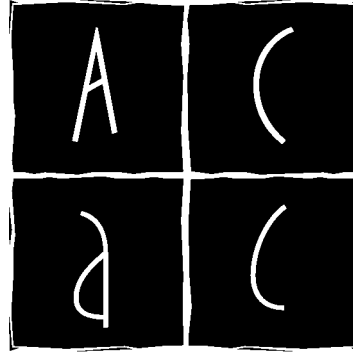


ADAMS COUNTY

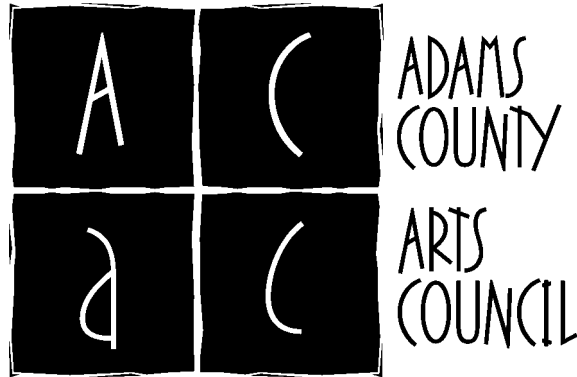


ARTS COUNCIL

STRATEGIC PLAN 2009 – 2013

Executive Summary

Presented for Board Approval January 5, 2009



Strategic Plan 2009-2013 Executive Summary

BACKGROUND

The Adams County Arts Council was founded in 1993 and held its first public planning sessions in 1995. It has been operating with that same model for programming since that time.

Between 2001 and 2005, the organization has experienced significant growth, more than doubling its annual budget. This resulted because of the rapid acceptance and popularity of its arts and cultural programming for audiences of all ages, and its expansion for some specific educational curriculum. Through a variety of artist-in-residencies in schools, after-school classes and evening adult courses, there has been a wide acceptance of the Adams County Arts Council (ACAC) as a community leader in providing essential arts services.

In late spring 2008, after two years, the organization had completed an extensive process which resulted in the award of the Standards for Excellence: An Ethics and Accountability Program. This award was presented by the Pennsylvania Association of Nonprofit Organizations after ACAC demonstrated its leadership in nonprofit management and the capacity for continual leadership development.

The mission of ACAC, to cultivate an arts-rich community, is grounded on the acknowledgement that the arts are an essential part of our being, that they contain the power to transform our minds, bodies and spirits for both individuals and communities and that as such, the arts define our society both now and for future generations.

During this same timeframe, the arts in Adams County have enjoyed their immersion in its community through the addition of new festivals and venues. At a time when the economy is distressed, and the arts are more important than ever, ACAC faces a key challenge due to the need for expanded space to accommodate its classes. There was a recognized vulnerability for continuation of some ACAC programs because of reduced funding.

This summary encompasses both the consensus of community outreach and the results of a strategic board planning retreat which was spread over the ensuing weeks including staff and key volunteers.

THE PLANNING PROCESS

The Strategic Plan 2009-2013 was designed to acknowledge the accomplishments of the past 15 years, and to recognize the growth surge and strength of arts and culture in the region. It was of particular importance that broad participation of the community was included in developing the plan.

The Planning Process was conducted by Best Principled Solutions LLC, under the auspices of a board-level Strategic Planning Committee. After several meetings with this committee and additional board members, the process was clarified.

Modifying an approach enlisted by Peter Drucker, a change management guru, ACAC considered these five questions and modified them to demonstrate its commitment to the citizens of Adams County and to their funders and other supporters. What is our mission? Who are our customers? What does the customer value? What are our results? What is our plan?

Integrated with a model used by the Center for Civic Engagement, University of Pennsylvania, ACAC turned again to its community and through a series of three public forums it conducted "The Big Canvass" a solicitation of ideas about arts and culture from consumers, providers, students and citizens at large in late October, 2008. Here participants gave input

on the uses and users of arts and culture in Adams County; the value and values (meaning and benefits); the barriers to more arts and cultural programs; and an opportunity to select funding streams.

With the entry of new nonprofits into the area, it was also recognized that there would be competition for revenues, for members, for donors, for professional staff and for volunteers within its geographic confines. The demand for accountability, realizing higher expectations and a dynamic increase in public awareness for fundraising modified the horizon of patrons. It was imperative that these supporters were included, to assure that the journey on which ACAC was to embark, would be community based and sustainable.

Simultaneously, a comprehensive ChangeWorks! board survey was developed and analyzed the strengths and challenges of its board members. During the retreat itself, the ChangeWorks! group profile, a SWOT analysis and the forum results were reviewed and a vision statement, values and guiding principles and the plan were outlined. Finally, in subsequent meetings, specific goals were delineated and a 2009 Program of Work was elaborately created to hold the board and committees, the staff and additional volunteers accountable for completing actions.

This summary was approved by the board on January 13, 2009.

What We Found During "THE BIG CANVASS"

Almost 80 interested arts and cultures consumers and providers offered this input during the public forums. Every participant in each session was given the opportunity to converse in smaller groups and then present back to the full body.

The times of the town meetings were selected to be inclusive of individuals from every economic stratum and were centrally located in Gettysburg. While the many comments varied during each session, they could be summated into four general categories whether a use, a user, a benefit, or a meaning. There were no boundaries and every comment was taken into consideration for inclusion in the resulting plan.

The following statements reveal a sampling of the comments offered during the forums.

Recognized Uses:

Economic – Arts festivals attract tourism which generates money. Arts and culture stimulate investments. Local artists use it as their business.

Educational – Culture can be defined by providing a historical timeline through the arts. The arts can be used for observation for problem solving and expression. Arts and culture can be used to encourage thinking outside the box.

Spiritual – The arts uplift and inspire. They provide mediation. They inform and enlighten. They enhance a community's quality of life.

Personal – There is a connection with art as therapy. Art is used for enjoyment. Art is used as an expression of self and humanity.

Recognized Users:

Economic – Business owners of all sizes (for image enhancement, investments, advertising); artists to promote their product and tourists visited cultural attractions.

Educators – Students; teachers; school children (despite No Child Left Behind).

Spiritual – Adults as therapeutic and as parents; children for expression – as a treat and as a break; patrons w/disabilities.

Community – Social or ethnic groups; history buffs; uncreatives, as well as those who were creative.

Value/Benefits

Economic – Economic prosperity (i.e. Majestic Theatre) brings employment and beautification. Festivals bring an economic impact to the community. Diversity is enriched through partnerships.

Educational – Lessons bring a historic & cultural understanding about human development. Lifelong learning enhances a richer vibrant community. There is an acknowledged appreciation for diverse cultures and thoughts.

Spiritual – There is cause to pause and reflect on one's own life experiences. The arts offer an inspiration for one's spirit. Art reinforces a cultural identity.

Personal – Art extends broader viewpoints and brings people together. Art offers tangible expression. It demonstrates a low risk way to experience how others have dealt with similar problems.

Values/Meaning

Economic – The arts afford partnerships, attract innovation/progress and at times, can be viewed as political.

Educational – The arts supply mentors in the community. They open up creativity in all facets of an educational curriculum. They encourage a better understanding of cultures and a family intergenerational dialogue.

Spiritual – Universal concepts of right and wrong are better appreciated through culture. Cathartic experiences can be realized. The arts can provide inspiration and religious experiences.

Personal – The arts build character, raise the level of civility and reinforce self-worth and accomplishments.

Coincidentally, while referenced as *perception* in some instances, the barriers were also sorted into those same areas.

Barriers

Economic – Choices, choices, choices – having the money or having to make a choice when money is tight. The ever present graying of the audience poses a larger dilemma for developing a younger audience that has limited disposable income. ACTV is not reached by everyone in Adams County.

Educational – No Child Left Behind. There is a need for more communication and marketing outlets to permit people to know what is available. Habits to “love the arts” cannot be developed because there is no sustained exposure. There needs to be a better translation for appreciating the arts in common occurrences: if it’s NASCAR that people enjoy, help them find art in the auto body detailing and math in the music on their radios.

Spiritual – Cultural mores/Community Values prevent many from participating. Censorship looms ever present. There is a disparity between the creators and the consumers. To some, the terms “arts” is unappealing.

Personal – There is an inherent stigma about the arts. Time is a critical deterrent. Expectations are often confusing or attitudes unrealistic about the arts and certain types of events. There may be a fear of acceptance or unacceptance.

Repeatedly, we heard concepts that led to these statements:

The Adams County Arts Council was a provider. It provided inspiration to many, nurtured the creative spirit to explore and engage and in the arts and acted as a catalyst for a better quality of life through education and personal experiences.

THE WORK OF THE BOARD

The board began its work with a full day retreat considering the comments from the public forum. Using these same reflections, they crafted a structure for the organization that would define its purpose, delineated its business for the Adams County community, assessed the current situation and characterized how it would achieve the goals for the next five years.

Subsequent committee meetings continued through conference calls and another half-day commitment to complete the work it had set out to accomplish. The following outlines those decisions.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES/VALUES

- ◆ Strive for Excellence
- ◆ Practice Fiscal Responsibility
- ◆ Provide Leadership
- ◆ Be Innovative
- ◆ Build Partnerships through collaborations

STRATEGIC GOALS for Completion by the End of Five Years

FACILITIES: CREATE A WORLD-CLASS EDUCATIONAL MULTI-FUNCTION CENTER FOR THE ARTS.

The Adams County Arts Council would have a large enough single facility and expand to include adjunct locations to provide access to everyone who desires to learn about the arts and culture.

GOVERNANCE: DIVERSITY AND DEVELOP THE BOARD.

The Adams County Arts Council would have enhanced their board capacity to offer strong and effective leadership to maintain its goals and adapt to funding trends. Through sound evaluation techniques, ACAC will demonstrate its relationship between program delivery and accountability to its supporters.

PROGRAMS: DIVERSIFY AND INCREASE PROGRAMS WITH ALL ARTS & CULTURES.

Strong and effective programs will address the full variety of needs and desired programs for the citizens in Adams County and they will include varying levels of knowledge, experience and finesse.

FINANCE: BUILD A DIVERSIFIED PORTFOLIO THAT IS NOT VULNERABLE TO FUNDING AND ECONOMIC TRENDS.

Enhanced and expanded sources of income to create long-term organizational sustainability for operations and programs of the Adams County Arts Council

MEMBERS: SUSTAIN AND ENHANCE MEMBERSHIPS.

Significant increases in memberships will be realized through an augmented menu of services and appreciated value and differentiation between member and non-member benefits for Arts Council program participants. Marketing and communications will be augmented to provide news to the reader in a manner in which they are familiar.

PARTNERSHIPS: CREATE, SUSTAIN AND GROW COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS.

Fortify existing relationships and explore and commit to opportunities with other acknowledged Adams County organizations that are leaders in community affairs which affect cultural economic development.

STAFF: ATTRACT, NURTURE and RETAIN PROFESSIONAL STAFF.

Preserve and secure the human resources to complement the goals of the organization. The board will provide the resources for a professional and volunteer staff to implement its policies.

CONCLUSION

The board of the Adams County Arts Council has developed an aggressive, ambitious agenda for the next five years. Because it has been authored by them, with critical input from the community, they can be assured of attaining their goals with similar community outreach.

The policies are in place from the Standards for Excellence Process. Budgetary concerns have been taken into account and collection of data, specific technologies needed and human resources will continue to be assessed. The board will hold itself accountable for its progress through the annual reflection on the Program of Work, which will drive their budget. Through prudent monitoring future risk assessments will be determined to support calibration of metrics used for evaluation. Lessons learned will be a viable component for reflection on future trends and adoption of best practices.

Thank you for the work that you do and will continue to do as together we cultivate an arts-rich community.

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Adams County Arts Council is a 501(c) (3) nonprofit charitable organization; contributions are tax-deductible as allowed by law. A copy of the official registration and financial information for ACAC may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll-free, within Pennsylvania, 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.

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