

Arts Northwest March 2019 Strategic Planning Session Summary

Present: Kristine Bretall, Jill Barnes, Laura Forbes, Brandi Newton, Ray Solley, Michelle Fujii, John Zirkle, Palmer Davis, Sam Calhoun, Laurel York Odell

Discussion Items

I. Arts Northwest Purpose Today

Members of the board and staff began the session with a review and re-validation of Arts Northwest's purpose. Participants identified the following problems and needs of artists and presenters in the northwest the organization exists to address.

- Community isolation limits access to artist, art organizations and best practices
- Lack of knowledge of how to get work presented
- Historical needs of 40 years ago with no technology, limited relationships and large geographic area (Oregon, Washington, Idaho)
- Relationships are critical to work of artists
- Expensive to find artists (money and time) to present (access between artists and presenters is challenging) especially for smaller organizations and communities
- Mental/emotional needs of those we serve need support and encouragement
- Lack of validation for the arts mattering (does anyone care?)
- Individual organization investments in shows not cost effective, limits availability of shows
- Limited ability to problem-solve/deal with change (lack of skills/knowledge)

The elements were then refined and agreed upon as an outline for the purpose of Arts Northwest.

Arts Northwest exists to.....

*Bring together performing artists and presenters in a supportive network;
Offer opportunities for participants to share their knowledge and expertise;
Provide a forum for building relationships for mutual support, inspiration and
extending experiences; and,
Engage all types of communities.*

II. Defining Success

With the purpose outlined, session participants were then tasked with defining benchmarks of success for the organization. These provide the framework for determining and demonstrating the organization's effective implementation of purpose and desired impacts. The following list summarizes the responses and includes measurable indicators. The full list follows as Attachment A.

Proposed Benchmarks of Success

- Artists and presenters are working together, and independently, sustainably.
Evidenced by:
 - Increasing revenues to each and from each
 - Decreasing numbers of those going out of business/not thriving

- Arts Northwest is a recognized network resource for professional development and expertise in the performing arts.
Evidenced by:
 - Increasing numbers of utilization of services
 - Services meet expressed demand as well as best practices

- The Arts Northwest network is growing and thriving. Our resources/infrastructure support and sustain successful organization growth.
Evidenced by:
 - Increasing numbers of members and categories with proportional balance
 - Financial health
 - Happy staff support/perform work
 - Active, engaged board

- Communities throughout the Northwest and beyond experience performing arts that provoke, inspire, stretch and excite.
Evidenced by:
 - Increasing numbers of rural communities presenting diverse artists
 - Increasing numbers of rare, unique artist bookings and showcasing

III. Strategies for Achieving Success

Arts Northwest provides multiple opportunities for artists, agencies and presenters to work together. The following list outlines the primary strategies Arts Northwest currently, and in the future, utilizes to implement the organization's purpose.

- 1) Conduct an exceptional conference to allow attendees to identify and build relationships with colleagues; showcase talent; offer opportunities for block booking; and, provide a forum for professional development. Objectives would include:
 - Increasing participants and registrations;
 - Increasing net revenue; and,
 - Reaching 300 total participants by 2021

- 2) Coordinate communications to members and other constituents to provide valued resources and information including, but not limited to:
 - Membership directory with member profiles as well as contact information
 - Block booking alerts
 - Member performance alerts (and comp tickets)

- Job listings
- Resource directory of professionals for technical assistance
- Archives of toolkits (add 2 or more per year)
- Utilization of annual meeting for member communications/interactions/engagement in the organization

3) Provide year -round colleague interaction programs/activities.

- Tips/questions chat room
- Affinity cohorts
- Comp ticket program

4) Encourage and model shifting paradigm for provoking, inspiring, stretching and exciting through a prioritization and focus on diversity and inclusion.

IV. Key Activities for 2019-2020

The following key activities were identified as strategic areas of focus for the board and staff during the next two years.

Key Activity Outline – 2019-2020	Assigned To
Conduct exceptional conferences. Determine specific participant and revenue objectives.	All
Determine and implement membership structure for maximum revenue generation and member benefit by Oct 2019 to announce at annual meeting.	Laura, Sam, Jill
Identify (by Sept Board Meeting) & implement additional revenue streams (conference and non-conference).	Brandi, John, Kristine
Determine key activities and objectives for diversity and inclusion focus (ongoing).	Michelle, Laura, Palmer
Assess need for additional staffing/human resource needs and structure for effective, quality strategy implementation by Feb/March 2020.	Sam, Ray

Conversation focused on the expected (yet unwritten) roles and responsibilities of board members relative to the coordination and implementation of the conference. The following list outlines identified expectations of board members that can be communicated and incorporated into board member job descriptions.

- Approve content
- Assist with development of content
- Review and problem solve production
- Identify volunteer roles and assist with filling
- Identify and assist with sponsor recruitment
- Coordinate mentor/mentee program
- Review and consult on layout
- Assist with identification and recruitment of key note
- Attend
- Outline and coordinate member meeting

V. Next Steps

A board work calendar of specific tasks and timeframes was outlined and is included as a separate document. Recommended next steps for the strategic plan process as well as implementation follow:

- Develop and implement 3 affinity cohorts at 2019 annual meeting (Brandi, Jill)
- Explore options for implementing chat room (Sam)
- Outline and communicate comp ticket program (?)
- Review and approve strategic plan at April meeting (All)
- Review and re-validate plan at October board meeting (All)

Attachment A - Elements/Benchmarks of Success

- Artists, agencies presenting working together (contracts signed & executed, have confidence) (1)
- Communities through US and beyond have access to artistic expressions/artists that provoke, inspire, stretch, excite, change perspectives (3)
- Artists working sustainably; presenters working sustainably (6)
- Membership increases in total, in categories, equitable/proportional balance
- Audience/participant engagement increases (1)
- Artists prepared to showcase their work/have agency to go to communities & engage audiences & have access to network for development & exchange
- Presenters recognizing, booking & succeeding with artists outside their perceived box (2)
- Infrastructure supports work
- Vibrant region of performing arts events (more and more by Arts Northwest) (1)
- Presenters not feeling isolated w/industry changes
- Presenters feel inspired to present artists based on experiences with them, to support transformative work in communities, access network of development and exchange
- Developmental growth as artists, educators, business people
- Arts Northwest is seen as and used as source of expertise/info... our network is the resource (3)
- Professionals who provide communities with events that provoke, stimulate, inspire
- Integral, important part of the educational and professional life of performing arts presenting in communities (1)
- Everyone has a voice and is represented

Note: Numbers in parentheses represent numbers of votes received to determine priority areas.

Attachment B – Member Network Services

- Conference ...identify colleagues to build relationships, showcasing, block booking, professional development
- Colleague interaction/forum for chats/expertise exchange, mentoring
- Archive of tools/resources (toolkits)
- Membership directory for contact info (provide additional info)
- Technical support to artists ... how to be successfully booked at conference & outside, (materials, strategies, follow-up)
- Block booking alerts
- Performance alerts
- Comp tickets
- Job listings for those in performing arts
- Access to information on vetted, quality, affordable artists, up and coming artists ... yelp type reviews/references
- Technical support/referrals to organization resources for capacity building
- Advice/tips from our network experts (chat room)
- Professional development
- Endorsements
- Affinity cohorts (quarterly meetings)