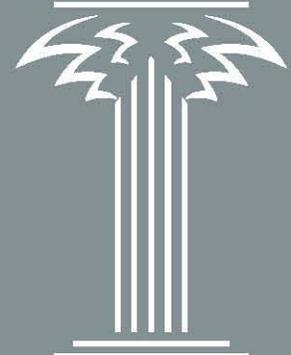


CITY OF SAN DIEGO
COMMISSION FOR ARTS AND CULTURE

Diversity Initiative

“Best Practices” Report 2006

CITY OF SAN DIEGO
COMMISSION FOR
ARTS AND CULTURE



VIBRANT CULTURE
VIBRANT CITY

**CITY OF SAN DIEGO
COMMISSION FOR ARTS AND CULTURE**

VIBRANT CULTURE: VIBRANT CITY

The mission of the City of San Diego Commission for Arts and Culture is to vitalize the community by integrating arts and culture into community life, supporting the region's cultural assets, and showcasing San Diego as an international tourism destination.

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CITY OF SAN DIEGO COMMISSION FOR ARTS AND CULTURE

DIVERSITY INITIATIVE “BEST PRACTICES” REPORT – 2006

This report captures and highlights the best diversity practices of the 83 applicants to the City of San Diego Commission for Arts and Culture's (Commission) FY2007 Organizational Support Program (OSP). As part of a multi-year, multi-dimensional diversity initiative launched by the Commission in 2005, the agency challenged applicants to the OSP to make diversity an organization-wide priority and to share in their proposals the strategies – planned and implemented - that will make their institutions more inclusive and reflective of all of San Diego's populations.

The Commission then charged a special application review panel of staff and community advisors to read the proposals and to glean from it practices which are noteworthy and capable of replication by other organizations seeking to move their diversity agenda forward. The practices compiled in this report do not purport to be exhaustive of all that is being done – but certainly, what was shared within the confines and page limitations of the OSP application.

For ease of use, this report is organized into the following topic areas:

- ❖ Leadership
- ❖ Programming
- ❖ Community Outreach and Engagement
- ❖ Tracking and Measuring
- ❖ Diversity for Ethnically Specific Organizations
- ❖ Next Steps

The Commission hopes that within these pages you find ideas that affirm the good work your organization is already doing and new approaches which will further your diversity efforts. We applaud every organization that has made a commitment to inclusion and look forward to working with everyone as we continue our learning process.

❖ LEADERSHIP

According to Building Board Diversity, published by the National Center for Nonprofit Boards, addressing diversity is a process, not a project. For the leadership of nonprofit arts and culture organizations – the board and senior staff - making a commitment to change, building awareness of the issues and establishing a long-term holistic approach are the first steps toward valuing diversity in the ongoing process of organizational change.

In reviewing the OSP applications, the panel noted several cases where organizations didn't dive blindly into the diversity pool, but took thoughtful time to plan and educate themselves about the issues through special meetings, workshops, training programs and internal assessments. Others solicited the help of outside consultants or community members for advice. The best efforts were incorporated into the organization's long-term planning efforts.

Planning and Training

- One organization devoted one year to assess the skills required for membership on the board so that diversifying the membership became part of a larger strategic planning effort. As a result of the assessment, the organization contracted a consulting firm to assist with board recruitment and retention activities.
- Other organizations have embarked on formal diversity planning efforts that include measurable objectives and timelines for the completion of tasks. Diversity is a standing item on the agenda of each board meeting with a report on the achievement of diversity goals and initiatives.
- Another organization invested in staff training specifically focusing on diversity.
- Several organizations have given staff time off with pay to participate in the Commission's Diversity Initiative activities, such as the Emerging Leaders of Arts and Culture program and a three-session board and staff training program for large budget organizations.

Policies and Procedures

The panel also noted that organizations that were working to become more diverse looked to their policies and procedures for opportunities to strengthen their commitment.

- One organization waives its annual giving requirement for members who they recognize fulfill a specific diversity need. They instead put a tangible value on the contributions these members make in helping the organization connect with new communities.
- To attract more diverse board members, one organization established a practice of soliciting underwriting to help individuals join the board who might otherwise be unable to meet the full financial commitment of membership.
- Some organizations integrated thoughtful diversity language directly into their missions. These statements put their funders, audiences, artists and other supporters on notice that diversity is an important organizational core value.
- By establishing an “open door” policy, one director has helped create an atmosphere which communicates a message that diverse opinions and views are valued.

Community Advisory Groups

Several organizations have initiated community advisory groups as a strategy to extend the leadership from the confines of the boardroom out into the community. Community advisory groups serve several functions: They provide insight into a community's values helping organizations be more responsive; they create ambassadors for the organization in the community; and, they influence new directions in programming. Finally, they can be a source for new board members or staff who may substantially expand an organization's resources.

- One organization implemented a Latino Leadership Advisory Council, comprised of business and community leaders, to assist in planning for and promoting increased participation from the region's Latino community.
- A theater organization increased its audiences and season ticket sales by cultivating a 20-year partnership with the African American community through its African American Advisory Council. This group co-sponsors an annual arts and culture festival and helps to promote productions that have a particular appeal to the African American community.

❖ PROGRAMMING

Programming, in the theaters, exhibit halls and galleries, dance studios or other spaces, such as schools, community centers or parks, is an area in which many OSP applicants excelled in terms of diversity. Some organizations begin by making an institutional commitment to represent the diversity of San Diego's populations in the artistic programming produced or presented in its venues. Many are developing creative ways to produce and present programming that has an awareness of or specifically targets people of backgrounds different from their mainstream audience. Others are including diversity as a topic of discussion in their education and outreach programming – putting the issue on center stage.

Some diversity activities are happening as a result of cross-disciplinary collaborations between organizations while others are being produced in partnership with community groups. In most cases, the strategy driving the programming is audience development – to offer high quality exhibits, theatrical productions, and concerts that break down barriers to participation, such as location, affordability, accessibility, language, education, age, gender, religion etc. The examples are many, but here are a few that are worth noting:

- One organization, believing strongly that artistic excellence can be found in all segments of the community, intentionally seeks artists for its programs with diverse backgrounds and points of view.
- A dance group presented work along the local trolley line, reaching people who use public transportation and may not otherwise experience a dance performance.
- Another organization also took their programming to the streets by partnering with local businesses to mount an exhibition of work by refugees and immigrants in shops and business windows on a major thoroughfare.
- Organizations offered a variety of strategies to make participation more affordable, such as volunteer work opportunities in exchange for tickets, “pay-what-you-can” admissions, scholarships and the establishment of special funds to underwrite transportation.
- The panel noted that several organizations provide educational materials in Spanish, Tagalog or Vietnamese, while others provide sign-language interpretation or literature in Braille.

- A unique music-training program combines instruction in African drumming with western classical percussion. Students receive group instruction and performance opportunities in both traditions, thus cultivating a cross synergy of cultural interest and artistic abilities.
- An organization that focuses on Christian liturgical music collaborated with a Jewish organization to present a broader program of sacred music.
- A collaborative project with the San Diego Library explored the role of religion in the life journeys of immigrants now living in San Diego.
- Some organizations are turning their attention to Gen X and Y audiences by utilizing contemporary cultural forms, such as video games, hip-hop, after-hours clubs, to create programming that will get them in the door. One such organization made the strategic decision to collaborate with the Comi-Con Convention to present a performance that attracted a large number of young patrons who would not normally attend their concerts.
- One organization engaged youth in peer-to-peer discussions about sensitive socio-political topics, especially those concerning race and ethnicity. Presented as part of an exhibit exploring the evolution of race in America, the project provided a forum for young people to discuss how their peers both struggle and succeed in racially charged situations and circumstances.

❖ **COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT**

Once barriers to participation are removed, the panel noted that some organizations are intentionally implementing strategies that are designed to reach and communicate more effectively with different audiences - from publicity and promotional activities to efforts to engage families or to interact with participants in the neighborhoods where they live, work and play.

Publicity and Promotions

- Because Spanish language media is essential to disseminating arts and culture information in this border region, many organizations are now advertising on Spanish television, radio and in newspapers.
- In other examples, some organizations get the word out by translating their promotional materials into several languages that also include the growing immigrant and refugee communities.

- Independent and non-traditional information outlets are being increasingly used to reach broader audiences, such as internet radio and pod casting. One organization established its own online station to reach a broader audience.
- Still other organizations are showing up at street fairs where interaction with the community is immediate. Community members can experience and learn about an organization in an environment that is familiar and accessible.

Family Engagement

To better meet the needs of diverse communities, organizations combine their outreach, programming and educational activities with other activities important to families.

- In one case, an organization brought its programming to a health fair, which many families were known to attend. A link between the arts and the health of a community was demonstrated.
- Another organization used young people as co-collaborators and curators for an exhibition that highlighted the families and history of their neighborhood.
- In yet another example, two organizations offered all students participating in after school workshops family passes to attend performances, acknowledging the importance of family involvement and extending the learning beyond the student to siblings, parents and grandparents.

Community Involvement

- Some organizations have chosen to utilize community members as collaborating partners in creating new works, doing research, or collecting data.
- The panel noted one classical dance organization that used young people to choreograph a new work.
- Another organization used volunteers to collect data for an important catalogue of the natural world.
- In yet another, community members took artifacts from an organization's collection and used them to create an exhibition.

- One organization partnered with a social service agency to launch a new library-based digital storytelling project for local residents. The goal of the project was to help an ethnically specific population maintain community identity in an area of historical significance.

Cross-border collaborations

Many organizations are now working on cross-border collaborations as a form of community outreach and a means for increasing diversity. Partnerships with Mexican political and cultural groups can greatly expand the audiences for San Diego arts and culture institutions, on both sides of the border.

- One organization in partnership with the Centro Cultural de Tijuana implemented a new bi-national program featuring Mexican and American students playing to both Tijuana and greater San Diego audiences.
- Another organization presented a major international exhibition focusing on the development of new works presented throughout the San Diego and Tijuana region. Through this process, Tijuana residents experience the work of San Diego arts organizations, while artisans from Tijuana influence how San Diegans think about art, architecture, planning, and the environment.
- Organizations whose programming involves work with cross border artists are structuring their hiring process to accommodate international work visas/work permits and requisite tax regulations.

Inter-organizational Cooperation

Some organizations looked to each other for assistance in moving their diversity agenda forward. Working in cross-disciplinary capacities or with like organizations that have in-roads with audiences of a different demographic have yielded results they could never have achieved alone.

- The executive director of a large-budget mainstream institution volunteered to facilitate the board retreat of a small-budget organization serving Gay, Lesbian, Bi-Sexual and Transgender communities. The relationship being built between the two institutions has the capacity to result in dynamic programming that could bring disparate communities together.
- Another institution offers small budget organizations free or reduced rental of performance and rehearsal space.

- In another case, one organization implemented a Community Partners Initiative that allows participants to cross promote their programs in each other's newsletters and websites.
- Still other organizations call upon one another's resources by sharing office space and part-time administrative staff.
- Another example of diversity achieved through cooperation occurred between one organization with a mission to serve the GLBT community sharing performance space with another company that targets a mainstream audience. By thinking creatively, both organizations benefit from broader exposure to new audiences as well as cost savings.

❖ **TRACKING AND MEASURING**

The panel noted that some organizations aren't stopping with the implementation of activities to increase diversity; they are putting systems in place to track and measure how well their strategies are working. Some organizations have taken the audience survey to a new level. In addition to tracking demographic data, surveys are being used to gather input from audiences regarding programming preferences. Overall, however, the evaluation of diversity activities is an area where nearly every organization could improve.

❖ **DIVERSITY FOR ETHNICALLY SPECIFIC ORGANIZATIONS**

On the surface, ethnically specific arts and culture organizations may seem to face the greatest challenge to become more inclusive because of the obvious diversity that already appears to exist within their organization. In fact, the need for diversity within organizations whose programs are specific to a certain culture, ethnicity, gender, etc is no different from mainstream organizations that have a broader focus. Every group can benefit from the ideas, approaches and outlooks of people who are different.

- Some ethnically specific organizations are realizing that diversity to them might mean recruiting members to the board who not only do not share the same ethnicity but are of different ages, genders, professional backgrounds, or live in other areas of the city.
- One organization that focused on Japanese garden culture offers programs in Spanish, Tagalog as well as Japanese.

- A Philippine dance company regularly participates in the Martin Luther King, Jr. parade and offers workshops at the Malcolm X Library located in a multi-cultural neighborhood.
- A Latino cultural organization has representation on the board of Native Americans, African Americans, Caucasians, Latinos, Gays and Lesbians.
- A cultural center focusing on the people of African descent has strong collaborations with cultural institutions in Tijuana and regularly hosts programs on both sides of the border.
- A Jewish cultural center collaborated with an African American church in the presentation of a Jewish gospel singer.

❖ NEXT STEPS

A similar study of applicant responses to the FY2008 OSP application will occur in 2007 to evaluate the progress that has been made from year-one of the Commission's implementation of its Diversity Initiative. A final report will be the most exhaustive survey of diversity efforts, a culmination of the three study years and analysis of the progress we have made as a community. Overall, the Commission hopes that as diversity practices become more institutionalized into the policies and practices of the funded groups that the strategies, tools and activities to increase inclusiveness will become more intentional and focused.

Here are a few questions organizations may wish to consider as they prepare for the work ahead:

- When you think of diversity, are you considering it in its broadest context, inclusive of gender, age, socio-economic background, religious or political persuasion, sexual orientation, geography, as well as ethnicity?
- If you are the director of a nonprofit arts and culture organization, have you developed and expressed your own commitment to diversity?
- Has your organization developed a long term, integrated approach to diversity?
- Have you considered the assets and markets that diverse communities could bring to your organization?
- Are you working to recruit and retain a staff that represents and can effectively communicate with the audiences you want to reach?
- Have you investigated the cultural nuances of your programs and services?
- Have you assessed existing resources for developing inclusive leadership in your organization, including volunteers and clients?
- Does the structure of your organization's board of directors lend itself to developing inclusiveness?

The Commission is working to enhance its website with new tools and resources to help organizations develop better diversity practices. Please visit www.sandiego.gov/arts-culture to download additional copies of this report.



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California

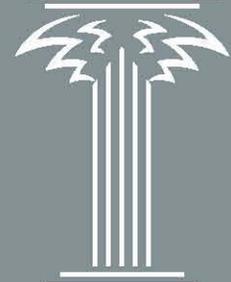


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