

FISHERS CULTURAL ALLIANCE

MASTER PLAN FOR ARTS & CULTURE DEVELOPMENT

January, 2009



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



INTRODUCTION

A TRUE COMMUNITY EFFORT

The Fishers Cultural Alliance master planning process was a collaborative initiative that involved dozens of members of the community. Some played large parts and dedicated a great deal of time and effort to the development of the plan, others played smaller yet valuable roles, such as taking the time to send an email with a suggestion, and or few minutes 200 people took to participate in the survey process. All involved are to be thanked for their thoughtfulness and the gift of their time.

Special thanks go out to:

The Fishers Cultural Alliance

- Diane Eaton, Executive Coordinator and Grant Coordinator, former President, Sisters Cities Association of Fishers Indiana
- Terry Ballantini, President, Fishers Arts Council
- Brad Fields, Vice President/Treasurer, Fishers Arts Council
- Nana Vaughan, Executive Director, Fishers Music Society
- Mike Kalb, President, Sisters Cities Association of Fishers Indiana
- Jennifer Kehl, Fishers Freedom Festival and Parade
- April Hensley, Board Member The Historic Ambassador House and Gardens
- Pam Newell, former Executive Director, The Historic Ambassador House and Gardens
- All the members of the participating organization boards of directors

Community Focus Group Participants

Erin Albert
Rev. Rusty Allanson
Jennie Boady
Wes Bucher
Tom Branum
David Cooper
Ken Deuser
Teresa Downham
Jennifer Driscoll
Rev. Joe Freeman
Beth Galhausen
Tracy Gritter
Art Hall
Ann Henn
Gary Huff

Lois Irvin
Jeff Knurek
Diane LeRose
Art Levine
Judy Levine
Beth Lux
Mark McSweeney
Kathy Meyer
Heather Miles
Joe Milleman
Brenda Myers
Gary Nance
Bill Pemberton
Eileen Pritchard
Gary Pruitt

Gary Reynolds
Sarah Rittman
Matt Rund
Ellen Rosenthal
Kathy Scheemine
Susan Seet
Liz Tate
Corby Thompson
Denise Town
Jason Urban
Brenda Williams
Lisa Wiggers
Christy Wolf

The Fishers Town Council

Scott Faultless
Eileen Pritchard
Stuart Easley
Daniel Henke
Charles White
David George
Arthur Levine

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Fishers Cultural Alliance is an informal partnership of arts groups that includes the Fishers Arts Council, The Historic Ambassador House and Heritage Gardens, the Sister Cities Association of Fishers, Indiana, the Fishers Music Society, and the Fishers Freedom Festival and Parade.

The group formed in order to leverage resources and strengthen each organization. An outcome of their collaboration was to develop a master plan for the arts and culture in Fishers; a plan that would produce concepts that would further sustain arts organizations while making Fishers an even more desirable visitor destination, distinctly different from the other towns in Hamilton County. The group was interested in exploring the needs and values of residents relative to the arts; understanding the marketplace and the competitive environment; looking at the available and potential arts and performance infrastructure; and developing a long term funding plan for sustainable arts development.

PROJECT BACKGROUND, PURPOSE AND METHODOLOGY

The Alliance was awarded a grant from the Hamilton County Convention & Visitors Bureau's Destination Hamilton County Tourism Development Grant Program. The grant allowed for the retention of three consultants: Methodology, Inc. for project coordination, feasibility analysis, and the final plan; Anorlas Enterprises for land issues and real estate analysis, and Strategic Marketing and Research for a consumer opinion study. The master plan included the following steps:

- A series of five moderated stakeholder focus groups to share information, assess community needs in the areas of arts and culture, and generate ideas that could be supported by a community-wide arts organization.
- Research of market potential through an objective consumer study that would supply quantifiable data and could drive and support the arts development initiative. Secondary trend data was also examined to provide usage projections relative to Fishers cultural products.
- An inventory of arts and culture related organizations and their programming that exist within the town of Fishers and a comparison of that product with other Hamilton County communities.
- A review of market data that told the story of how people in the Fishers market area spend their leisure time and disposable income.
- An examination of land resources to determine areas that may be currently or become available for arts and culture uses.
- A study of best practices of 30 arts organizations in eight communities throughout the U.S.
- Development of a master plan, including a funding and sustainability plan, based on the above background data.

DEFINING A THRIVING ARTS AND CULTURAL COMMUNITY

The focus group participants had many ideas about what makes a prosperous community in terms of arts and culture that included experiential, physical and organizational definitions. In addition, work by the Metropolitan Regional Arts Council (Minneapolis) that sought to understand how arts activities affect and are affected by community life was studied. This report concluded that there are four stages of development: background factors, emerging development, sustaining development and mature development.

WHY ARE THE ARTS AND CULTURE VALUABLE TO COMMUNITIES?

The arts contribute to quality of life by making communities more livable. They help to define a sense of identity, a sense of place, and they serve as a vehicle for the preservation and transmission of culture. The arts help to form an educated and aware public by promoting understanding in a diverse society and by promoting the open exchange of ideas and values.

They play a vital role in the development of desirable products and increasing available choices, whether it is types of housing or leisure activities. In addition:

- Businesses looking to relocate or expand look hard at the cultural climate of locations they're considering
- The arts and culture draw visitors, and visitor spending that generates tax revenue and jobs
- The arts and culture play a large role in the lives of citizens when there is an abundance of product available, enhancing quality of life
- When a place commits to developing its arts and culture, it supports growth in the creative industries like advertising and new media development
- Great public spaces like vibrant plazas and active, pedestrian-friendly streets contribute directly to customer satisfaction and enhance the economic return for business developers, pushing up rents, reducing vacancies, and offsetting operational costs
- A city's heritage is a critical part of its arts and culture environment; that heritage and culture is found in not only the arts institutions, it is found in the community's architecture, signage, cuisine, music, traditions, ways of interacting, and in its forms of worship, recreation, and celebrations

The focus groups concluded that arts and culture are not only valuable, but critical to Fishers. They pointed out that, when a lively arts community exists, a community is better able to attract talent and young professionals, and that Fishers has an "obligation" to keep residents in the town engaged through arts and culture. They pointed out that Fishers is "growing up," that the time is right for Fishers to support its natural progression, and that "great" communities all have arts and culture. Since Fishers is made up of so many newcomers, the arts can be a unifying element and help the town become a less transient community.

The *Arts & Economic Prosperity III Calculator* offered by the Americans for the Arts website is a tool that allows cities and towns to approximate the economic impact of their nonprofit arts and cultural organizations as well as the entire nonprofit arts community. As we can see in the following table, the total industry impact for Fishers is close to \$2 million, supplying more than 52 full-time-equivalent jobs within the community. The calculator estimates that people attending arts and cultural events in Fishers spend \$22.65 on things like meals, refreshments, and lodging, excluding the cost of admission.

If the community's arts organizations could quadruple their budgets and double their attendance, the total

A community is considered "mature in its cultural evolution when:

- *artists serve as magnets for other artists;*
- *there is professionalism within the artistic community;*
- *there is growth in arts-related businesses;*
- *the arts are seen as central to community and economic development; and*
- *there are one or more facilities dedicated to the arts.*

industry impact (jobs, household income, and government revenue) would triple.

Current Estimated Economic Impact of Nonprofit Arts and Culture Organizations and Audiences in Fishers

	Total Expenditures	FTE Jobs	Resident Household Income	Local Government Revenue	State Government Revenue
Nonprofit Arts & Culture Organizations	\$250,000	7.7	\$164,398	\$8,528	\$9,738
Nonprofit Arts and Culture Audiences	\$1,698,750	44.8	\$689,081	\$67,474	\$79,077
Total Industry Impact	\$1,948,750	52.6	\$853,479	\$76,002	\$88,815

ARTS AND CULTURE TRENDS

According to the National Association of State Arts Agencies (NAASTA), an increasing number of states are establishing **arts or cultural districts**, which are defined as “special zones that harness the power of cultural resources to stimulate economic development and community revitalization.” In early 2008, the Indiana Arts Commission announced they would begin development a certification program to designate community cultural districts in Indiana.

The Project for Public Spaces (PPS) makes the case for **reinventing streets as places**. PPS offers the philosophy that cities and towns have the ability to design streets as more comfortable places for people, to reclaim their streets as gathering places, to implement transportation plans that favor people and community, and to reshape streets into places that “provide greater economic vitality and more opportunities for civic engagement.” PPS advocates that **every community needs at least one great street** that attracts residents and visitors alike.

“**Creative industries**” are composed of arts-centric businesses that range from nonprofit museums, symphonies, and theaters to for-profit film, architecture, and advertising companies. These businesses play an important role in building and sustaining economic vibrancy. As of January 2008, a Dun & Bradstreet report indicated that Indiana is home to 8,905 arts-related businesses that employ 53,924 people.

According to *The Arts and Smart Growth* by William Fulton and Morris Newman, “community building” has become a hot topic throughout the United States. As communities have struggled to strengthen themselves, the arts have often become a focal point because of their potential to connect people within a community in new ways. **Communities that are using Smart Growth values need the arts to help strengthen that community’s physical place**, and the arts need Smart Growth to help strengthen the community’s cultural fabric.

Art Calendar magazine notes that dozens of small towns and cities across the county have instituted **artist relocation programs** to encourage professional artists to move and open businesses in their communities. Many offer low-interest loans, grants, reasonably-priced mixed use properties, tax benefits, marketing assistance and other incentives specifically tailored for working artists.

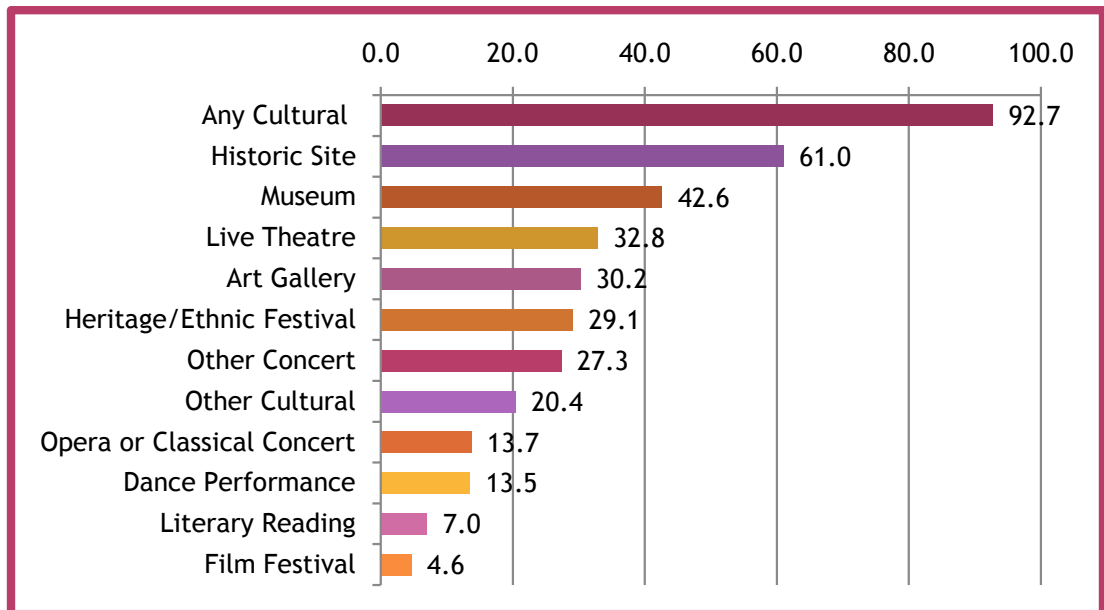
An article posted on *CausePlanet.org* discusses how the rising trend in nonprofit partnerships is impacting arts and culture organizations. It has found that mergers between organizations can be beneficial in many ways; some of the more **successful arts organization mergers** are those between advocacy organizations - those organizations whose objectives are to increase visibility and funding for the arts.

Nationally, **attendance at live performances has been on the increase**, but a RAND report attributes these increases to population growth, not the percentage of the population that attends live performances. Despite decades of effort to make high-quality works of art accessible to all Americans, **demand for the arts has not kept pace with supply**. The younger population especially appears to be more comfortable with electronic and media-delivered entertainment than they are attending live performances.

While federal funding for the arts has declined by almost 50 percent since the early 1990s, **state and local appropriations for cultural initiatives have increased in many states**. State and local grants tend to focus more on the social and economic benefits of the arts as opposed to benefiting specific artists.

In terms of tourism, research studies by the Travel Industry Association of America (TIA) has found that heritage/cultural travelers have a higher propensity to use paid overnight lodging than the average traveler, which leads to more spending in a community. A majority of historic/cultural **travelers say a specific historic/cultural activity or event was their main reason for taking a trip**. The “sameness” of the American landscape is leading people to consciously seek out unique experiences when they travel. As communities across the country continue to proliferate with franchised and big box retailers, local character is being rapidly lost. **Travel is one way Americans can find special and unique experiences**.

Number of Adult U.S. Travelers that Included Cultural Events on Trips of 50+ Miles (Millions)



MARKET PROFILE & VISITATION POTENTIAL

As of the U.S. 2007 revised Census, there were 65,382 people living in Fishers, a 73 percent increase over just seven years ago. It is estimated that by the year 2025, the population of Fishers will be more than 124,000.

Just over 57 percent of the Fishers population has household incomes between \$60,000 and \$149,999. The highest percentage of household incomes is in the \$75,000-\$99,000 bracket.

When we want to analyze the actual potential for visitation to arts and cultural events and places in Fishers, we of course want to look beyond the town limits, especially when there is a goal of not only attracting residents, but attracting new visitors. According to ESRI, an a leading supplier of reports that combine extensive demographic, consumer, and business census data with GIS technology, the

population and number of households increases dramatically within the 30-minute drive time as compared to those figures for the town of Fishers itself. Here, we see a tremendous potential for attracting new audiences. The adult population of this area is 763,782 and is estimated to be 826,504 by 2013.

The ESRI report also gives us three types of information on the sports and leisure market potential for Fishers: 1) the expected number of adults who participate in a set of activities within a 12-month period; 2) the percentage of the population who participate in those activities; and 3) the index of people participating in those compared to the U.S. average. This data allows us to create a “cultural profile” of people in the market area by combining the activities that index high compared to the general population and the *percentages* of people likely to participate in those activities.

Since “going to a movie” and “reading a book” top the list and “cooking for fun” makes the top eight, the Fishers cultural development initiative may want to consider programming and events that incorporate **motion picture viewings or events, book discussions, and the culinary arts**. Looking at how the Fishers market area performs when it comes to more strictly arts and cultural pursuits, we see just slightly above average participation (compared to national averages) in things like attending dance, theatre, or classical music performances, playing musical instruments or painting or drawing. These are the areas in which Fishers will need to concentrate on product development, education, and marketing to establish demand.

Fishers Market Area Resident “Cultural Profile”

1. Go to a movie (454,921)
2. Read a book (293,725)
3. Walk for exercise (210,496)
4. Go to a theme park (176,593)
5. Go to the beach (168,460)
6. Go to a nightclub (150,957)
7. Cook for fun (150,391)
8. Attend baseball games (105,893)
9. Lift weights (99,802)
10. Visit a zoo (99,344)
11. Go bowling (89,708)
12. Play golf (87,622)
13. Attend a rock music performance (85,523)
14. Go jogging (80,328)
15. Attend college football games (77,081)
16. Play basketball (76,660)
17. Play billiards/pool (75,582)
18. Go road biking (73,292)

CONSUMER AND STAKEHOLDER RESEARCH ANALYSIS

To understand current community usage of cultural activities, gauge support for development of the arts in Fishers, and determine a target audience for promotion of cultural attractions, Strategic Marketing & Research (SMARI) conducted a research study; there were 200 completed on-line surveys. The main take-aways from the research findings were that...

1. Ninety percent felt the development of the arts in Fishers was either very or somewhat important
2. Satisfaction with existing Fishers attractions and events is generally high, with 80 percent or more rating those experiences as either excellent or good. Activities considered “high culture” rated highest
3. Outdoor and indoor facilities for performances scored highest for having impact on potential resident participation in arts and cultural activities
4. Sixty-five percent of survey participants indicated they were very or somewhat interested in the development of a public gathering space
5. Survey participants were up to 25 percent more likely to attend festivals and performances if additional activities and venues were developed in Fishers
6. In terms of funding for the arts, 80% were either neutral or were in favor of public funding

FISHERS ARTS/CULTURE INFRASTRUCTURE

The focus groups were instrumental in helping to understand both Fishers assets and their needs in terms of its arts and cultural product. Some of their conclusions include:

- The demand for arts/culture is already there - witness the numbers of residents that are going elsewhere to get those experiences
- Fishers has been successful at staging both larger festivals and smaller special events, from the Freedom Festival to the summer concert series to the Fishers Chamber Players concerts
- Some festival and performance spaces exist, but demand for larger staging places, more parking, and affordable performance spaces for smaller nonprofits is an issue
- Fishers is fortunate to be the home of Conner Prairie, one of the nation's leading living history museums, as well as several excellent parks and new commercial developments that could become cultural assets
- Fisher's "creative retail" product lags behind that of other Hamilton County communities, although Gallery 116 is an asset that provides exposure for more than 200 artists
- The parks education programs are strong, the library provides some arts programming, Conner Prairie has begun to focus on the visual arts, and the schools provide education in all forms of music and arts, but there is a need to better interpret the Fishers story, its transportation history, and provide many more opportunities for arts programming, especially for adults
- The community has human assets that include its diverse population, its proximity to a large population base, and many talented residents that are employed in the creative industries (though those jobs might not be located in Fishers); at the same time, Fishers' history is not shared by most residents since so many are new to the area -- Fishers has "shallow roots"
- There will likely be a continued, typically suburban issue with Fishers' growth being of the predominantly of the franchise retail type, inhibiting Fishers' ability to create its own unique sense of place
- The plan for the Fishers Town Center has struggled, yet there is a clear desire for a common town gathering place
- Currently, retail is spread out in pockets that serve different neighborhoods; there is no critical mass or true center place
- Fishers is lacking a visible arts scene; the town needs to develop its character, look and feel
- Current assets are spread out throughout the community; this could be an advantage if there was some connectivity built between these areas but at the current time, it's an unhelpful situation
- Sports is seen as essential to the community; arts and culture currently not as much
- Outside of the Ambassador House, none of the Fishers cultural institutions have a single place dedicated solely to their arts and culture programming
- There is currently no central directory of arts and cultural offerings in Fishers, so awareness of arts and cultural product visibility is low
- The availability of funding from both public and private sources is always an issue

NEEDS ANALYSIS

Community leaders participating in the master planning process agreed that the time is right for the maturing Fishers community to add to its thriving sports community and develop its arts and cultural product for the benefit of its citizens and the overall economic health of the town. They have experienced places with a thriving arts and culture surroundings and want to imitate that feeling in their own town, but with a unique Fishers personality. As such, they have identified “needs” that would greatly improve Fishers arts and culture product.

The types of facilities and spaces that seem to be the most desired by the community and the arts organizations are a community cultural center, a centralized downtown, cultural districts throughout the community, and a festival or cultural park. These concepts have the most potential to build not only the Fishers arts and cultural product, but also its sense of place. Not only did the research study solidify the community’s interest in such places, they also fall in line with many of the cultural trends discussed in the master plan.

When determining what site or sites may work for arts and cultural uses, several questions need to be asked. First, where is adequate acreage available? Second, is there adequate access to the site? Are utilities present or will they be present by the time the site would be developed? It is also important to ask where the current population is and where growth is expected.

SMARI’s consumer survey asked respondents to select preferred sites on which the town might develop arts and culture attractions from a list including areas throughout Delaware and Fall Creek Townships. From that list, the existing municipal center (116th and Municipal Drive) and the Old Town area (116th Street east of the railroad tracks and Lantern Road) were most preferred by the survey participants.

In the Anorlas study, several areas of Delaware and Fall Creek Townships were considered as areas that could have potential **real estate for cultural uses**: the Municipal Center and Old Town; the Exit 5 area; Southwest Fishers including the existing airport property and the Riverplace development; 116th Street near Hoosier Road; the Exit 10 area; and the Cyntheanne Road/113th Street area. Each of these areas has its own set of challenges, but many offer exciting possibilities.

Areas that have been determined to have potential to develop into **cultural districts** include downtown Fishers, The Nickel Plate Cultural Arts Trail, the retail pocket on 131st Street, the area near 96th Street and Hague Road, the White River area between Conner Prairie and the Ambassador House, and the Geist area.

BEST PRACTICES

An important piece of the Fishers Cultural Alliance Master Plan was to study best practices of communities that have been successful with regard to arts and culture development and whom Fishers may wish to emulate.

The bulk of the best practices research included reviewing organizational structures, roles, and responsibilities of arts/culture organizations in several communities chosen by the Alliance based on the size and geographic nature of those communities. Thirty arts organizations in eight cities were chosen for study. They were: Reston, Virginia; San Antonio, Texas; Tempe, Arizona; Fort Wayne, Indiana; Raleigh, North Carolina; Columbus, Indiana; Bloomington, Indiana; and Naperville, Illinois. In summary, the findings concluded that:

- Nearly every organization has a **membership structure**. Most organizations have **large boards**, ranging from 15 to 40 members.

- **Most organizations have staff**, ranging in this study from five to 18.
- **Some arts commissions are advisory** to a city’s arts/cultural office/department which primarily provide direct funding or grants to local arts groups. Other commissions are stand alone organizations that **receive funding from a variety of sources**. Some receive city funds, some do not. Those that do not are much more program oriented. **Nearly all also award grants** to individual artists and/or arts organizations. The City of Tempe is perhaps the exception as a government model, as it not only plans but executes programs and manages performance facilities.
- **Creative funding sources** include workplace giving campaigns, a dedicated percentage of sales or food and beverage taxes, and government funding on a per capita basis.

Several of the communities studied have developed **United Arts Funds initiatives**, including Fort Wayne and Columbus, Indiana. United Arts are community-specific fundraising organizations that distribute earned funds to their arts organizations. The movement is based loosely on the United Way model with the idea that one organization is able raise substantially more than individual organizations can on their own. It is strongly recommended that the Fishers Cultural Alliance take a look at this model as it might apply to the recommended leadership organization.

RECOMMENDED ACTION PLAN

As we’ve seen from the research provided in this report, the input from many in the Fishers community, and lively discussions among Fishers Cultural Alliance members, communities that have successfully created a vibrant arts culture share many of the same qualities.

Those include, among other things, strong organization and leadership, a sense of place and a local story, programming, education, events, marketing, creative industries, performance venues, a central gathering place and cultural districts, creative retailers, nonprofits, museums and cultural places, and public and private support.

These issues, projects, and programs present a complex set of needs, including buildings, physical cultural use areas, programs, public accessibility, marketing, financial support, leadership, and many other factors. Being successful will require a long term “piecing together of parts” that will one day complete the picture of a vibrant and even more livable town of Fishers.

The conclusion, therefore, points to continued community interaction that will lead to actionable outcomes in *many areas*. This led to the concept of laying out a plan for what could emerge as a successful **leadership organization** and the development of a comprehensive **community engagement program**.

The master plan seeks to assist in that process by providing a “next steps road map.” First, the plan includes a recommended structure and focus areas for what will hopefully emerge as a leadership organization for the arts and culture in Fishers.

The roles of the leadership organization are recommended to include acting as a community resource, facilitating the development of the arts and culture product and arts education programming, supporting artists and arts organizations with both capacity building and funding, advocating for and taking positions on all matters concerning arts and culture in Fishers, and coordinating arts marketing activities.

In my own philanthropy and business endeavors, I have seen the critical role that the arts play in stimulating creativity and in developing vital communities.

As The Americans for the Arts study indicates, the arts have a crucial impact on our economy and are an important catalyst for learning, discovery, and achievement in our country.

-- Paul G. Allen, Philanthropist and Co-Founder, Microsoft

The methodology for community engagement suggests the formation of four key teams and several workgroups that will address specific issues relative to the more important and immediate topics.



It is recommended that the workgroup topics be prioritized and addressed at a rate at four or five per year. That means within four years there will be a content-rich and comprehensive plan from which the leadership organization can work and to which they can become accountable. At the same time, early successes are important; prioritizing the workgroups is critical so results will be seen in the first year.

To make certain that organized progress is maintained throughout the engagement process, each of the teams and workgroups will need professional facilitation and moderating. This assistance can come from staff and/or consultants. The facilitator/moderator will also be responsible for creating written plans with action items at the conclusion of each workgroup’s four meetings.

It is important to stress that this method is being recommended not just so that people will need to do more talking (although talking is good), but so that the Alliance can have a rock-solid set of actionable recommendations by which they can move forward quickly and attain visible results. The workgroups will address the “hard” issues like real estate location options, cost estimates and funding sources for capital projects, and sustainability models for long term success.

FUNDING AND SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

The Fishers arts and culture leadership organization has several possible alternatives to explore to secure funding for the organization and the organization's needs. Among those choices include local, state, and national grant funds, corporate donations, and individual and corporate memberships.

Support for nonprofit arts organizations comes from a montage of funding sources; a fragile balance of earned revenue, government support, and private sector contributions. According to the Americans for the Arts, nonprofit arts organizations are generally able to *earn* only half of the money it takes to sustain their operation. The other half must be raised through contributions and grants, private sector philanthropy, and government support. If the Fishers arts and culture leadership organization determines it should not be in the business of developing and producing events, that will limit its ability to produce earned income. The following sample budget includes expenses that the Alliance has agreed would necessitate funds.

Sample leadership Organization Annual Budget

Expense	Budget
Staffing (one executive director)	\$70,000
Administration/Operations	\$25,000
Grant Matching Funds	\$50,000
Re-Granting Funds	\$50,000
Seed Capital	\$20,000
Marketing & Public Relations	\$40,000
Event Sponsorships	\$100,000
TOTAL	\$355,000

With a \$355,000 budget, using the typical nonprofit arts organization percentage funding averages from Americans for the Arts, the leadership organization would need to raise dollars from various sources as follows:

Leadership Organization Potential Sources of Funding

Category	Amount
Earned Income	\$177,500
Individuals, Endowments	\$126,025
Foundations	\$17,750
Local Government	\$10,650
Corporations	\$8,875
State Government	\$7,100
Federal Government	\$7,100
TOTAL	\$355,000

The master plan addresses strategies and tactics for the different type of fundraising activities that will need to be undertaken, such as the development of case papers and pledge packets, sales strategies, grant writing, and establishing fair market values for sponsorship development, among others.

Methods for approaching corporations, businesses, individuals, and associations for support will vary somewhat, and will be dependent upon linkages and systems already in place, but all require four things: awareness and visibility, relationship building, packaging and valuation relative to the potential funders' goals, and ongoing communications.

Nevertheless, the most critical aspect to fundraising is the simplest: **manpower**. All organizations reliant upon fundraising need a dedicated person, or people, to do the fundraising work. Volunteers can help, especially those with close connections to the donor world, and their work would be

invaluable, but one person needs to have the ultimate responsibility and accountability for fundraising. In the case of the leadership organization, the executive director may very well need to find ways to fund their own salary.

The master plan includes descriptions of dozens of public, private, and corporate granting organizations that may have funds for which the leadership organization may successfully apply, as well as a section on information resources including publications, research reports, and resource “communities” in which the organization may become involved.



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