



# Film in the City

## *Evaluation of 2014 Program Activities*

*“Film in the City inspires young people to reach higher and to express themselves; it reminds them that their voice is not only valid, it is valued. This program must continue.” –Film artist*

Film in the City is an arts learning program that offers homeless youth in the Twin Cities an opportunity to learn filmmaking skills from professional artists, as well as express themselves through the art of film. In 2013, Film in the City received a Minnesota State Arts Board Arts Learning grant, which enabled the project to fulfill the vision of teaching filmmaking skills to Twin Cities youth, a vision that was originally put forward by its project director, Rich Reeder.

A longtime local filmmaker and film educator, Rich assembled a multi-faceted team of filmmakers, including actors, film editors, designers, composers, teachers, and screenwriters – all of whom have extensive experience working with at-risk youth or with the visual and performing arts. The project began with a series of 12 workshops led by film artists and culminated in youth working with film artists to write, cast, film, edit, and premiere an original short film.

## About the Arts Learning grant and this evaluation

For the purpose of the Arts Learning grant, *arts learning* happens when participants are engaged in creating, performing, and responding to art in a disciplined and intentional way with teaching artists. Arts Learning grant projects incorporate at least one of the following:

- **Create.** Arts learners study works of art, acquire skills related to practicing the art form, understand the context of the art form guided by teaching artist(s), and build appreciation for the technical and/or aesthetic qualities of the art form. Study may include acquisition of skills relevant to practicing the art form.
- **Perform.** Lessons include an opportunity for arts learners to share their work either through presentations or explanations of their artwork.
- **Respond.** Arts learners are asked during their arts learning experience to describe, interpret, and evaluate their own artwork and that of others. Lessons include questions to guide arts learners in reflecting on the work.

To evaluate the extent to which Film in the City fulfilled the Arts Learning grant criteria, Wilder Research developed two surveys in partnership with Rich Reeder: one survey for young filmmakers and another for film artists that contributed their skills and expertise to the project. These surveys focused on a number of aspects of respondents' involvement with Film in the City, including learning filmmaking skills, developing as an artist, working together and making connections, future filmmaking plans, and perceptions of working with the program.

### Young filmmakers

Young filmmakers, age 17-20 at program entry, were recruited from Twin Cities organizations that serve homeless youth, including Ain Dah Yung Center, Avenues for Homeless Youth, Full Cycle, Kulture Klub Collaborative, SafeZone, and YouthLink. For their participation, young filmmakers received \$25 for each workshop they attended as well as \$40 for each day they participated in making their film. Additionally, Film in the City reimbursed young filmmakers for bus fare to and from program activities. In total, 12 young filmmakers participated for the entirety of the program. Seven youth completed the young filmmaker survey, for a response rate of 58 percent. See Figure 1 for demographic characteristics of young filmmakers.

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## 1. Young filmmakers' demographic characteristics

Gender of young filmmakers	Number of young filmmakers
Female	7
Male	5
Race/ethnicity of young filmmakers	
African American	5
American Indian	2
Southeast Asian	1
White	4

**Note:** These demographic characteristics were collected by Film in the City staff when young filmmakers were recruited for the program.

## Professional film artists

The Arts Learning grant requires that projects engage arts learners with skilled teaching artists. Film artists were recruited by Film in the City project staff to assist with the three major components of the project: teaching workshops, film production, and post-production. Film artists represented a wide array of filmmaking expertise, including screenwriting, acting, casting, cinematography, film editing, and more. For their participation, film artists were reimbursed at the rates recommended by the Minnesota State Arts Board, which is \$300 for up to a four-hour day. When daily program activities were longer than four hours in duration, film artists were compensated accordingly. In total, 68 film artists offered their skills and expertise to Film in the City (Figure 2). Seventeen film artists completed the survey, for a response rate of 25 percent.

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## 2. Film artist roles

	Number of film artists
Film in the City staff	7
Workshop artists	15
Short film production crew	26
Short film cast	10
Short film post-production crew	5
Other collaborators <sup>1</sup>	5

**Note:** These data were provided by Film in the City internal records.

<sup>1</sup> "Other collaborators" refers to the following roles: social media, casting consultant, public relations, grant consultant, and grant manager.

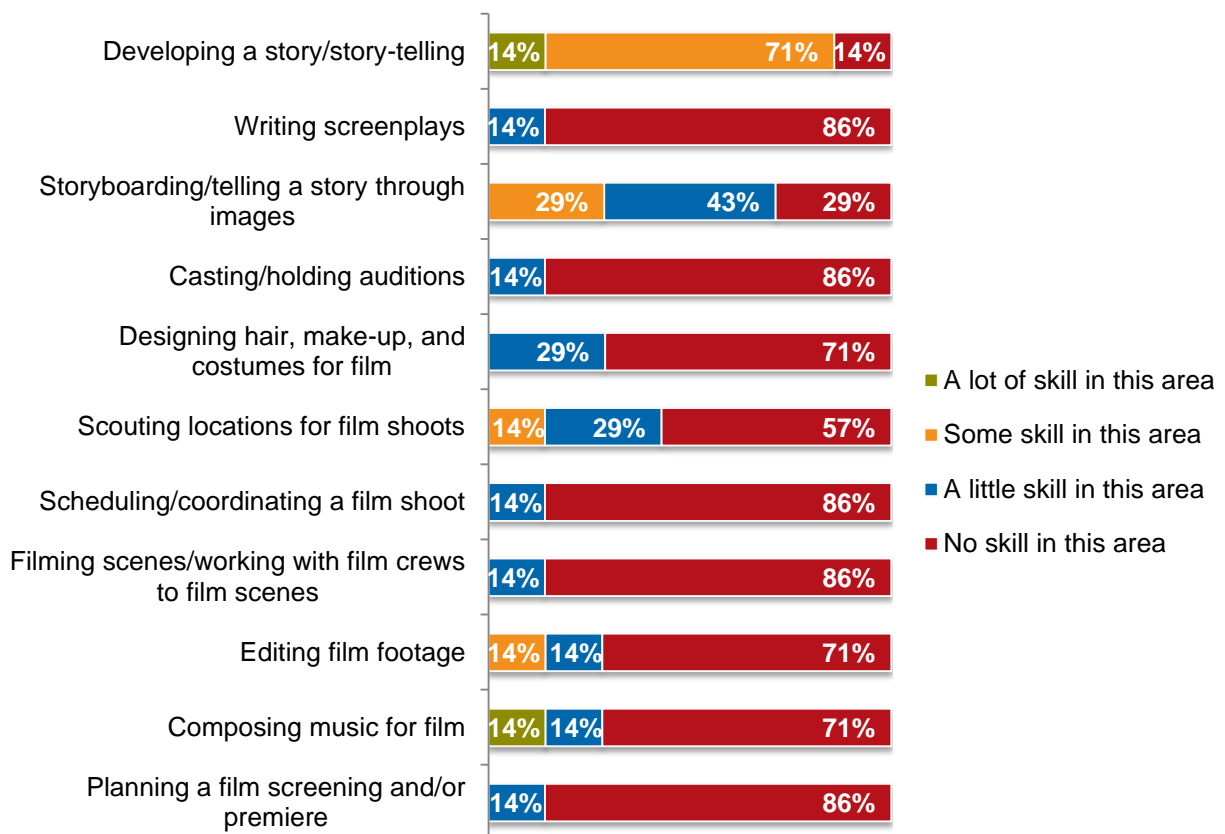
## What did young filmmakers learn?

Film in the City received their Arts Learning grant to support young filmmakers in creating art, which is defined by the Minnesota State Arts Board as studying works of art, acquiring skills related to practicing the art form, understanding the context of the art form guided by teaching artist(s), and building appreciation for the technical and/or aesthetic qualities of the art form.

We asked young filmmakers to retrospectively rank their filmmaking skills prior to participating in Film in the City (Figure 3). We also asked young filmmakers if their filmmaking skills increased due to their participation in Film in the City (Figure 4). Overall, young filmmakers reported low levels of skill before participating in Film in the City (with some exceptions), and many young filmmakers reported skill level increases in a variety of areas due to their participation in the program.

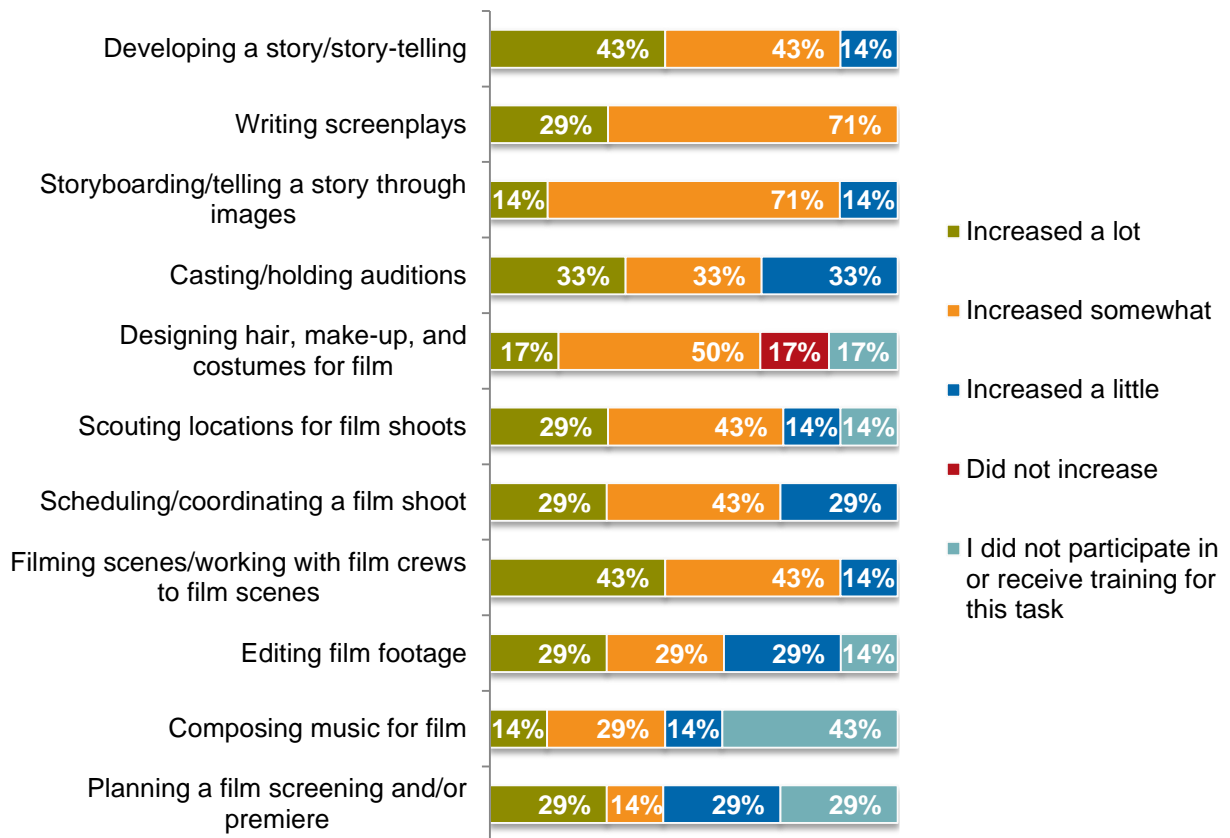
### 3. Young filmmakers' skills before participating in Film in the City

#### ***Before participating in Film in the City I had...***



#### 4. Young filmmakers' increase in skill level because of Film in the City

*Because of Film in the City, my skill level in this area...*

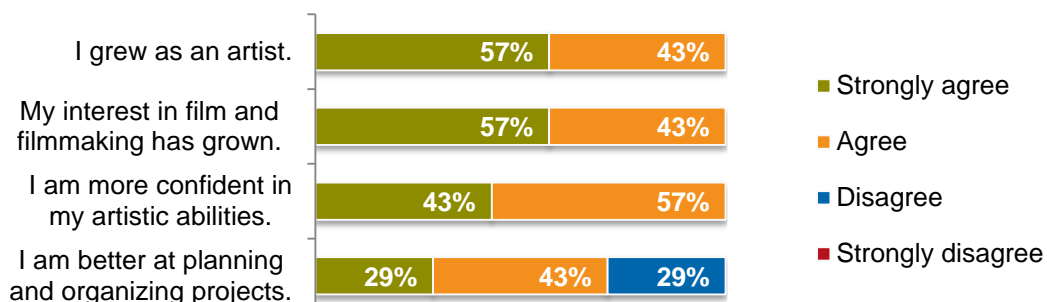


#### Developing as an artist

Young filmmakers gave us their insights regarding how their participation in Film in the City contributed to their development as film artists (Figure 5). All young filmmakers agreed that they grew as an artist, their interest in film and filmmaking increased, and that they were more confident in their artistic abilities. About 7 in 10 young filmmakers also agreed that they got better at planning and organizing projects.

#### 5. Young filmmakers' artistic development measures

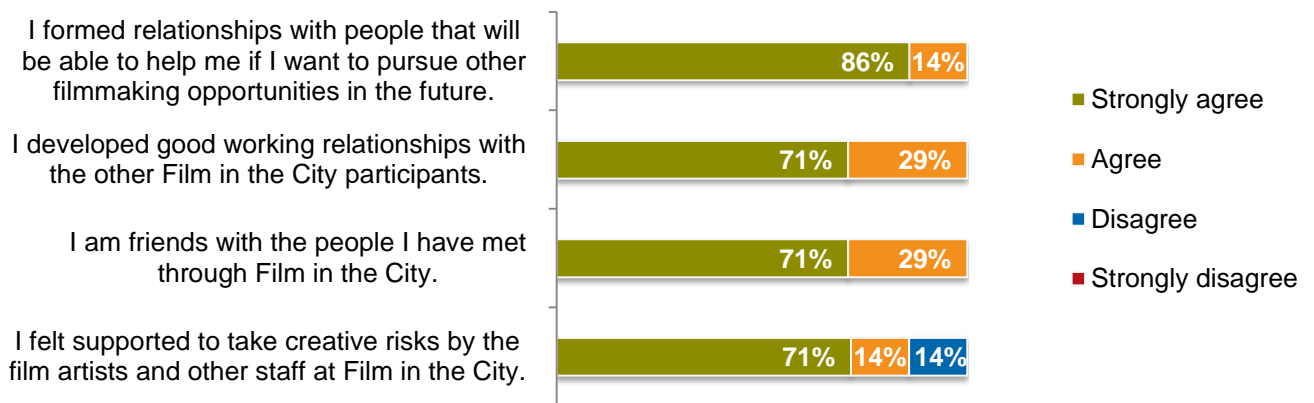
*Because of my participation in Film in the City...*



## Making connections and working together

We asked young filmmakers about connections they made through their participation in Film in the City as well as about working together with others involved in the project (Figure 6). All young filmmakers agreed that they formed beneficial relationships for future filmmaking opportunities, developed good working relationships with other young filmmakers, and were friends with the people that they met through Film in the City. More than 8 in 10 young filmmakers agreed that they felt supported to take creative risks by the film artists and other staff at Film in the City.

### 6. Young filmmakers' connections because of Film in the City



Some young filmmakers noted that making connections and working together with others was their favorite part of Film in the City.

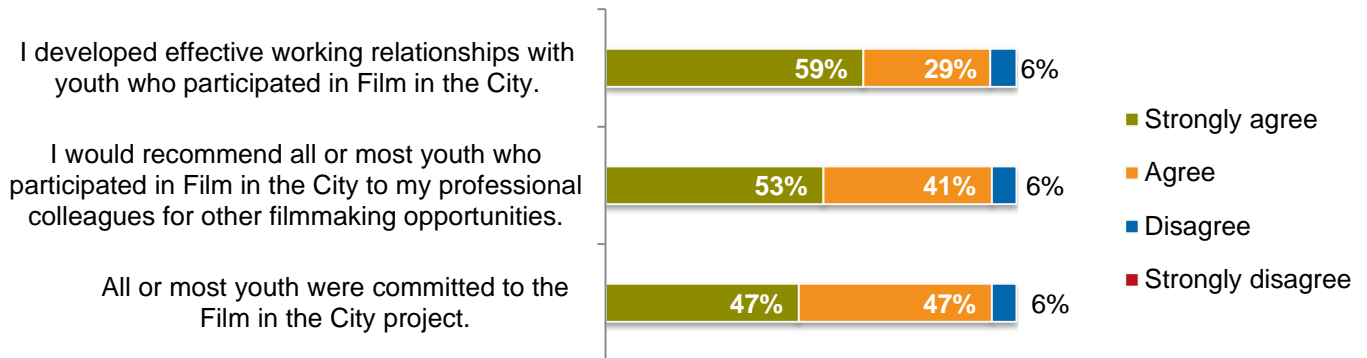
*My most favorite part was meeting [professional filmmakers]. I formed bonds with them that I will use for my music and performance career. –Young filmmaker*

*[My favorite part was] learning how to compromise with lots of people and still making something really cool that will last and people will see it. It's a whole project beginning to end that we actually finished and we can be proud of it. –Young filmmaker*

*[My favorite part was] working with everybody because everybody had different ideas, which made it fun. –Young filmmaker*

We also asked film artists about their perceptions of personal connections with and working alongside young filmmakers (Figure 7). Almost all film artists (94%) reported forming effective working relationships with young filmmakers, observing young filmmakers' commitment to the project, and that they would recommend young filmmakers to their professional colleagues.

## 7. Film artists' perceptions of personal connections with and working alongside young filmmakers



Some film artists mentioned their experiences with young filmmakers as highlights of their involvement with the program.

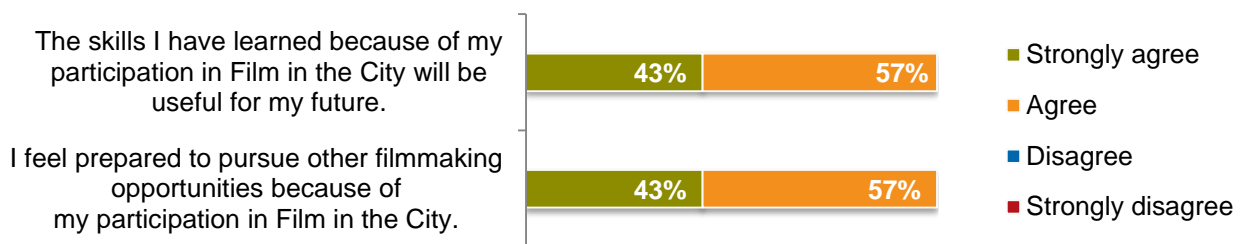
*Working with youth was extremely fulfilling. I appreciated that everyone came together to create a project for kids who really need the opportunity. –Film artist*

*Interacting with the young adults that participated in putting this together was the most rewarding part of being a part of FITC. –Film artist*

## Future filmmaking plans

Young filmmakers gave us their insights regarding how Film in the City has influenced their future filmmaking plans (Figure 8). All young filmmakers agreed that they have learned useful skills for their future through Film in the City, and that they feel prepared to pursue other filmmaking opportunities because of their participation in Film in the City.

## 8. Young filmmakers' future filmmaking plans



Some young filmmakers noted that Film in the City impacted their lives by influencing their future filmmaking plans.

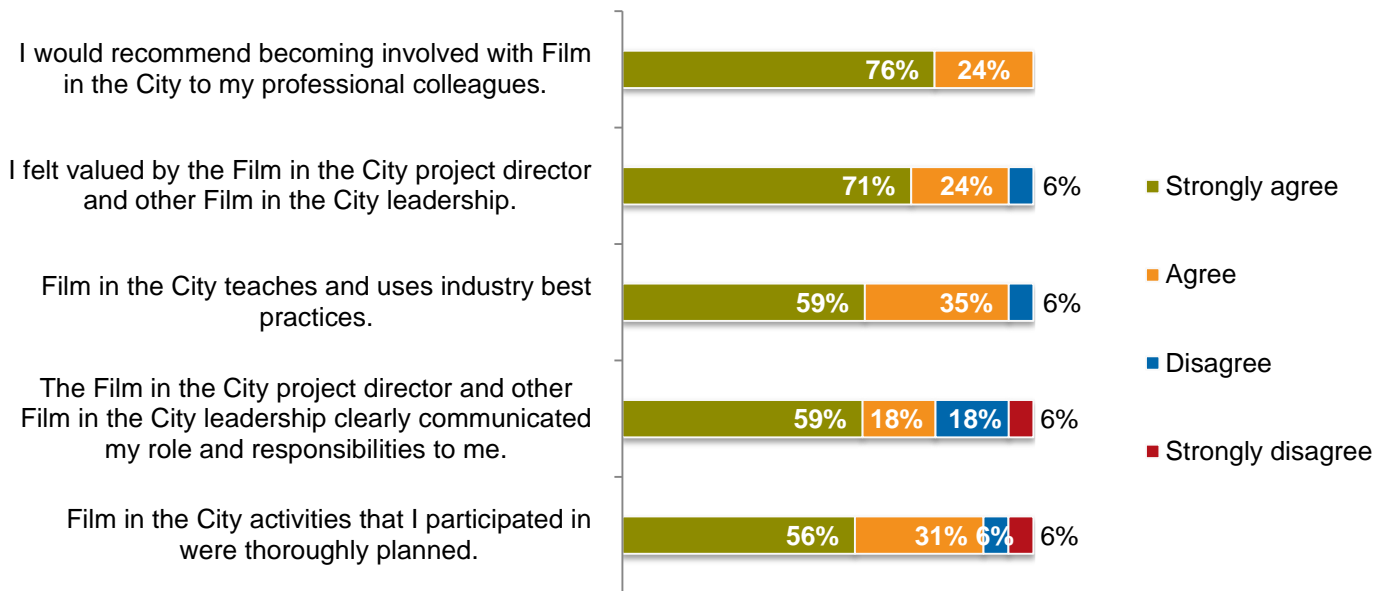
*[I'm] going to school for my BFA in filmmaking. –Young filmmaker*

*It looks great on my resume and I found a new interest in film. –Young filmmaker*

## Working with Film in the City

The film artists who were involved with Film in the City possess a wealth of filmmaking knowledge and experience. We asked them what they thought of their interactions with Film in the City (Figure 9). Overall, film artists' responses about working with Film in the City were positive, with all film artists noting that they would recommend becoming involved in Film in the City to their professional colleagues. However, findings also indicate that communication from Film in the City was not always clear and that some activities were not thoroughly planned.

### 9. Film artists' perceptions of working with Film in the City



The rest of this section outlines other strengths and areas for improvement for Film in the City as identified by film artists and young filmmakers.

### *Strengths of Film in the City*

Film artists most often mentioned **youth empowerment** as a strength of Film in the City.

*Film in the City inspires young people to reach higher and to express themselves; it reminds them that their voice is not only valid, it is valued. This program must continue. –Film artist*

*The greatest strength of FITC is its connection to the youth. I feel this way because to help youth develop a story, tell the story, and show them the filmmaking aspect without any noticeable issues is amazing. I've worked with homeless youth in MN for the past 5 years and it takes skill to not show any current issues they may be faced with. –Film artist*



Film artists also mentioned **skill development** as a strength of the program.

*It's about access to knowledge and tools. No other organization that I know of does as good a job of reaching out and offering these to people who would most likely never have the opportunity. Their programs offer important opportunities for personal growth, empowerment, and the skills required for effective life-long learning, even if the path that participants eventually choose in life has nothing to do with film whatsoever. –Film artist*

Additionally, film artists noted youth making **personal connections to professional artists** as a strength of Film in the City.

*The idea of Film in the City is a great one. The goal is to build relationships with professional people involved in the film and give the youth involved skills in the entertainment industry that they didn't have before. –Film artist*

*The greatest strength was Film in the City engaging the youth with professionals. ... I was impressed with the talent that the youth were exposed to and the connection the professionals made with the youth. –Film artist*

### ***Improving Film in the City***

Young filmmakers and film artists offered a number of suggestions for improving Film in the City in the future. A number of young filmmakers and film artists mentioned that **giving youth more authority and decision-making power** is one way that the program could improve.

*Let all the youth do everything on their own! That was the only thing wrong. Letting us work the camera, do make-up, etc. –Young filmmaker*

*Giving the youth a little more authority on the project. –Young filmmaker*

*The youth need to be put in the driver's seat. We need to involve them in the actual workshops and the shooting of the film. We had special guests come into every workshop and speak to them instead of involving them in the project. When we were shooting, the youth helped a bit with set dressing, but I think they wanted to direct the actors and the storyline. –Film artist*

Also noted in Figure 9, some film artists also suggested improving **communication** among Film in the City staff, film artists, and young filmmakers.

*Roles must be clearly defined and discussed ahead of time, there must be more planning, far in advance, for the singular workshops. Improper or lack of communication was Film in the City's greatest downfall. –Film artist*

*There were many times when communication was lacking between the staff and the youth. ... There needs to be a manager or producer that is there every day and communicates with the staff so they know exactly what is going on. –Film artist*

Additionally, one film artist mentioned devoting more time to **building relationships between young filmmakers and film artists** as a way to improve the program.

## Summary and moving forward

Findings from the young filmmaker and film artist surveys clearly indicate that Film in the City fulfilled the requirements of the Arts Learning grant. Particularly, the project engaged arts learners in acquiring skills relating to filmmaking and building an appreciation for the technical and aesthetic quality of filmmaking. This fulfills the “Create” requirement of the Arts Learning grant (see page 2 for an explanation of each of the requirements). One young filmmaker commented:

*I look at movies and entertainment media differently now and I know how much work goes into the things I see on TV or at the movies. –Young filmmaker*

Additionally, Film in the City worked with young filmmakers to premiere their 20-minute original film at the Riverview Theater in South Minneapolis, which fulfills the requirement for arts learners to have an opportunity to share their work through presentations or explanations of their artwork. This fulfills the “Perform” requirement of the Arts Learning grant. When compiling and editing film footage during post-production, young filmmakers also had the opportunity to describe, interpret, and evaluate their own artwork, which fulfills the “Respond” requirement of the Arts Learning grant. Young filmmakers also participated in One Day on Earth, an annual worldwide film and media event that features filmmakers of various ages, countries of origin, and filmmaking experience. Participation in One Day on Earth offered an additional opportunity for young filmmakers to Create, Perform, and Respond as part of their involvement with Film in the City.

It’s also clear from survey findings that young filmmakers and film artists view their involvement with Film in the City as worthwhile. Moving forward, Film in the City should consider the strengths and areas for improvement identified by these invested stakeholders. In particular, Film in the City might consider:

- **Giving more ownership of the project to young filmmakers** by making young filmmakers responsible for individual project tasks, or having young filmmakers take a more active role in project tasks or workshops
- **Capitalizing on opportunities to form personal connections** between young filmmakers and film artists by creating more small group or one-on-one time between young filmmakers and film artists, when appropriate
- **Improving communication** among Film in the City leadership and staff, film artists, and young filmmakers by identifying one point person to handle communication duties for the project

To continue learning about how the program can be more effective, Wilder Research recommends more in-depth research that is embedded into program activities, such as focus groups or one-on-one interviews with young filmmakers and film artists at multiple points throughout Film in the City programming. A process evaluation such as this will allow continuous and real-time feedback to Film in the City leadership regarding areas for improvement identified by young filmmakers and film artists.

Findings from this evaluation show that Film in the City is valued by young filmmakers and film artists who were involved in the program, and that Film in the City effectively fulfilled the requirements of the Arts Learning grant. Rich Reeder and the Film in the City team are continuing to showcase the young filmmakers' work at Twin Cities youth organizations and local churches, as well as through networking with similar programs in San Francisco and Seattle.

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451 Lexington Parkway North  
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55104  
651-280-2700  
[www.wilderresearch.org](http://www.wilderresearch.org)



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**For more information**

This summary presents highlights of the *Film in the City: Evaluation of 2014 Program Activities*. For more information about this report, contact Ryan Evans at Wilder Research, 651-280-2677.

Author: Ryan Evans

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