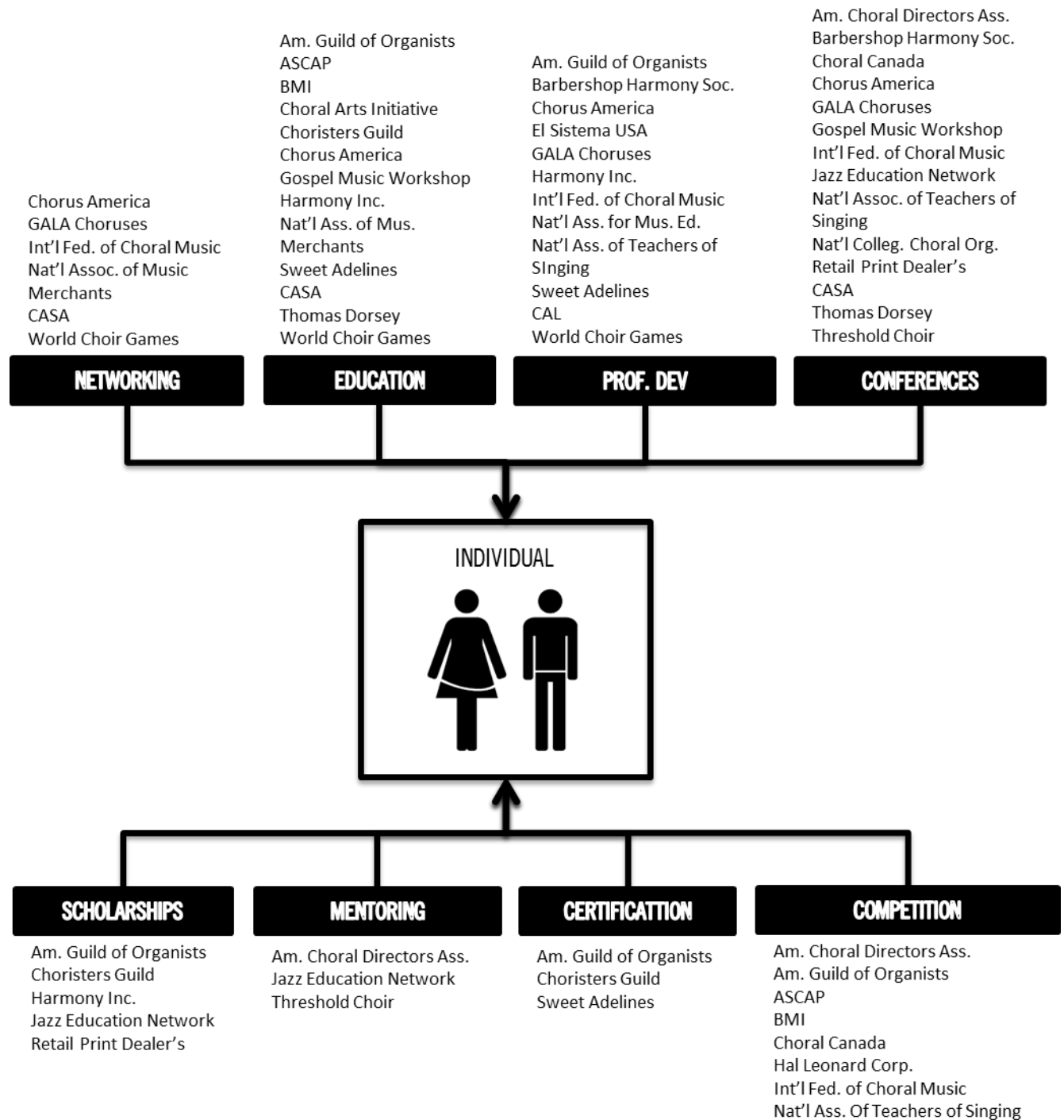


Figure 7. Group-Level Programming Ecology.

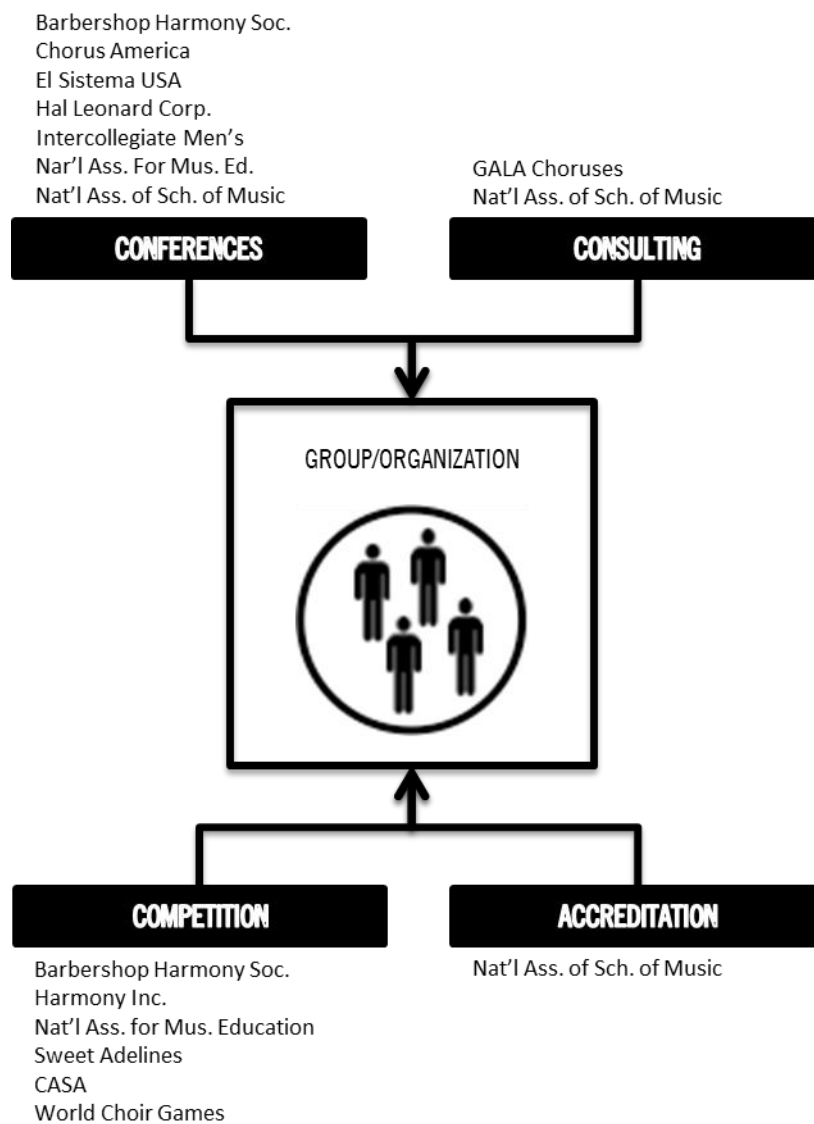


Figure 8. Field-Level Programming Ecology.

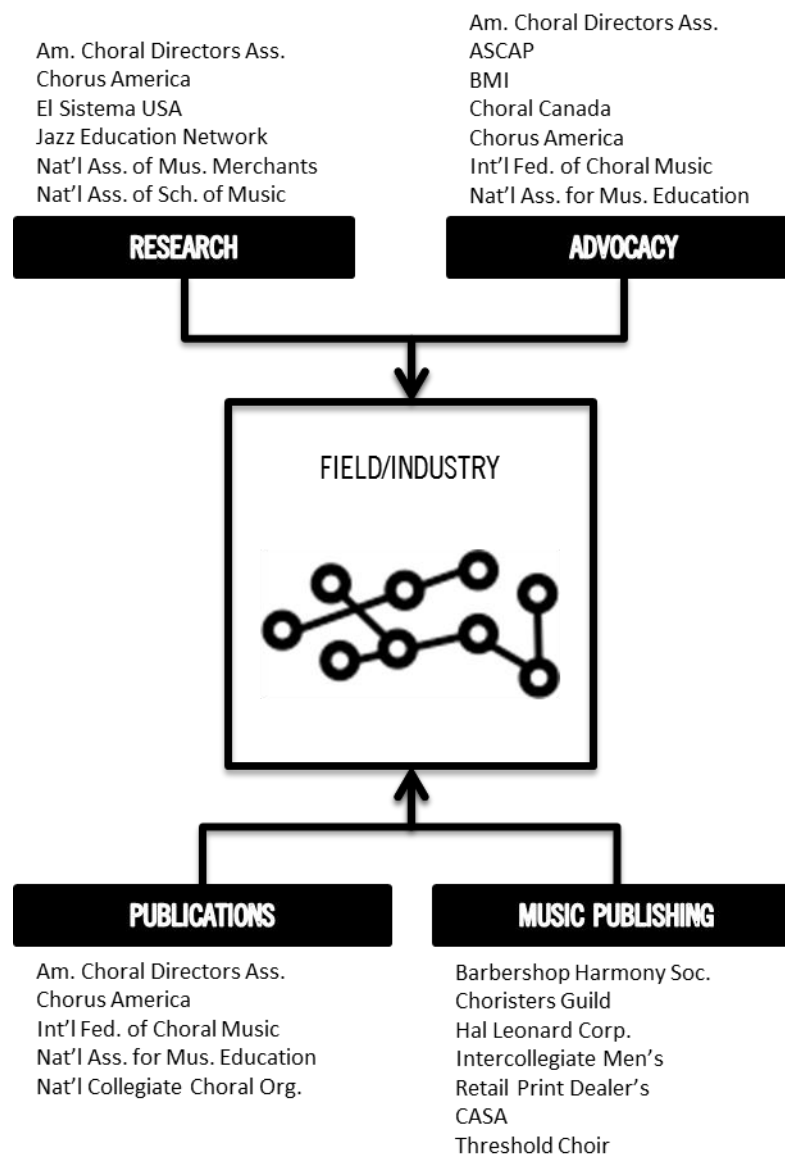
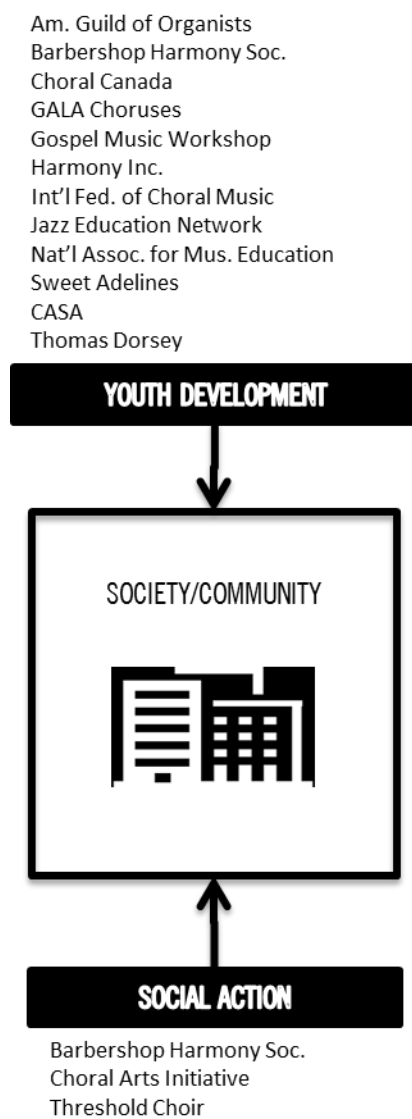




Figure 9. Society-Level Programming Ecology.



## ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

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In addition to the collection of current programming information, this study also sought the collection of information on the challenges each of the participating organizations is facing, the future directions (if any – a few organizations expressed contentment with where they are) they are going with their programming, and the larger social trends they see impacting their work and the world of choral and music performance more generally. These “bigger picture” questions, taken together, hinge on the single issue of *organizational capacity* – the capacity of these organizations to face present needs and challenges, their capacity to grow into the future, and their capacity to adjust to the changing winds of the larger society and culture.

To examine the collective capacity among these organizations, their challenges, opportunities, and trends are mapped out among five major factors related to organizational capacity, as illustrated in Figure 10 on the following page: (1) operations; (2) programming; (3) membership; (4) technology; and (5) finances. In the section that follows below, each of these factors will be examined according to the ways in which the participating organizations understood and discussed them. This examination will provide a comprehensive overview of the ways in which these organizational dynamics influence (or are influenced by) the current and future capacities of choral- and music-based field-building organizations.

Importantly, these capacities and organizational dynamics are always occurring within and are influenced by larger social/macro contexts that help give shape to the organizations and their constituents (represented in the right-hand column in the below illustration). The macro contexts discussed among study participants included:

- ❑ **Music Preferences:** Many of the organizations discussed recent shifts in musical tastes in the U.S. and abroad that may either challenge the organization’s current genre or style focus or present new opportunities for expanding that focus. In the U.S., a rise in the popularity of a cappella singing (*The Sing-Off* television show and the *Pitch Perfect* films are an indication of this) was noted by a few organizations as presenting opportunities to appeal to new and/or younger audiences. Several organizations noted shifting music trends in Asia, as with the rise in popularity of gospel music in Japan or the rise in popularity of choral music in Southern Asia.
- ❑ **Decline in Affiliations:** For these participating organizations, individual memberships (and the membership dues that come along with them) are an important programmatic focus and source of financial resources. Yet some organizations observed that, in the U.S. at least, people no longer affiliate with organizations and institutions to the same degree that they used to. Membership as a social activity is in decline or is changing, and this could have major long-term implications for organizations that are based on the membership model.
- ❑ **Multiculturalism:** Arguably the majority of the organizations participating in this study represent genres or styles of music that historically are indicative of certain cultures and demographic groups (e.g., Western, European, white, upper class). The steadily increasing racial and cultural diversity in the U.S. in particular presents these organizations with challenges and opportunities

The diagram is a complex organizational chart for a music organization, centered on **ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY**. It is divided into three main sections: **MACRO CONTEXTS** (top right, red dashed line), **Meso Contexts** (middle right, black dashed line), and **Micro Contexts** (bottom right, black dashed line). The **MACRO CONTEXTS** section includes **Music Preferences**, **Decline in Affiliations**, **Multiculturalism**, and **Younger Generations**. The **Meso Contexts** section includes **Decline in Music Education**, **Business Models**, and **Donor Relations**. The **Micro Contexts** section includes **Website Development**, **App Development**, and **Social Media**. The chart also shows various organizational functions like **Staffing**, **Board Engagement**, **Strategic Planning**, **Operations**, **Programming**, **Outreach**, **Consulting**, **Communications**, **Professional Development**, **Research**, **Collective Impact**, **Social Focus**, **Hobbyist Focus**, **Director Development**, **Credentialing**, **Membership**, **Technology**, **Finances**, **Fundraising**, **Decline/Growth**, **Diversity**, **Member Services**, **New Technologies**, **Online Education**, **Geographic Expansion**, **Member Classification**, **Member Type**, **Sex**, **Race**, **Age**, **Senior Programming**, **Younger Members**, **Senior Programming**, **Younger Members**, **Social Media**, **App Development**, **Website Development**, **Decline in Music Education**, **Business Models**, **Donor Relations**, **Finances**, **Online Education**, **New Technologies**, **Technology**, **Membership**, **Organizational Capacity**, **Operations**, **Programming**, **Communications**, **Consulting**, **Outreach**, **Professional Development**, **Credentialing**, **Director Development**, **Hobbyist Focus**, **Social Focus**, **Collective Impact**, **Research**, **Strategic Planning**, **Board Engagement**, **Staffing**.

- Capacity factors
- Tertiary factors
- Cross-factor links

related not only to the make-up of their memberships, but also to the ways in which music is understood and expressed within their organization.

- ❑ **Younger Generations:** Some organizations noted the generational differences that seem particularly pronounced between the older generations that comprise many of the organizations and the younger (e.g., Millennial) generations that are emerging and becoming a focus of membership and programming efforts. These generational differences may be manifested in a number of ways, including technology and communication preferences, as well as a desire to engage in social action, among other things.

Each of these macro contextual features interacts with the below factors in ways that warrant serious reflection on the part of these organizations and, as some of these organizations seem to indicate, have already begun to shape operations and programming in the present.

## OPERATIONS

### *Staffing*

As noted in an earlier section of this report, five of the participating organizations reported having no paid staff whatsoever, full-time or part-time, operating instead through the work of board members and/or a cadre of volunteers. Other organizations reported only 1 or a few part-time administrative staff, or a handful of full-time project/program management staff. Staffing limitations place obvious constraints around the scale at which these organizations are able to implement their programming, though a few organizations have found creative ways to accomplish larger scale events or programs with limited staff resources.

**Intercollegiate Men's Choruses**, operating only through the support of board members, places event planning and facilitation responsibilities on the college hosting a given event, with a different college hosting each event. The **International Federation of Choral Music** hires contract staff to facilitate educational programming through funds provided by the regional or national government hosting that programming. Still other organizations contract with management services to help with basic administrative needs. In these and other ways, field-building organizations may be able to implement larger-scale programming without incurring the significant expenses of paid staff.

### *Board Engagement*

Organizational capacity to implement programming, for some of these organizations, may hinge on the engagement of board members in the facilitation of the organization's work. As noted above, some organizations lack full-time or part-time staff, in which case responsibilities for organizational operations may fall on board members. For the **National Convention of Gospel Choirs and Choruses**, which has no paid staff, the board is highly active and engaged in programming, including an "honorary board" comprised of gospel industry leaders and experts. NCGCC board members, as with other organizations with similar board engagement and structure, are divided among specialized committees that serve important functions in moving operations and programming forward.

A few organizations, however, discussed the challenges of relying on board members for program implementation. Namely, it can often be challenging to engage board members in the work of the organization when they themselves have other full-time employment and other responsibilities competing with their time as board members.

### *Strategic Planning*

Finally, a few of the participating organizations – **American Choral Directors Association, American Guild of Organists, Chorus America, Harmony Inc.** – discussed having recently (or currently) engaged in a strategic planning process to determine new directions or major initiatives for their organization in the coming years. These processes necessarily involve considerations of organizational capacity, or of what may be possible in the future in light of the organization’s current resources. Research-related activities, then, become critical in helping the organization to better target its limited resources, as do considerations of collective impact, or the extent to which a collection of organizations can strategically pool their limited resources to maximize the impact they are able to make toward their missional goals.

There may be challenges associated with the strategic planning process, of course. The **American Guild of Organists**, for example, discussed engaging in a lengthy several-years strategic planning process, only to discover that the process had taken so long that the social and cultural conditions that had made the strategic planning necessary had changed to such a degree that a new, second strategic planning process was then needed. The timing and duration of strategic planning, then, is a factor some organizations may need to consider in undertaking such a process.

## PROGRAMMING

### *Outreach*

For a number of participating organizations, discussions around challenges in current programming and possibilities for future programming centered around the extent to which the organizations do or do not reach out into their surrounding communities. For some organizations, this was expressed as a concern over whether or not the organization represented a “hobbyist” institution, or an institution intended merely for members’ enjoyment and entertainment and not for larger community and social purposes and impact. Some organizations appear to know precisely who they are and are comfortable with their stated goals of advancing musical excellence or preserving a particular genre of music, without aspirations to accomplish more in the wider community.

Other organizations feel a stronger pull to expand their programming to include social action and community service. **GALA Choruses**, for example, views such an expansion as consistent with who they are as an organization. With their interests in celebrating and supporting LGBT persons and communities, they desire more intentional engagement in social action and service related to advancing causes of concern to the larger LGBT community. The **Barbershop Harmony Society** shared a similar desire to move more outward into local communities, to not only engage in “self-entertainment” or singing for themselves, but to also sing for their communities and be ambassadors of goodwill out in the world.

One interviewee for the study observed that such outward shifts in focus among these organizations is indicative of a larger trend in emerging “special interest” choruses, or choruses intended to address a

variety of social issues or community needs. With choruses for the transgender community, choruses focused on filling the education gaps in underserved communities, choruses for men and women prisons, choruses for end-of-life, and choruses for senior citizens, “There’s a chorus for everything.”

### *Communications*

Several organizations discussed the need for improved communications and clarity with members and other stakeholders related to the programming their organizations offer. If an organization historically has been strongly identified with a certain program activity (e.g., national conference, competition), it may be difficult for that organization to raise membership awareness of the new or additional programming and services it offers, diminishing the level of member engagement in those new or additional programs and services.

The **National Association of Music Merchants**, historically, has engaged in three programmatic priorities, operated through three stand-alone non-profit organizations: (1) advocacy; (2) research; and (3) archives and museum. Lack of membership awareness that NAMM was doing work in these three areas, coupled with membership desire to see NAMM do this work, led the organization to merge these three stand-alone non-profits into one entity, the NAMM Foundation. This change has given NAMM membership greater clarity on the work the organization is doing, and has helped the organization further advance those three areas of programming.

**GALA Choruses** has also expressed frustration around lack of membership awareness of additional services offered by the organization (namely consulting and year-round support services), due partly to poor communication to members about those additional services as well as the tendency of members to see the organization primarily as an event-based organization that hosts a large quadrennial festival.

### *New Directions for Programming*

A few organizations detailed new programming directions in which their organization is heading, including increased chorus consulting services, new opportunities for members to attain certifications or credentialing, and programming focused on strengthening directors in an effort to strengthen choruses. At issue with each of these new programming directions is (1) at what level the organization has the capacity to engage in that programming and (2) whether and to what degree that programming will in turn further enrich the capacity of the organization. For example, director development programming, in the case of **Harmony Inc.**, demands increased funds provided from the membership through a new fundraising campaign, and necessitates partnership with another organization (the Barbershop Harmony Society) to help facilitate that programming. In turn, the organization is hopeful that a strengthened director community will enrich the organization’s work in the long-term.

## MEMBERSHIP

### *Decline/Growth*

For many of the participating organizations, memberships (and membership dues) are a significant contributing factor to organizational capacity. Members not only provide the programmatic focus for organizations, depending on their particular needs or areas of musical practice, but they also provide the direct funds for supporting that programming. Some organizations expressed concern, then, over recent declines in membership, or what they perceived to be impending declines in membership (e.g., baby boomer members are beginning to age out of active participation). The need to add to membership numbers, or at least to maintain current membership numbers, have led some of the organizations to pursue geographic expansions or to rethink the concept of membership.

Organizations like the **National Convention of Gospel Choirs and Choruses** and the **International Federation of Choral Music** are expanding their programming and services into parts of Asia, where gospel and choral music are finding rising popularity. **Sweet Adelines International** is looking to expand and improve educational services offered for members in Australia and New Zealand (e.g., through new online technologies), recognizing that those areas are experiencing membership growth but find it challenging to attend national conferences and educational events located within the U.S. As travel and communication technologies continue to improve, and as membership trends in the U.S. continue to decline in some areas, organizations may continue to seek membership growth opportunities internationally.

Other organizations are countering membership trends by rethinking what it means to be a member and restructuring the ways in which persons can become members. The **American Guild of Organists**, for example, has taken steps to offer more tangible benefits to their membership, including an arranged group insurance plan among members. **Chorus America**, to cite another example, has discussed developing “a la carte” models for structuring membership, wherein members would have the ability to pick and choose among the membership benefits they wish to purchase, in addition to offering local choral communities new tools for networking in their areas.

### *Diversity*

Nearly all of the organizations interviewed discussed diversity issues in serving, maintaining, and growing their membership. For some organizations, like **GALA Choruses**, the different types of members they serve present challenges in how best to allocate programmatic resources. The majority of their member choruses are small choruses, which have different programmatic and resourcing needs than the fewer larger member choruses they serve. Programming they might offer for their smaller choruses, then, may not be relevant to the needs of a larger chorus.

A few organizations have sought to diversify their membership body and program offerings in terms of gender or sex identification, as illustrated by **Threshold Choir’s** recent decision to begin including male members as affiliate members. **Harmony Inc.**, similarly, has established an affiliate membership program for male barbershop singers, and their contest judges typically include several male judges from the Barbershop Harmony Society.

More typically, participating organizations discussed the need for greater racial-ethnic diversity among their membership. **American Choral Directors Association**, **American Guild of Organists**, **Barbershop**

**Harmony Society, Choristers Guild, Chorus America, National Association for Music Education, National Association of Teachers of Singing, Sweet Adelines International, and Threshold Choir** all discussed the need or desire for greater engagement in racial-ethnic diversity, or current initiatives to increase diversity, both in their programming and their membership.

Finally, age diversity in membership and programming was also discussed as a current or developing priority for a number of organizations. Many of the organizations boast impressive youth-oriented programming, seeking either to foster education and professional development among young persons (as with the competition and scholarship opportunities discussed in earlier sections of the report), or to create networking opportunities among their young members. Though slightly less common, organizations also offer or are developing programming targeted as senior members, as with the **National Convention of Gospel Choirs and Choruses** recent addition of senior-focused education and networking opportunities.

#### *Member Services*

As organizations seek to maintain or grow their memberships, many of them share more practical concerns around how best to structure the membership experience and how to make membership in their organization more consistent with convenient modern-day technologies. **Harmony Inc.**, for example, is facing challenges in transitioning from older paper-based record keeping and membership processes to digital and online processes. The **Barbershop Harmony Society**, similarly, has experienced transitional challenges in moving from a traditionally paper-based system to handling activities like membership transactions in a digital or online format.

## TECHNOLOGY

#### *New Technologies*

Websites in 2016 are hardly “new” technology, and yet for some organizations they are “new” in the sense that these organizations previously (or even still currently) have not had what they would consider a modern, upgraded website. Organizations reported either having recently undergone a substantial website upgrade (**National Association of Schools of Music**) or needing to make upgrades in the near future (**Threshold Choir**).

Social media has presented many of the organizations with new avenues for promoting their work and for energizing and attracting membership. Most of the organizations have some amount of social media presence, most typically through Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. It was not uncommon over the course of this study for an organizational leader, when describing the work of their organization, to share a YouTube video for illustrative purposes, or to point to social media activity that had gone “viral” and been widely shared beyond their own organization. The potential of social media as a promotional and communication tool, particularly among younger demographics, is well understood among these organizations, even if they admit to not yet understanding its full potential (e.g., how to make a profit through YouTube sharing).

App development for mobile devices was also discussed as an exciting new opportunity, particularly in the area of improving member services. **GALA Choruses** leadership, for example, discussed a recent event



for which a phone app was used as a scheduling and communication system for the several thousand persons attending the event. Due to the organization's limited funds, the app they purchased for this event was considered a lower-quality app, and event attendees as a result experienced some frustrations in utilizing it. Technology, it seems, presents these organizations with opportunities for streamlining their membership experience and processes, yet in some cases remains just out of reach for organizations with limited resources.

#### *Online Education*

Some participating organizations have already ventured into establishing online educational portals through their websites or other channels, and other organizations discussed online education as an area of development for their organization. **American Guild of Organists, Barbershop Harmony Society, National Association of Teachers of Singing, and Sweet Adelines International** each talked about the potential of new online educational formats as a means of expanding their geographic reach to other membership areas and/or as a way of compensating for the limited capacity to offer more traditional brick-and-mortar educational opportunities.

## FINANCES

#### *Decline in Music Education*

For those organizations focused on music education, either as a direct individual or group programming priority or as a field/industry-level concern, trends in music as a core subject in public school systems and as a funding priority for regional and national governments are important on several levels. It may serve as a catalyst for advocacy activities, as has already been discussed, and as an important source of funding it may have long-term implications for the capacity of their organization to engage in its work. **Choral Canada**, to name just one such organization, closely watches trends in the priorities and funding decisions of the Canadian government, as those decisions directly affect the Canada Council for the Arts and the financial support provided for their organization.

Other organizations not as directly linked to such trends still note them as concerning for their organization and field/industry in the longer-term. If governments cease to support music or the arts as a core education subject, it may weaken the social and cultural fabric surrounding music performance, and the long-term viability of some organizations and their work may seem to be in question.

#### *Business Models*

At least one organization, the **International Federation of Choral Music**, is responding to changes in government funding by transition from a 501(c)(3) model to operating more as a business, developing a foundation, making changes to their board and executive committee, and otherwise adjusting their expectations of where funding will come from in the future, knowing that funding traditionally received from American and European governments simply won't continue to be there.

### *Fundraising and Donor Relations*

Finally, these organizations utilize traditional means of raising funds from members and other donors, through online giving portals, promotional activities targeted at potential donors, and fundraising campaigns aimed at supporting new initiatives. In some cases, organizations have established foundations or special divisions for generating donations, as with the **National Association for Music Education's** Give a Note Foundation and the **Retail Print Music Dealer's Association** Foundation. Still other organizations, such as the **Barbershop Harmony Society** and its partner, Harmony Foundation International, have ventured into establishing legacy donation opportunities, perhaps especially in light of what they perceive to be an aging membership population.

**Choral Arts Initiative** leadership discussed new efforts intended to improve donor relations and engagement in their organization and in choral singing more generally. They noted a trend in "disengaged giving" among donors, or cases where donors provide financial support out of a desire to contribute to organizations in their community but otherwise do not share a deeper-level appreciation for the work of that organization or the art form they are supporting. To counter this, Choral Arts Initiative is seeking to develop a series of social/educational gatherings for donors to engage with their organization while also learning more about the choral music art form and, hopefully, gaining a deeper and longer-term appreciation for the work they are supporting.

## CONCLUSION

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The field-building organizations represented in this study serve a wide range of individuals, groups, and musical fields, and the approaches they take to their work and the ways in which they structure their organizations range almost as widely. And yet they share many common features, common programmatic activities and priorities, as well as common challenges and hopes for the future of their organization and field. Most commonly among them, they strongly believe in the value of music for human thriving and the well-being of our communities and society.

This diversity and commonality among them is arguably their collective strength. The different levels at which they target their programming, from working to develop the musical and professional skills of individuals to larger-scale advocacy for the long-term future of music education, helps to ensure a more fully ecological system for supporting musical practice and addressing the needs and challenges that come along with engaging in that practice. Along with these different programmatic approaches, these organizations' common values and hopes for a future in which music is a vibrant part of our global society binds them together and moves them collectively forward toward the same vision for human community.

Yet more can and must be done among these organizations in collaborating and sharing resources toward this common vision. Many of the organizations represented in this study face significant deficits in their capacity to implement the programming and services they know their constituents need and desire. They are understaffed and working with outdated technologies, among other capacity deficits, and are caught up in larger social and cultural trends to which they must adjust in order to ensure the long-term sustainability of their organization. To the extent that these organizations can learn from one another and coordinate their collective efforts in enriching musical practice and effecting positive social change, the capacity of individual organizations within their own unique leadership roles will be enhanced.

One such area of collective effort that emerges from the above summary, and warrants brief mention again here, is the near-universal absence of rigorous and systematic evaluation of the programming and resources offered by these organizations (see page 13). If the collective impact of these organizations is truly to be determined, and if social and cultural needs and demands continue to shift and challenge the relevance of these organizations' work to human thriving and community, the task of collecting and analyzing and communicating programmatic effects is a critical one. And, importantly, it may be a task that in some instances can be shared and resourced among these organizations.

"Harmony", a theme that was noted by a number of these organizations, may be defined as the combining of distinct yet simultaneous notes or voices to form a chord that is pleasing to the ear. Ultimately, this is the potential of the collective work of these field-building organizations – each one playing a distinct role, yet combining with the others in a way that is pleasing to the future thriving of musical practice and human community.

## APPENDIX A: SURVEY QUESTIONS

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1. Please provide the name of your choral field-building organization.
2. Please provide your name, and your role within your organization.
3. Which of the following best describes the constituents served by your organization?
  - ☐ We primarily serve individual persons (e.g., individual members, educators, customers)
  - ☐ We primarily serve organizations/groups (e.g., choruses, schools)
  - ☐ We serve both individual persons and organizations/groups
  - ☐ Other
4. If you serve individual persons – how many persons are currently served by your organization?
5. If you serve individual persons – please provide a demographic profile of the individuals who are served by your organization. (Who is the “average” person served by your organization?)
6. If you serve organizations/groups – how many organizations/groups are currently served by your organization?
7. If you serve organizations/groups – please describe the types of organizations/groups that are served by your organization. (What is the “average” organization/group served by your organization?)
8. Please list the peer organizations, if any, with which your organization has established a formal strategic partnership. (If possible, please briefly describe the nature of these partnerships.)
9. What, if any, opportunities for growth, collaboration, and/or innovation is your organization currently pursuing?
10. What are the primary programs and services your organization currently offers to constituents and/or to the communities in which your organization operates?
11. What additional new programming and/or resources, if any, is your organization currently developing?
12. How many full-time and/or part-time staff are currently employed by your organization? (Provide numbers for both full-time and part-time, if applicable.)
13. Please describe the "outputs", or the level of constituent participation, of your organization's primary programming and services (e.g., how many people have attended your major event(s), how many organizations have been served through your consulting service).

14. Please describe the desired outcomes of your major programming and services (e.g., what conditions are you seeking to change, how will constituents be different as a result of your programming?).
15. What measured outcomes has your organization achieved toward its stated goals?
16. Please describe any evaluation activities your organization uses to evaluate its programming and services.
17. Please describe your organization's current fundraising activities, if any.
18. Beyond your typical streams of funding, what additional funding opportunities, if any, is your organization actively pursuing for the future? (e.g., program grants, new fundraising campaigns)
19. If you serve individual persons - what demographic groups, if any, is your organization actively/programmatically trying to reach that currently are underrepresented in your organization?
20. If you serve organizations/groups - what types of organizations/groups, if any, is your organization actively/programmatically trying to reach that currently are underrepresented in your membership?
21. Please describe the facilities currently being utilized by your organization. (e.g., office/headquarters, other operating facilities)