

Culture Connects All

Rethinking Audiences in Times
of Demographic Change



Partners for Livable Communities

Funded by **MetLife Foundation**

About MetLife Foundation

MetLife Foundation was established by MetLife to continue the company's long tradition of corporate contributions and community involvement. The Foundation supports programs that improve education, promote health, encourage parental involvement and family engagement, help revitalize neighborhoods and stress accessibility and inclusion. The Foundation contributes to arts and cultural organizations across the United States, with an emphasis on increasing opportunities for young people, reaching broad audiences through inclusive programming, and making arts more accessible for all people. For more information about the Foundation, please visit its web site at www.metlife.org.

About Partners for Livable Communities

Partners for Livable Communities is a non-profit leadership organization working to improve the livability of communities by promoting quality of life, economic development, and social equity. Since its founding in 1977, Partners has helped communities set a common vision for the future, discover and use new resources for community and economic development, and build public/private coalitions to further their goals. For more information on Partners for Livable Communities, please visit www.livable.org.

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Cover
Deeply Rooted Dance Theater, Dancer
Carmel Louis of *Mature H.O.T. Women*. Image
courtesy of Deeply Rooted Dance Theater and
photographer Mike Manley

Back cover
Left, Corona Plaza Fair Event, 2007. Image
courtesy of the Queens Museum of Art
Center, The Annual *Día del Niño Festival*,
Image courtesy of the National Museum of
Mexican Art
Right, Meet Me at MoMA. Image courtesy of
Jason Brownrigg, Museum of Modern Art

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A Report From Partners for Livable Communities

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MoMA

Participants of *Meet Me at MoMA*, a program for Alzheimer's patients, their families, and caregivers funded by MetLife Foundation. Image courtesy of Jason Brownrigg, Museum of Modern Art



Foreword

In my many years of research on the roles of art in communities and contemporary society, I have witnessed the efforts of cultural organizations as they strive to be ever more vital and relevant. What can they offer to communities? How can they improve quality of life? How can they be understood as essential to a region, city, or neighborhood? Partners for Livable Communities, with the support of MetLife Foundation, has made significant strides in answering these questions by emphasizing the importance of reaching out to two growing populations that often are overlooked in many American communities: older adults (over 65) and immigrants.

Through a compelling collection of insights drawn from research in Atlanta, New York, Dallas, Phoenix, Tampa, and Chicago, the authors of this report offer a useful prism through which one might re-frame the ways in which cultural organizations connect to older adults and immigrant populations. Specifically, the results of this research call for active and meaningful engagement of these populations not only as audiences but also as active participants involved in shaping the creations, presentation, and advancement of art in our society. More intentional involvement of these populations has important benefits for the participants

themselves as well as for the institutions that are wise enough to understand that the participation of older adults and immigrants is often imperative if they intend to be relevant and central to contemporary America. Certainly participants derive enjoyment, aesthetic fulfillment, and often experience their involvement in cultural activity as part of their civic engagement—connecting to neighbors, expressing their views and voice. But organizations also find that outreach to these populations can expand their participant base and range of stakeholders, opportunities for partnerships with other arts and non-arts agencies, and even opportunities for funding.

Partners for Livable Communities and MetLife Foundation offer this important report at a crucial time—when people in the arts and other fields are wrestling with how to do their best work to create thriving, vibrant communities that embody and build on the assets of all groups.

Maria Rosario Jackson, Ph.D.
Director, Culture, Creativity and
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Executive Summary

Arts and cultural organizations traditionally have two main roles: the production of arts or cultural activities, and the presentation of them to an audience. Both of these fundamentally involve people, as producers or as spectators; it is people who give cultural organizations their means and purpose.

Given this importance, when demographics change, cultural organizations must pay attention; and demographics are indeed changing. Two of the fastest growing population groups present a timely opportunity for engagement but are at risk for being ignored by many cultural organizations that could benefit from their participation.

Which are these two rapidly expanding populations? They are the rising tide of immigrants and older adults. Whether looking at the ever-increasing waves of immigration or the incoming wave of adults over the age of 65, it is clear that America's demographic makeup is increasingly diverse and proportionally older than in the past. At the same time, arts and cultural organizations in search of new audiences have primarily focused on the 'young and wireless.' While this may be one strategy for bolstering the number of tickets sold, it means that cultural organizations may be ignoring the populations that

need them most, and also ignoring a host of opportunities to increase their reach and resources in the community.

Immigrants and older adults face a number of challenges. For the immigrant community, these may include education, jobs, health, and isolation. Older adults also face challenges around finances, health, mobility, and isolation. Arts and cultural organizations not only have the ability to make small changes to help mitigate barriers to cultural participation, but also have the ability to address some of these central issues, with lasting impact, through programming and partnerships. Both these populations labor under misperceptions and stereotyping, categorized by specialized needs; but both bring knowledge, experience, and social ties as new assets for cultural organizations.

To understand whether and how arts and cultural organizations are adapting to these changes, Partners for Livable Communities researched and interviewed cultural organizations in six cities. Partners began this project building on years of experience working with cultural organizations on social and economic development. The findings are clear: organizations must look inside their programming and operations, and 'outside their four walls,' to create meaningful partnerships, partici-

pate in and listen to the community, and generally embody the spirit of being a good neighbor. The key to addressing these findings is to understand the value of mutually beneficial relationships.

While cultural organizations face increasing external pressure from funders, stakeholders, and others to demonstrate their social and economic impact, some have made it clear that community development is not their mandate. Instead, they focus on marketing and donor relations, while proclaiming their community involvement through outreach programs focused on bringing arts to the community. While these elements are and will always remain important activities, there is a much larger opportunity in creating reciprocal relationships with the surrounding neighborhood.

Arts and cultural organizations have resources that can help immigrants and older adults to become connected and valuable members of a community. By engaging with these populations in meaningful ways, cultural organizations can increase their attendance, revenues, and donor relations while simultaneously providing valuable services and expanding the reach of their arts mission. Unfortunately, too many organizations believe that ‘excellence’ and ‘equity’ are fundamentally at odds. They are not. As the many examples in this report show, community building activities do not need to get in the way of aesthetic values; indeed, understanding the community with a willingness to delve into difficult issues helps to feed the quality and impact of the arts.

Building mutually beneficial relationships means that arts and cultural organizations get involved in the community around them. They make attempts to understand major issues in the community

such as health, development pressures, or discrimination. They work with the community both inside their four walls and outside, by participating in community dialogues, events, and visions. And they do it both because it is beneficial to them and because it is beneficial to the community. On the other side, immigrants and older adults have unique assets to offer. The immigrant community often has extensive social networks and deep ties to cultural heritage, and many older adults have diverse experiences and flexible schedules to contribute to cultural activities. Both groups bring the added value of strong family and youth connections. If cultural organizations can tap into these networks and this experience, they will find audiences to sustain them far into the future.

This report briefly describes the state of the arts and culture sector, followed by in-depth examinations of the two populations: immigrants (those who are foreign-born) and older adults (those aged 65 and over). Within these discussions, the report describes some of the most salient aspects of these groups for cultural organizations, and how they can and already do engage with the cultural sector.

In the research by Partners for Livable Communities and its interviews with leaders of arts and cultural organizations in six cities (Atlanta, Chicago, Dallas, New York City, Phoenix, and Tampa), Partners found many developed, innovative programs that attract a diverse audience base, with a majority focus on immigrant and older audiences. These organizations have built a new and broader base of patrons, but they have not accomplished this through marketing alone. Instead, they have made a fundamental commitment to supporting their communities, often in fresh and novel ways.

The second part to this report defines ten recommendations for arts and cultural organizations interested in reaching out to immigrants and older adults. These are followed by valuable insights distilled from leaders of arts and cultural organizations in the six cities. These organizations were chosen because of their methods for creating arts and cultural experiences that satisfy the interests and specialized needs of their immigrant and older adult audiences.

These recommendations stimulate discussion regarding the internal and external changes made by arts and cultural organizations, to result in greatly improved programs for immigrants and older adults, while contributing to the social capital of communities.

In brief, these recommendations are:

1. Develop an Asset-Based Model

Recognize both the assets of the immigrant and older adult populations, and those embedded in the arts and cultural organizations as the building blocks for new ideas. While immigrants and older adults have special needs, they also have numerous resources from which cultural organizations can benefit.

2. Step Outside the Walls

Meet prospective audiences and partners on their own turf, and do not hesitate to use spaces outside of the organization. This will open the doors to new audiences and create an easier link for community members to visit the organization.

3. Understand the Community and its Residents

Stay on top of what is happening in the community by talking to individuals, leaders, and formal and informal groups. Avoid falling into the trap of stereotyping and instead work to understand what is different and unique about a particular neighborhood and community.

4. Build Trust, Relationships, and Partnerships

Relationships are a two-way street and cultural organizations that reach out to immigrant groups or centers for older adults need to be prepared to both offer, and receive, in equal amounts.

5. Develop Intentional and Inclusive Programming

“Community Relations” should not be its own segregated organizational department. Arts and cultural organizations should integrate programming relevant to community issues into their normal line-up and into their education efforts. To the greatest extent possible, all programming should be designed to be inclusive and appeal to the broadest audiences. The choices arts and cultural organizations make should be informed by their carefully acquired understanding of potential audiences and by evaluating the benefits to them.

6. Value Audiences and Volunteers

Audiences are also marketers, community members, and neighbors, and must be valued as the reason for an arts and cultural organization to exist. Immigrants and older adults benefit from volunteering, and many have the experience, expertise, and knowledge of their communities to be invaluable resources to arts and cultural organizations. Volunteer opportunities, however, must be structured to accommodate their interests and experience.

7. Eliminate Barriers

Every step of the process—from developing a program, to its scheduling and marketing, ensuring the safety and accessibility of the venue, as well as the hours when it is offered, and creation of the program in one dominant language—is critical to determining the accessibility of an arts or cultural event. Offering multilingual



programming or building an access ramp creates accessibility once patrons are on the door step, but will not break down greater barriers to entry such as lack of access to ticketing websites, programming scheduled at inconvenient times, or the preponderance of culturally insensitive space.

8. Develop Marketing Strategies that Build on Relationships

Marketing strategies can build on relationships in a variety of ways. A smart marketer targeting immigrant or older adult audiences for an arts and cultural event, for example, will select words, pictures, and images for marketing materials that suggest a relationship between their interests and the institution's coming events. Marketing materials for a program featuring older adult dancers would be missing a major selling point if they do not have pictures of the dancers performing in costume. One of the most powerful marketing tools is to stress a relationship—the close affiliation between the prospective audience and the host organization.

9. Assess the Organization from the Inside

To intentionally engage immigrants and older adults involves the entire organization. It takes ensuring that the entire staff and board of directors are committed not just in principle but through strategic

plans, job descriptions, and team building. One of the most visible and informative statements of arts and cultural organizations is the mission. Does it clearly embrace all community members? It is critical that arts and cultural institutions assess their missions, take into account changing demographics, and pay close attention to major implications of the shifts in population. An institution that fails to do so, large or small, may find that its audience is shrinking and that its events are no longer relevant.

10. Be a Leader and Good Model—Collaborate Outside the Arts and Culture Sector

Arts and cultural organizations do not want to get stuck in a narrow framework that limits their creativity, especially when designing programs for new audiences. Some of the most exemplary programs for immigrants and older adults collaborate outside of the arts and culture sector to partner with institutions and organizations in fields such as health, science, and education. Leaders of arts and cultural organizations will initiate such partnerships with organizations previously identified as having little in common, showing the benefits of cross-sector collaborations. ■

The Latin American Association

The Latin American Association sponsors *Inspira!* youth programs, which provide a range of services including a four-week summer camp created to improve academic achievement for Latino students and engagement in the visual arts, dance, and drama. Image courtesy of the Latin American Association

“Arts and cultural organizations struggle to find ways to connect with the older adults in their community.”¹

The National Museum of Mexican Art

The annual *Día de los Muertos: Rooted in Tradition* exhibit is attended by thousands of people. *Día de los Muertos* is a Mexican holiday honoring those family and friends who have passed away.

Image courtesy of The National Museum of Mexican Art



Introduction: Building Audiences While Serving Community

The Status and Opportunities for Arts and Cultural Institutions with Older and Immigrant Populations

In the next two decades, the number of adults age 65 and older in the United States will double to more than 70 million. This upward trend is also true of the immigrant population: between 1990 and 2007, the foreign-born population increased from 19.8 million to 37.9 million², a trend projected to continue. Immigrants now account for one in eight U.S. residents, the highest level in 80 years.³ Between 2000 and 2007, 10.3 million immigrants arrived in America—the highest seven-year period of immigration in U.S. history.⁴ Among the foreign-born population, 20 percent or six million people, are 55 or older, with Asian and Latino elders comprising the fastest-growing segment of this population.

For organizations that provide opportunities for arts and cultural participation, these demographic trends represent an opportunity to expand their audiences and take leadership positions in their communities. Culture plays unique roles to knit the fabric of communities, connect disparate groups, and build social capital. Yet, despite the tremendous demographic changes of the past 20 years, the audiences for arts and cultural activities have not significantly increased or broadened. Though arts and cultural leaders recognize this fact, engaging new audiences beyond their core

is one of the central challenges facing arts and cultural institutions today.⁵

A Civic Transformation—and an Opportunity for Arts and Cultural Institutions

America is experiencing a second great immigration wave. Unlike the first great wave of immigration at the turn of the 20th century, which was concentrated in urban areas, 21st century immigrants are finding economic opportunities in all parts of the country, including the Midwest and Southeast as well as the traditional immigrant magnets of New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles. Congruent with the iconic founding of our country, immigration continues to be the major force at work behind America's diversity.

Even as America continues to become more culturally and ethnically diverse, another population wave is coming: the aging of the baby boomers. Beginning January 1, 2011, the first of an estimated 78 million baby boomers turned 65 years of age, followed by 11,000 more each day for the next twenty years. The number of adults age 65 and above will almost double between now and 2030—one in every five Americans in the United States will be 65 and above; ten million Americans will be age 85 and above.⁶

These two massive demographic waves will intersect, as the older adult population itself will become far more diverse. The number of older Latinos will quadruple to reach 8 million people; and the older Asian population will grow from 1 million in 2003 to 4 million in 2030.⁷

The changes that these demographics bring are affecting and will continue to affect our communities and core civic institutions. Public schools, for example, are facing increasing pressures to educate a more diverse population of students. Local and state elected officials are legislating for and seeking the votes of a much more diverse constituency and a more complex web of interest groups. For the school superintendent who has to meet an ever-rising bar for academic achievement with an ever more diverse student body with growing needs, or the city council member who has noticed more Latinos and senior citizens at neighborhood meetings and hearings, adapting to new demographic realities is a necessity.

Many immigrants experience the American cultural scene not as opportunities to be explored, but as a set of barriers to be overcome.⁸

So it is for arts and cultural institutions. To develop their audience and donor base, attract new sources of institutional funding and political support, and increase public support for the arts, arts and cultural institutions must creatively adapt to the age wave and the immigrant boom as critical and growing parts of the country's changing demographics.

Even as the communities around them are rapidly changing, the audiences for arts and cultural organizations are not keeping pace. Only one in every ten visitors to a

museum is a person of color.⁹ Participation rates in the "benchmark" arts of jazz, classical music, opera, musical theater, ballet, theater and visual art are actually declining.¹⁰

Seen in this light, the aging of the baby boomers and the explosive growth and diversification of America's immigrant population are major tests for how cultural institutions will adapt to changing demographics. These indeed are two of the most marked demographic trends in the country both today and over the next 20 years.

More broadly, these demographic trends are among the most politically visible and potentially polarizing. Without more inter-generational programs that engage older adults in the civic lives of their communities, many older adults can easily become isolated. When mechanisms for empowering immigrants and giving them a sense of belonging in their communities are not available, anti-immigrant sentiments are more easily exploited, and immigrant populations are more vulnerable. By providing outlets for creative expression and building bridges connecting different groups in their communities, arts and cultural organizations can position themselves as critical community institutions and catalysts for positive community change.

Engaging "new" audiences who may think of "art" and "culture" differently, often requires deep changes in organizational practice and sensibility within arts and cultural institutions. This is ongoing work requiring strong community partnerships and a finger on the pulse of changing communities. It requires different skill sets than those traditionally associated with arts production, marketing and education—often akin to community organizing.

Yet throughout the country, this work is getting done, with fruitful results. A wide

By providing outlets for creative expression and building bridges connecting different groups in their communities, arts and cultural organizations can position themselves as critical community institutions and catalysts for positive community change.

variety of arts and cultural institutions have increased their audience base and attracted new funding and community support through creatively engaging older adults and immigrants. They have also positioned themselves as catalysts for positive change in their communities, giving themselves stature and “heft” among decision-makers. These change-making institutions put arts and culture in a new light—as a critical ally, a community resource and connector, and a builder of social capital in communities characterized by their diversity.

America’s cities and metropolitan areas are thriving on this growing diversity and rich cultural mix. Whether it is the Sun-belt, the Southeast or older Northeastern and Midwestern regions, metropolitan growth is being fueled by immigrants and the aging of the baby boomers. This report highlights the innovative work of arts and cultural institutions in six cities, all of which are being profoundly affected by America’s age wave and immigrant boom.

The Changing Nature of Arts Organizations: Moving Beyond Marketing

Much like every institution, organization, and corporation throughout the United States during the deepest recession since the Great Depression, arts and cultural organizations are at a critical juncture in ensuring their sustainability into the future.

However, the current economy is not the only or even major cause for this reexamination of the arts’ role in our society; over the last 30 years, the field of arts and culture has expanded from what many think of as the traditional ‘high art’ nonprofit model that flourished in the mid-20th century. When discussing ‘the arts’ today, people might mean any number of things: from the traditional ‘high arts’ of established organizations, to smaller, localized, more recently

According to the Americans for the Arts’ 2009 National Arts Index, in 1960 there were less than 7,000 arts organizations. As of 2009, there were more than 104,000. Some of the themes and trends of the 2009 study showed that:

- 1 The arts follow the business cycle. The arts respond to the booms and busts of the nation’s economy. Based on past patterns, it is estimated that an arts rebound will begin in 2011.
- 2 Demand for the arts lags supply. Between 1998 and 2008, there was a steady increase in the number of artists, arts organizations, and arts-related employment. Nonprofit arts organizations alone grew in number from 73,000 to 104,000 during this span of time. That one out of three failed to achieve a balanced budget even during the strongest economic years of this decade suggests that sustaining this capacity is a growing challenge, and these gains are at risk.
- 3 How the public participates in and consumes the arts is expanding. Tens of millions of people attend concerts, plays, operas, and museum exhibitions, yet the percentage of the U.S. population attending these arts events is shrinking, and the decline is noticeable. On the increase, however, is the percentage of the American public personally creating art (e.g., music making, and drawing). Technology is changing how Americans experience the arts and consumption via technology and social media is also up.
- 4 The competitiveness of the arts is slipping. The arts, in many ways, are not stacking up well against other uses of audience members’ time, donor and funder commitment, or spending when compared to non-arts sectors.¹¹

created institutions, to for-profit enterprises, to the informal arts participation that occurs on every block in America.

Cultural organizations and activities face a variety of pressures around fundraising, marketing in the new media, audience development, and even more deeply sustaining a purpose. For example, large, established organizations requiring major grants from foundations and individuals are finding: increasing competition for these funds and attention, increasing maintenance and labor costs, fewer audience members able to pay high ticket fees, a reduced value of the 'cultural capital' that patronage of their institutions provides, and difficulty in adapting old methods of administration to new media and marketing strategies.¹² Mid-sized arts organizations face similar challenges, with the added difficulty of an increased reliance on grants that are issued with less regularity than those for the larger, entrenched organizations.

Many in the arts world recognize that the old model of doing business no longer applies and, subsequently, are adjusting their practices to appease funders and audiences alike. For funding, arts and cultural organizations are learning how to speak a new language of 'impact and outcomes,' where instead of focusing on excellence they must quantify and qualify value to their target audience. In terms of audience development, cultural organizations must adapt to the idea that the old days of season ticket holders and traditional marketing campaigns are no longer enough to keep the doors open.¹³

Marketing and audience development have always been important parts of the sustainability of arts organizations. In particular, over the last 20 years the number of studies on audience development has grown exponentially, with an increasing

focus on new media, building relationships, and young and diverse audiences. Arts organizations are told they must understand their purpose within a community, reach out through popular channels such as social networking sites, and create programs that are more attractive to the 'next generation' of arts audiences.

Within this abundance of advice lies a smaller, but critical set of voices that is urging a shift from thinking about building audiences to building communities. The challenge for cultural organizations in this model is to understand community engagement, not as getting the community engaged with the institution, but as actually engaging with the community in a mutually beneficial relationship. For many cultural organizations, this can be harder than it sounds—it means fundamentally changing how the organization operates and dedicating resources to activities that may not be directly funded as a part of core programming. It may also mean becoming involved in political, social, and economic issues in the community often buffeted with turmoil, complex power dynamics, and competing intentions.

The rewards for overcoming these challenges are what make the effort worthwhile; instead of relying on traditional arts funding sources, organizations gain independence and the ability to seek out new grants from human services agencies, community development interests, social justice organizations, and more. As their interest and involvement in the community grow, so too does the investment of the community in the organization, which means more people through the doors, more volunteers, and more attention from those in power. There may be increased interest from community-based organizations representing diverse sectors to partner with

Instead of having to rely on traditional arts funding sources, organizations become able to seek out new grants from human services agencies, community development interests, social justice organizations, and more.

the arts organizations, bringing in more resources and opportunities. Furthermore, as more people become engaged with the organization, they gain political clout and supporters which may result in increased public funding and involvement in planning efforts. While these benefits can be considered tangential to their arts missions or goals of excellence, they are critical to sustaining the organization.

The current focus on young populations is not without great merit; they are seen as the ‘growth audiences’ and as more unengaged than their older counterparts. However, even while the rates of participation by younger audiences in certain sectors of the arts are declining, leading to what many organizations call ‘the graying of audiences,’ it does not mean that arts and cultural organizations can neglect the older generations and other growth markets where their impact may be greater. These audiences not only represent potential growth areas for cultural organizations, but also stand to gain some of the greatest benefits from enhanced participation in the arts as a result of the increased social capital, civic engagement, and skills development that participation in the arts encourages.¹⁴

This report explores the current trends in audiences, the challenges and opportunities that these groups present, and describes various strategies that cultural organizations can—and do—use to reach out to these populations in a meaningful way.

The Changing Face of America: A Snapshot of Today’s and Tomorrow’s Immigrants

Forty years ago, only one in every five Americans was a member of a minority racial or ethnic group. In 30 years, one in every two Americans will be a member of what are today’s minority groups. In just two generations—a historical blink of an eye—America is being transformed from a predominantly white, European-origin country to an ethnically, racially, and culturally pluralistic society. Whether in Oklahoma or New York City, diversity of culture, race, and ethnicity permeate everyday experiences through creative expression on the radio, the Internet, schools, cultural institutions, and other popular forums for culture.

With over 38 million people, the U.S. immigrant population today is higher than at any other time in America’s history. Yet over the coming generation this number may more than double, and immigrants and their U.S.-born descendants are expected to account for 82 percent of the country’s population growth.¹⁵ Who are today’s American immigrants, and what will the picture of America’s immigrants look like 10, 20, or 40 years from today?

More than half of America’s immigrants come from Latin America. More than 11 million, or 30 percent, come from Mexico. While Mexico has historically been a leading country of origin for America’s immi-



The Latin American Association

The *ilnspira!* youth programs provide a range of services designed to improve academic achievement for Latino students including out of school time arts and academic enrichment programs.

Image courtesy of The Latin American Association

grants, the past two decades saw a marked increase in Mexico-U.S immigration. Today, two of every three Latino Americans—more than 30 million people—are of Mexican origin. Cultural critic Gregory Rodriguez observes, “Cumulatively over time, Mexicans have surpassed Germans to become the largest immigrant group in the history of the U.S.”¹⁶

Twenty-four percent of America’s immigrants come from Asia, and Asian Americans are the second fastest-growing minority group in the country. From 1.4 million in 1970 to 11.9 million in 2000, the group that now comprises four percent of the U.S. population will become eight percent by the year 2050.¹⁷ The Philippines (1,685,000), India (1,627,000) and China (1,339,000) are the leading Asian countries of origin.¹⁸

Far from an aberration, the immigration boom of the past two decades is expected to continue. The Pew Research Center estimates that the U.S. immigrant population will rise by 67 million between 2005 and 2050. Within the next 15 years, the Center estimates that 15 percent of the population will be foreign-born, the highest proportion of immigrants in the country’s history.¹⁹ The Latino population alone is expected to rise to 128 million people—accounting for 60 percent of the country’s population growth during this period.²⁰

America’s immigrants are finding homes and opportunities in all parts of the U.S. While the traditional gateway states of California, Texas, and New York contain more than half of the country’s immigrants, the highest rate of immigrant population growth has taken place in the Southeast. Just between the years 2000 and 2008, Georgia’s immigrant population increased by roughly 60 percent, as did that of South Carolina.²¹

Even with so many different immigrant groups in so many different locations, there are still a number of similar challenges that immigrants of all kinds face. Robert Wood Johnson’s 2006 report, *Living in America*, provides a good summary of these common challenges.

The first is education. A lack of English proficiency is universally a major barrier and can make it difficult to navigate transportation, health, emergency, and educational systems in the United States. Many schools are ill-equipped to deal with the language barriers experienced by youth, who consequently fall behind their English-speaking peers. Furthermore, immigrant students whose families move frequently due to innumerable factors such as lack of employment, housing, or proximity to family, have problems readjusting to different school systems. Finally, children of immigrants often face discrimination or lack of cultural understanding, not just from their fellow students but from teachers and the administration as well.

As a related issue to education, many immigrants face challenges both in finding first jobs, but later in finding jobs that hold the opportunity to advance up the socio-economic ladder. With less English proficiency and a lack of traditional American education, immigrants face stiff competition from American counterparts for similar jobs, particularly in tight job markets, and often must settle for “last resort” jobs that are both unwanted and provide little or no opportunities for advancement. Difficulties of procuring adequate education and employment often compound to problems in finding adequate housing and accessing needed resources.

A third major challenge is a lack of access to social services, particularly health. This results both from a lack of documen-

While immigrants often engage in cultural expression that is central to their identity, they are less likely to take advantage of established cultural organizations.²³

tation for some immigrants, eligibility for immigrants who are not yet full citizens, or a lack of understanding or mistrust of government systems. For many immigrants, preventive care was not and is not possible; thus they potentially face more problems with chronic conditions, only worsened by greater stigmas around getting treatment for such conditions.

Finally, the challenges and situations of many immigrants often result in isolation, both physical and social. Where public transportation is not readily available and car ownership requires large investments, many immigrants experience barriers to access jobs and basic needs such as grocery stores not within walking distance. Even those able to purchase a car may have trouble driving that car legally, with driving tests in English, extensive personal documentation required, and the expense of registration and insurance. Immigrants also often face social isolation as a result of long working hours and stress about finances or situations in their home countries. Immigrants may also find themselves distant from their own children as their children become more Americanized.²² In addition to these specific challenges, at every step of the way many immigrants face discrimination and a general lack of cultural understanding and sensitivity.

Immigrants and Cultural Organizations

All of these challenges relate to cultural organizations, either as barriers to overcome or as opportunities for advancement. If cultural organizations wish to expand their audience and their social impact with immigrant populations, understanding these challenges and other factors of immigrant lifestyles is critical. Cultural organizations have the ability to tackle many of the challenges immigrants face while celebrating diversity. To do this, they need to overcome the barriers to participation in their programming and offer welcoming and culturally sensitive space.

While many immigrants engage often in informal arts and cultural activities such as music-making, immigrants attended only half as many formal cultural events as residents born in the United States.²⁴ Furthermore, on a survey of 300 immigrants from various backgrounds in Silicon Valley, over 50 percent of the individuals answered ‘yes’ to the question of whether they considered themselves an artist.²⁵ This suggests that not only are cultural organizations overlooking immigrants as a potential audience, they are also overlooking them as potential creators and presenters. Somewhere there exists a disconnect between the way that cultural organizations operate and the way in which immigrants participate in cultural events.

Immigrants come from all socioeconomic backgrounds and vastly different cultures from around the world. The chal-

challenge for arts and cultural organizations is that there is no 'one size fits all' approach to bridge this reality, and indeed making assumptions about an individual or group without understanding their particular background can easily lead to alienation and charges of stereotyping. In one study of Latino arts and cultural participation (not limited to foreign-born), many Latinos felt that they were not often marketed to, and when they were, they were seen as a "monolithic 'Mexican' market rather than as modern consumers who reflect the cultures of many Latin countries in addition to Mexico."²⁶

Age, wealth, education, country of origin, legal status, length of time in the U.S., and level of assimilation all present different challenges in understanding potentially engaged individuals. With these differences in mind, process becomes as important as content. Creating programming that is relevant to different immigrant groups is most effective when engaging directly with that target group.

One common element that many immigrant groups do often share regardless of background is strong networks of social organizations and culturally-specific support systems, which are excellent mechanisms for identifying volunteers, marketing programming and other opportunities, and keeping in touch with common tensions and interests within particular groups.²⁷

These networks have a number of key leaders or activity nodes that can become entry points for cultural organizations to begin navigating the landscape of their local immigrant populations. Immigrant women, in particular, have been shown to take a strong leadership role in community building for men, youth, and families, and thus are an important entry point for cultural organizations.²⁸

A study of immigrant populations in Washington, D.C., *Lessons Learned about Civic Participation among Immigrants*, suggested that there are a number of other structures that may play a role in the civic and social networks of various immigrant groups. These include structures:

- That preserve culture and language (cultural centers, language classes, and others)
- That build on religion and spirituality (spiritual institutions)
- That address professional and other specific concerns (immigrant affairs, ethnically-based professional associations)
- For mass communication (ethnic media)
- For integration (ESL classes, citizen workshops)
- That build on economic concerns (clusters of ethnic businesses, lending networks)
- That preserve traditional leadership (elders, pastors, midwives, and others)²⁹

Given the overlap between cultural activities and these structures, many cultural organizations have an advantage over other types of groups to make headway in partnering or reaching out through these networks. Cultural organizations are often able to appeal to intergenerational concerns and audiences. This is attractive for many immigrants that have very strong family connections and seek out activities that can involve multiple generations.³⁰

It is not only cultural organizations that can benefit from engaging immigrants; immigrants benefit from engaging with cultural organizations as well. Newer immigrants might find that cultural organizations are the best way to connect with mainstream institutions such as schools

and social service agencies. They may then have greater confidence in connecting with other important educational, health, and vocational systems.³¹ Civic participation or volunteering in one group helps to build the skills and capacities that lead to more effective involvement in other groups, and helps develop leaders within communities that understand how systems function.³²

The Silicon Valley survey referenced earlier also notes that arts are valuable for communicating cultural traditions, maintaining family cohesion, promoting physical health, or making social or economic connections.³³ In terms of the wider community, a series of focus groups on immigrant integration in Los Angeles also identified the critical need for community organizing with immigrants that involved both immigrant and non-immigrant groups learning about and from each other, noting particularly where there are tensions.³⁴ Much of Partners for Livable Communities' Shifting Sands Initiative, which worked with community-based arts organizations, was based on the notion of bridging tensions between diverse communities, on the principle that cultural organizations have unique capacities to translate experiences and values in a neutral and meaningful way.

These benefits represent the power of engaging with arts in general, but there is also great opportunity for cultural organizations to create programming that is targeted to specific immigrant needs. For example, these may include programs that help immigrants learn English and computer skills through the arts, programs that focus on mental health and community building through the sharing of experiences through the arts, or programs that educate about wellness through the arts. Instead of focusing on educational

programs for youth as what falls under 'outreach and education' departments, cultural organizations have an opportunity to expand their offerings in ways that can help integrate foreign-born populations and improve their relationship with U.S. cultures and systems.

The Older Adults of Tomorrow and Today

Americans are enjoying longer and healthier lives. Today, there are more than 35 million Americans age 65 and above—a tenfold increase since 1900.³⁵ Over the next two decades, that number will double, and one in every five Americans will be age 65 or older.

The "baby boom" generation of adults born between 1946 and 1964 will define aging in America during the next two decades. Compared to previous generations of older adults, the baby boomers are much more likely to live into their 70s, 80s, and even 90s.³⁶ Baby boomers are also more likely to continue working after age 65, the country's standard age for retirement. Having come of age in the 1960s and 1970s, the baby boomers experienced, and helped shape, dramatic changes in the country's mores and social landscape. They are also likely to reshape the experience of aging.

Civic Ventures, a national organization committed to solving social problems using the talents and expertise of older adults, says that "never before have so many Americans had so much experience—with so much time and interest in using it," and calls this phenomenon the 'experience dividend.'³⁷ The organization asserts that there is a new stage of life, resulting from improved health and longevity, which follows traditional retirement. In this new

phase, the opportunity to contribute a lifetime of experience to meaningful causes results in new careers, interest in volunteering, and other forms of engagement in civic and cultural matters. However, this generation is finding that it has to pioneer many of these changes while local governments, civic institutions, and arts and cultural institutions struggle to create these opportunities quickly enough.

Furthermore, a far more racially, ethnically, and culturally diverse America characterizes the 1960s and 1970s. The boomers came of age and matured during a time when America began its transformation to a society based upon diversity and cultural pluralism. And mirroring the society as a whole, the coming generation of older adults is far more racially and ethnically diverse than previous generations of older Americans.

This diversity represents another new set of challenges for older immigrant populations. As the Center for Intergenerational Learning at Temple University discovered, “Though human service practitioners and researchers are beginning to recognize the benefits of connection and contribution, both for individuals 50+ and for the larger community, scant attention has been paid to the characteristics of civic engagement among foreign-born elders.”³⁸ Older foreign-born adults often simultaneously face the pressures of being immigrants and of growing old in a society not optimized for their needs.

Thus, there is both a growing population of older adults with experience, resources, and capacity to engage with society in new ways, and a growing population of older adults who become increasingly vulnerable and powerless as they struggle to navigate U.S. human service and health systems. To make things even more com-

plex, one could easily fit into both of these categories.

There are some common challenges that face many older adults; the first of these is finances. With older adults living longer, the need for savings, Social Security, and help from family takes on a new importance. The second and most common challenge is health, which becomes the main focus for many older adults as regular, everyday ailments become serious and sometimes life-threatening. Health challenges take shape both in an individual’s physical debilitations, as well as financial means for securing health care and insurance, taking deep tolls on the savings of many.

The third challenge, which often is an outcome from health issues, is a lack of mobility and resulting isolation. The availability of transportation and proximity to family and friends enhance or limit opportunities available to older adults and their mental health. Isolation and a lack of mobility hinder an individual’s real sense of and practical ability to engage. Older adults want and deserve to lead meaningful lives enabling them to contribute to the welfare of their families, communities, and to observe their own cultural traditions.

Older Adults and Cultural Organizations

Arts and cultural organizations have a unique opportunity to enrich the lives of older generations and provide needed resources, while also mutually benefiting from their involvement in programming. Arts organizations may slight their older audiences by assuming that they can retain interest and patronage without any additional effort. In fact, cultivating older

Whether partnering with cultural institutions, arts organizations, academic and medical institutions, government agencies, or a combination of them all, partnerships are the root of every successful effort to engage older adults through culture and the arts.⁴⁰

audiences requires close attention to their preferences, schedules, and needs. And organizations that take their older audiences for granted may miss opportunities to enlist their talents and experiences on the organization's behalf.

The participation of older adults in arts and cultural activities is often limited by the barriers some face as a result of mobility, health, and cost. Some solutions are relatively straightforward: offering matinees or reducing costs for special programs can attract a substantial number of older adults. Other solutions may require more planning. To improve access to venues for those with mobility limitations, arts and cultural organizations have established partnerships with transportation providers or social service agencies. The venues themselves must be accessible and compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act, to ensure that those with disabilities can enter and exit safely.

In addition to these considerations, Civic Venture's *Blueprint for the Next Chapter*, challenges community organizations to offer the following options:

- Meaningful engagement through work and service
- Continued learning
- Peer and community connections
- Employment
- Leadership development
- Relationships, whether social or familial
- Spirituality
- Technology and information literacy
- Wellness³⁹

Through a combination of expanding and redefining volunteer opportunities, creating programming that provides participatory, intergenerational, and interactive elements, and improves accessibility, arts and cultural organizations can address each of the above components to more fully engage older populations.

The good news for cultural organizations is that institutional loyalties stabilize during mid-life and most boomers these days intend to remain in their communities instead of moving elsewhere.⁴¹ Additionally, a study by the Center for Intergenerational Learning attributes five major motivations for civic engagement led by older immigrants: the desire to 'give back,' the need for connection and purpose, their faith, the desire to influence younger generations and preserve their cultures, and an aspiration to address community concerns.

Arts and cultural organizations, then, have a great opportunity to sustain a connection with older adults over a long period of time, more than they might have with a younger, more mobile and less settled generation. Older adults, particularly grandparents, are often responsible for introducing younger generations to the arts.⁴² A number of theater companies and arts organizations have developed intergenerational programming, to bring family members of all generations together.

As older adults may have more time, more disposable resources, and more experience than younger adults, arts and cultural organizations that find ways to

engage them in their enterprise will find them an invaluable resource. It is important to note that the coming wave of older adults has very different expectations than previous generations. Those now aging are interested in working on their own terms.⁴³ They are likely to respond to volunteer programs that support their communities, or serve a very important cause, and take advantage of their knowledge and expertise—or the chance to participate in a brand new role that has long intrigued them.

While arts and cultural organizations benefit from new audiences and volunteers, older adults benefit as well. They enjoy an enhanced quality of life as participants in the arts. A groundbreaking study initiated in 2001 by the Center on Aging, Health and Humanities at The George Washington University assessed the impact of community-based cultural programs on the

physical and mental health of adults 65 and older. It was the first study of its kind and concluded that those engaged in arts and cultural activities reported a higher overall health rating, fewer doctor visits, less medication use and fewer instances of falls.⁴⁴

By another measure, exposure and participation in artistic activities is an outlet for some older adults that enables them to communicate more easily and establish stronger connections with others. Isolated older adults and those suffering from long-term diseases such as dementia, are catered to by specific arts-based outreach programming, as shown in some of the Best Practices. Because people relate to the arts on an emotional level, the communication barriers of older adults whose language skills or memory are diminished may be bridged when they hear music, or study a painting, or watch and join in a dance. ■

Building Livable Communities for All: Bringing Everyone Together

The advantages to arts and cultural organizations of larger audiences and increased sustainability resulting from greater patronage by immigrants and older adults are significant, as is the positive influence of the arts on immigrants and older adults. The groundbreaking 2002 report, *Gifts of the Muse*, additionally makes a convincing case that the presence of arts and cultural institutions in communities and participation in them contributes even more broadly to building social capital and greater economic health.

Gifts of the Muse, in its quantitative research-based assertions, argues that participation in the arts promotes social interaction and a “sense of community identity,” and may influence increased civic participation and volunteerism. The economic consequences, this study argues, include greater employment, increased spending and the strong draw to people and businesses of communities that offer ample arts and cultural opportunities.

Perhaps the most salient point from *Gifts of the Muse* is its description of “communal meanings,” that “convey what whole communities yearn to express. Examples of what can produce these benefits are art that commemorates events significant to a nation’s history or a community’s identity, art that provides a voice to communities the culture at large has largely ignored...”

It is very important to keep in mind, as *Gifts of the Muse* stresses, that expanding access to arts and culture for immigrants and older adults benefits the entire community. As they engage in arts and culture, immigrants and older adults form stronger ties with their community, enrich their experience of it and participate in its social networks. With their increased sense of belonging, the bonds of community are made more secure. Their engagement with arts and culture enhances the economic health of the community, builds its social capital, and makes their community more livable.⁴⁵

Queens Botanical Garden
As an urban oasis in one of the most culturally diverse counties in the nation, Queens Botanical Garden celebrates the connections between people and nature through 39 acres of inspiring gardens, innovative educational programs, and demonstrations of environmental stewardship. Image courtesy of Queens Botanical Garden Staff



Ten Recommendations for Arts and Cultural Organizations: Engaging Immigrants and Older Adult Populations

Immigrants and older adults are a collectively monumental portion of the United States population, attributed with diverse values, varying economic resources, and very different challenges. Fortunately, arts and cultural organizations have many tools at their disposal to engage immigrants and older adults in programs that enhance their lives—while simultaneously contributing to organizational sustainability. For this report, the most significant practices and insights cited by arts and cultural organizations are reflected in the following ten recommendations. These recommendations establish guidelines for ensuring that arts and cultural programs are inclusive, accessible, and relevant to specialized populations. These recommendations also demonstrate that arts and cultural organizations can contribute substantially to the building of social capital in their communities.

Many of these recommendations are also relevant for populations other than older adults and immigrants. However, these two groups often face more serious obstacles to participation in arts and culture than others do. Whether the barriers are mobility issues, language, the time of day when programs are offered, or many of the other issues discussed in this report, arts and

cultural organizations may find ideas and new approaches in the following pages. With imagination and perseverance, arts and cultural organizations can attract immigrants and older adults as new audiences, as talented and engaged volunteers, and as artists themselves.

The recommendations establish guidelines for ensuring that arts and cultural programs are inclusive, accessible, and relevant to specialized populations. The recommendations are not meant to be prescriptive. Every arts and cultural institution is situated in a complex environment with many factors influencing its choice of programs. Each organization makes very important decisions about its future programming goals and its relationship with the community. These recommendations are intended to provoke thought and to suggest models rather than define a precise approach.

Along with a description of each recommendation, two arts and cultural organizations are listed as examples, or best practices. The listings are labeled with page numbers to locate brief summaries of organizations' successful methods. Readers interested in a specific recommendation may quickly find organizations that have put a recommendation into practice. ■

Best Practices

The Academy Theatre
Atlanta
Page 42

Life Enrichment Center
Tampa
Page 87

Recommendation 1: Develop an Asset-Based Model

Use a broad range of assets to benefit the organization's programming

An asset-based model of community development first recognizes a community's valued assets before identifying its needs and problems as a positive approach to change-making. This model can be used to recognize the significant assets offered by immigrant and older adult populations as well as those embedded in arts and cultural organizations. Immigrants and older adults have unique experiences and talents from

which arts and cultural organizations can benefit, but these populations have often been defined by their special needs, or a deficit-based model of community development. However, in the past couple of decades many community-based organizations have made a shift to asset-based development, recognizing how to build on those assets for a stronger future.

Snapshot: Understand Your Assets

Arts and cultural organizations can identify unique assets that can be used to engage audiences and deepen their community presence. For Queens Botanical Garden, the physical space is its core asset, providing a verdant community gathering place in a dense urban environment. Deeply Rooted Dance Theatre in Chicago doesn't own a physical space, but its multi-dimensional approach to dance is a unique asset that it has tailored to teach dance to older adults.

While fulfilling the needs of those who are vulnerable is still critically important, harnessing the assets of specialized populations provides arts and cultural organizations with a very different perspective, one that can ultimately expand their human and financial resources. For example, many immigrants have particularly strong social networks through which information is spread informally, but rapidly, via word of mouth (a great marketing vehicle), and older adults often have time that they can dedicate to volunteer activities.

A focus on human, financial, and community assets is important for arts and cultural organizations in examining their own programming and operations.

Recommendation 2: Step Outside the Walls

Conduct programming in central and relevant community spaces

No arts and cultural organization can fully understand its community and audiences if it remains within its four walls. Prioritizing outreach to meet audiences and community partners on their own turf can lead to building stronger relationships, a better understanding of the community, and increased levels of comfort. Extending programming or conducting meetings in multiple locations will be an effective way to reach new audiences, and may entice the community to visit the organization's home base.

Arts and cultural organizations may gain more traction with specific groups if they provide initial programming in places where community members routinely congregate. One Urban Institute Cultural Participation Survey showed that “three out of the four places most frequently named by the respondents who attended arts and cultural events” were community spaces, to include open air spaces, schools and colleges, and places of worship.⁴⁶ Programming in public parks and other public

spaces can serve as an excellent gateway and introduction to an organization.

Creating important presences in their communities, arts and cultural institutions can be good and valued neighbors; their influence extends well beyond their four walls, and it is important that their presence be intentional and positive. The best arts and cultural institutions make deep investments in the social capital of their communities.

Snapshot: Activating Public Space

The Queens Museum of Art's (QMA) *Corazón de Corona Initiative* aims to improve the health of residents by partnering with a local hospital to offer free health screenings at festivals in nearby Corona Plaza. Over 1,500 documented and undocumented residents have been screened and another 1,200 have signed up for low cost or free health insurance.

Best Practices

The Queens Museum of Art
New York
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Patel Conservatory at the
Straz Performing Arts Center
Tampa
Page 89

Best Practices
Deeply Rooted Dance Theater Chicago Page 51
The Latin American Association Atlanta Page 44

Recommendation 3: Understand the Community and its Residents

Keep the organization current on community issues—listen to residents and community leaders and respond with relevant programming

It is not enough to think that all populations have the same problems or that one community is just like another. Incorrectly stereotyping populations, particularly immigrants who may have significant resources or older adults who may be fit and full of wisdom and experience, can potentially cause more harm than doing nothing at all. Asking questions and being

willing to listen are the first steps toward greater understanding. Most people working in cultural organizations have some sort of cultural sensitivity; this ‘cultural IQ’ can help organizations understand unique cultural aspects of their communities or neighborhoods.

In addition to cultural backgrounds, socioeconomic factors, and other indicators such as health and age, there are a number of less quantifiable factors that are useful to understand. Learning about local social networks and talking with key leaders and leadership nodes in communities can provide valuable entry points to finding out about a community’s values, challenges, and ongoing tensions.

Snapshot: Listening and Responding

Big Thought of Dallas discovered the importance of understanding community values when community organizers canvassed neighborhoods largely composed of immigrant families and received blank stares at the mention of “art.” “They were telling us, ‘Art is not something I do,’” said Erin Offord of Big Thought. “But when we framed it differently, and asked them what they *did* do, art was very much a part of their lives.” For Big Thought, that shaped the development of new community-based art programs such as quilting and folklórico dance classes.

Many immigrants face a sense of being an outsider, and many older adults feel like they have been forgotten as their mobility decreases. Cultural organizations can look to basic community organizing principles to learn how to ‘pound the pavement’ or sit in meetings to get a sense of the community. Some of the most common gathering places for immigrant communities and older adults are religious institutions, civil rights organizations, professional associations, financial and lending circles, neighborhood associations, community centers, and cultural clubs. Participating in community meetings, encouraging dialogue as a part of artistic presentations, and having individuals from the target population on the board and staff can also deepen this understanding.

Recommendation 4: Build Trust, Relationships, and Partnerships

Prioritize significant relationships and partnerships with individuals and organizations to build trust, and connect to the community through meaningful and sustainable methods

Relationships are a two-way street, and as arts and cultural organizations reach out to immigrant groups or to older adults, they need to be prepared to give as well as receive. Having a relationship with partners and prospective patrons does not mean that a cultural organization engages with the community only when it is convenient for them, or only engages through artistic programming. Instead, relationships with the community must rely on reciprocity, and cultural organizations may have to exceed common expectations in order to respond to the community.

By providing available resources to respond to community issues, arts organizations may ensure that they are not seen as exploitative when the situation is reversed. This can be particularly difficult for organizations that rely heavily on programmatic grants, as they can be tempted to limit their involvement with community partners only when resources are readily

Snapshot: Building Relationships

There is no substitute for going into the communities, identifying community leaders and building relationships with them. Curtis King, Community Relations Director of Kenny Leon's True Colors Theatre in Atlanta, is a regular at luncheons and meetings with ministers and other community leaders, making connections and using them to connect new audiences with the Theatre's programming. As the liaison between communities and the Theatre, he gets candid feedback to take back to his colleagues. He has forged successful partnerships with senior centers and assisted living facilities: these institutions benefit from being able to offer new activities to their clientele, while the theater fills seats during off-hours.

These relationships are built over time and have to be nourished, becoming stable from constant trust and sustainability, regardless of grant periods. Going to one community meeting is a good start, but showing up every week will make a much greater statement about the commitment of the organization to the community.

available. There are many opportunities for cultural organizations to effectively partner with local social service agencies, community organizations, and local networks and associations. These partnerships can take the form of exchanging services, such as providing discounts on tickets for members of certain groups, or using arts programming to provide dance instructors to a senior center to help keep older adults healthy and active.

Best Practices

Queens Botanical Garden
New York
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Big Thought
Dallas
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Recommendation 5: Develop Intentional and Inclusive Programming

Make programming participatory and relevant to the community

Engaging with target communities is not just a matter of marketing but should be infused into the organization's core programming. The programmatic choices an organization makes should be informed by an acquired understanding of their prospective audiences and by evaluating the potential benefits to both the patron and organization. These include ensuring that programming is relevant to people's lives, is of high quality and convenient to access, connects to identity in terms of race, ethnicity, religion, and cultural heritage, and allows for participation and interactivity.

Infusing regular cultural programming with these principles does not compromise artistic integrity and allows for a deeper connection of audience to program—a critical part of the mission of most cultural organizations. While it does not mean that organizations need or have the capacity to fulfill expectations for all people, being inclusive does require consideration of a community's profile: its general age ranges, languages spoken, racial and ethnic composition, income levels, and social needs that the arts and cultural organization can provide.

Arts and cultural organizations can find ways to make a majority of programming, particularly arts education, relevant to immigrants and older adults. Certain types of art lend themselves well to conveying a wide range of topics important for immi-

Snapshot: Using the Arts to Address Adversity

When the National Museum of Mexican Art produced an exhibit examining African influences on Mexico, they knew they were hitting some raw nerves and exposing tensions around race in surrounding communities. Community leaders were not completely ready to have the dialogues the exhibit was aiming to engender. And that was exactly the point. The NMMA was the leadership institution that stepped up to challenge its core audience of Mexican Americans and convene African American leaders to address a complex and even taboo subject. It was a highly risky project that required a lot of community credibility and painstaking partnership building. But in addressing such a tough subject, the NMMA brought its leadership and influence to a new level.

For some cultural organizations, this might seem too big of a departure from the main mission. However, this type of programming has the potential for significant rewards to the target populations as well as to the organization in the form of new funding, increased audiences, and greater visibility within the community. All this adds up to greater sustainability.

After developing strong relationships in the community, cultural organizations have a vast pool of resources on which to draw for selecting new programming and artists which draw new audiences. Regardless of whether a cultural organization is a large opera house, or a small gallery, the organization does not always have to present art to the community but can present it with the community. Integrating opportunities to share local, formal, and informal arts will increase the investment of local artists and neighbors in the organization.

Snapshot: Programming *with* the Community

When the Phoenix Art Museum was planning to host an exhibition of post-Chicano art, the Museum's leadership reached out to its local Latino arts community to develop a twin exhibition showcasing local Latino artists. They identified a range of leading practitioners of "high" and "low" art forms and integrated these local art works in their permanent collection.

Finally, it is important to start small and consistently readjust and deliver on what is being promised. The job of developing relationships with new populations will not be finished after one large theme program, but is rather achieved through actions that build on each other over time. Many cultural organizations make the mistake of holding an annual Seniors Day or Cinco de Mayo celebration or Chinese New Year and expect that to take care of everything in one fell swoop. Instead, creating meaningful programs that are long-term with specific goals, measures, and outcomes is a more effective methodology.

grants and older populations including technology, health and wellness, life skills such as critical thinking and confidence, language, leadership development, and more. At the very least, providing arts education opportunities that are affordable and accessible help build a potential audience for the cultural organization's main programming.

The area of programming that cultural organizations are least likely to be involved in is programming that addresses community issues. This type of program requires considerable intentionality as it involves identifying a set of community-based outcomes and then applying the skills or assets of the cultural organization toward those outcomes. An example of this is arts-based health programming that can range

from exhibits and therapeutic art classes to partnering with a local hospital to conduct health screenings. Many organizations have also had success in simply adding opportunities for community dialogue around the main cultural programming as a platform for diverse people to come together to discuss issues of identity, aspirations, conflict, and more.

Best Practices

Phoenix Art Museum
Phoenix
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Ollimpaxqui Ballet Company
Dallas
Page 59

Big Thought

Free field trips to Dallas museums and cultural centers are offered year-round to students, parents, and children providing interactive arts, exercise, and cultural activities throughout the city.
Image courtesy of Big Thought



Recommendation 6: Value Audiences and Volunteers

Curate audiences to represent community, and create meaningful volunteer positions to correspond with offered skills and assets; compensate with intangible or in-kind benefits

Audiences are not merely “bodies in seats” as the colloquial phrase suggests; on any given day, they are representative of the community on which arts and cultural organizations depend. They are word-of-mouth marketers, volunteers, and active, communicative members of the commu-

nity. Arts and cultural organizations need both to respect their current audiences—and figure out who is missing.

For example, if an arts and cultural organization targets a younger or more affluent audience, those older or less affluent populations will not feel valued and therefore are less likely to patronize the organization. If more respectful overtures are made to these left-out groups, such as cost-reduction for special occasions, or adjustment of hours and programming, these populations can become enthusiastic patrons. Additionally, organizations can tailor their programs to establish greater rapport with audiences through additional measures such as taking questions from the audience after a theater performance, or demonstrating the elements of a dance. Giving patrons a hands-on approach to learning various art forms has proven to be very popular, while some arts and cultural institutions sponsor fairs, forums, and other free events that can attract new audiences—and foster loyalty.

Best Practices

The Arizona Science Center
Phoenix
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Tampa Museum of Science
& Industry
Tampa
Page 90

Snapshot: Valuable Volunteers

The Arizona Science Center routinely called upon volunteers to act as docents, but when it was discovered that some were retired scientists, electrical engineers, and information technology experts they recruited them to volunteer in new roles as teachers and mentors. Tampa Museum of Science & Industry has leveraged over 100,000 volunteer hours to keep connected with the community.

Both immigrants and older adults benefit from engagement with civic institutions, either as an entry point to civic society or for continued involvement with people and places outside of the home. For both groups, but especially for older adults who may have more time available, volunteering can be a very satisfying experience. Volunteers are often vital to an under-resourced organization’s daily functioning and productivity, and it is important to value those regular volunteers through in-kind compensation such as free or discount program tickets.

Many of today’s volunteers are recent retirees, retaining expertise in specialized areas that can support the operations of an arts organization, or enable them to participate directly in the organization’s artistic or cultural mission. Volunteers are likely to respond to volunteer programs that support their communities or target populations that are significant to them. Additionally, volunteers are apt to serve a very important cause specific to their knowledge and expertise, or even in programs which offer them the chance to participate in a brand new role that has long intrigued them.

Recommendation 7: Eliminate Barriers

Adapt programming or organizational practice to remove barriers to access

Every step of the process in program development—from scheduling and marketing, safety and accessibility of the venue, language and translation, cost of tickets, and programming hours—is critical to determining the accessibility of an arts and cultural event. Offering in-language programming or building a ramp will not be enough if prospective patrons cannot access ticketing websites or are not available at the time of a program.

Access to arts and cultural programming begins with access to information, or the ways in which community members learn about an event. The technological revolution has led to many organizations' almost exclusive on-line marketing, from email invitations to endless social media venues. However, many older adult and immigrant populations lack routine access to the web; in hopping on the social media bandwagon, many cultural organizations leave behind their biggest audience base.

Once community members receive access to event information, language is often one of the biggest barriers to participation. Many organizations offer bilingual performances including translation in marketing and program materials, as well as subtitling throughout the arts program. However, language is not just an issue of translation, but of contextualization and

Does Your Venue. . . ?

- Welcome someone who may not be comfortable with the norms of U.S. cultural organizations?
- Allow opportunities for socialization, which is a significant part of creating a community and a meaningful experience for many people?
- Have diversity both in terms of staff and in the audience?
- Have easy to read signage/wayfinding in multiple languages?
- Conform to the Americans with Disabilities Act and has places to sit for older populations?

familiarity with the arts world; there exist other ways to cross the language boundary. Some organizations offer programming using a particular art form, such as dance, suited for varying interests or experience levels which help to contextualize the work in a way that diverse audiences can appreciate. Additionally, resolving any language barriers for older adults may be as simple as increasing the font size of programs and guides and providing more verbal contextualization during the programming.

Best Practices

Artreach
Dallas
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ASU Gammage
Phoenix
Page 80

Snapshot: Timing it Just Right

ASU Gammage in Phoenix added a Sunday matinee performance because it worked better for older theatergoer's schedules and frequently reviews its compliance with Americans with Disabilities Act standards. Kenny Leon's True Colors Theatre in Atlanta created weekday matinees to attract an intergenerational audience of both older adult groups and student groups.

The location and timing of arts and cultural events can be significant barriers to many. Older adults in particular face challenges of mobility both with public and private transportation, and may benefit from programs that provide alternate transportation options through churches, community centers, or peers in the community. As a possible solution, some organizations take their "show on the road," or transport audiences to a venue. The timing of events is also very important. For example, older adults may be inclined to attend events at earlier times and when they are less crowded.

Recommendation 8: Develop Marketing Strategies That Build on Relationships

Develop marketing strategies to promote inclusion of community, through methods of communication and in central locations used by all of the community members

Marketing strategies can build on relationships in a variety of ways. A smart marketer trying to reach immigrant or older adult audiences for an arts and cultural event, for example, will select words, pictures and images for marketing materials that suggest a relationship between their interests and the institution's coming events. Marketing materials for a program featuring ethnic dances, for example, would be missing a major selling point if they lacked pictures of the dancers performing a traditional dance, in costume. One of the most powerful marketing tools is to stress a relationship—the close affiliation the prospective audience has with what an organization has to offer.

Immigrant and older adult populations often have different communication networks than others, and finding the most highly used locations and methods of communicating can take extensive research, or inquiry into the community. One of the most valuable assets to marketing departments is word-of-mouth, especially when the words are coming from leaders and other well-connected individuals in a community. The Urban Institute study on cultural participation showed that “people who participate frequently in arts and culture tend to be such connectors and thus represent a path of engagement for others who participate infrequently in arts and culture or not at all.”⁴⁷ Networking, be it via computer, conversations in a local coffee shop or during a meeting maximize the

potential for these kinds of relationships. And for arts and cultural organizations, getting the desired message out by way of the “connectors” is critical.

Another effective strategy is publicizing an event in traditional and ethnic media, or for older adults, through highly rated newspapers, newsletters, and television. Placing or distributing marketing materials in central locations for both the older adult and immigrant communities such as libraries, churches, schools, and community and senior centers, is significant to spreading the organization's visibility. As just getting the word out is not always enough, a report by *Research into Action* describes that there is a difference between making people aware of an event and making them feel that they are “invited” to it.⁴⁸ Shaping messages that highlight the relevance of an event for specific audiences can overcome initial resistance and inspire interest.

The most powerful tool, however, can be an arts and cultural organization's role in the community. The organization that values its community, builds its social capital, and becomes a welcome, familiar and inclusive presence can more readily stimulate the interest and patronage of its members. The relationship is reciprocal: The arts and cultural organization that has created strong bonds with a community will find that its leaders and members become “marketers” themselves on behalf of the organization. While they spread the word, they can also provide important feedback that informs an arts and cultural organization about the community's preferences and expectations.

Snapshot: Creative Marketing

Arts and cultural organizations can call upon their creativity and resourcefulness to “market” their wares. Staff members of the Dallas Museum of Art meet with prospective audiences in locations all over Dallas, speak their language, and invite them to events at the Museum.

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Recommendation 9: Assess the Organization from the Inside

Institutionalize community-based strategies throughout the organization

For many cultural organizations, targeting immigrant and older populations may represent a significant change in organizational strategy. Being intentional to engage communities involves the entire organization; ensuring that the entire staff and board of directors are committed not just in principle but through strategic plans, job descriptions, team building, and more. Some organizations may even reexamine their missions to be more inclusive, while other organizations will find that all of these activities fall clearly within their arts-based missions by widening the impact of their art form. A cultural organization does not need to be a community-based organization to effectively engage older and immigrant populations, but if it wants to have an engaged audience and resource base within the community, it needs to ensure it is providing some value.

Furthermore, cultivating diversity begins at home, which means a staff that is reflective of today's communities. A culturally and racially diverse staff does not solely equip an organization with the needed qualities for intentionality and inclusiveness, but it can make great strides in developing effective relationships and

Snapshot: A Comprehensive Approach

Pregones Theater in the Bronx has from its beginning focused on its formerly underserved Puerto Rican and Latino populations in the neighborhood, and the Theater's staff, artistic directors and artists have focused collectively on their stake in enriching the lives of the residents of the Bronx community where it is located.

understanding social customs and needs. Board development often includes a certain amount of attention to diversity in regard to race or gender, but does not always pay as much attention to age and country of origin. Significant value can be found from inviting older adults or immigrant representatives to sit on the boards of cultural organizations, which can help keep the organization in-tune with and dedicated to engaging these populations meaningfully.

Lastly, it is critical that arts and cultural institutions assess their missions, take changing demographics into account and pay close attention to the implications of demographic shifts in their communities. An institution that fails to do so, large or small, may find that its audience is shrinking and that its events are no longer relevant, while older adults and immigrants are becoming increasing presences in most American communities. Arts and cultural institutions ignore them at their peril. For many, however, efforts to attract immigrant and older populations may require a transformation in organizational strategy.

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Recommendation 10: Be a Leader and Good Model—Collaborate Outside the Arts and Culture Sector

Use the arts as a tool to collaborate beyond arts and culture in other fields

Arts and cultural organizations do not want to get stuck in a narrow framework that limits their creativity, especially when designing programs for new audiences. Some of the most imaginative programs for immigrants and older adults are the consequence of arts and cultural institutions collaborating with organizations with which they may seem to have little in common.

Snapshot: Extraordinary Programs Lead to Extraordinary Outcomes

The Museum of Modern Art in New York, in its *Meet Me at MoMA* program for Alzheimer's patients and their caregivers, is a model for museums in this country and around the world. Alzheimer's patients, who may have been very withdrawn, will begin speaking, prompted by the art. "Often you can't tell who has the disease and who is the caregiver."

In some cases, however, common interests are easily identifiable. For arts and cultural organizations planning to expand programming appealing to older adults, conversations with the many groups and agencies representing their interests are a good first step. Those seeking stronger connections with an immigrant community would find it very helpful to contact groups that understand their culture and preferences.

It takes time, in any collaboration across sectors, to identify exactly where the convergence lies between concepts promoted by an arts organization and the perspective of those who represent older adults and immigrants. The first ideas that arise may not be accepted or workable, but continued discussions can be fertile ground for imaginative and innovative thinking.

There are very practical reasons for arts and cultural organizations to collaborate outside their own sector. The relationships they develop, and the programs that result, can attract the attention of funders whose missions focus on the delivery of arts and cultural programming to immigrants or older adults.

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MoMA

Meet Me at MoMA, a part of MoMA's Alzheimer's Project funded by MetLife Foundation.

Image courtesy of Jason Brownrigg, Museum of Modern Art



Best Practices of Arts and Culture Institutions in Six Cities: Atlanta, Chicago, Dallas, New York, Phoenix, and Tampa

The six cities featured in this report were selected for their diverse demographics and innovative approaches as observed by their arts and cultural institutions. The arts and cultural organizations narrated in the following pages represent a great variety in their artistic expression, purpose, and the communities in which they serve and partner; but they all share in common the commitment to offer programs to immigrants and older adults that break-down barriers and enrich lives.

Through research and interviews conducted by Partners for Livable Communities with leaders of the arts and cultural organizations, certain practices and insights emerged as important building blocks for successfully engaging immigrants and older adults. Because the organizations range in size and capacity from small dance troupes to major museums, their practices and insights are not “one size fits all;” but in their totality can be a great source of ideas for organizations seeking to reach out to immigrants and older adults. ■

The Latin American Association

Performance by Emory Tango Ensemble at the Latin American Association's *La Tentación del Tango* event, one of several annual events hosted by the EnLAAce Program throughout the year that attract diverse, intergenerational audiences to lively evenings of music, dance, and art while showcasing cultural heritages of Latin American countries.

Image courtesy of Sarah Marske, The Latin American Association



Atlanta: The Old South and the Modern Metropolis

A city whose roots are firmly planted in the history of the South, Atlanta has become a modern metropolis boasting the busiest airport in the world. Atlanta mixes Southern charm with busy highways, sky scrapers, and sprawling suburbs.

Home to several Fortune 500 companies, Atlanta is the second fastest growing metropolitan area in the country—only Dallas is growing faster. The city population has increased by 1.1 million people during the last eight years alone. More than 5 million people live in the 20-county metro region, but it is expected that by 2040, that number will grow to 8.3 million.⁴⁹

The city's rapidly increasing population is owed in large part to the immigrant population, but as have many living in the Atlanta region, immigrants tended to settle in the suburbs. The Brookings Institute's

Atlanta in Focus: A Profile from Census 2000, notes that "For every new foreign-born resident the city of Atlanta added in the 1990s, its suburbs added 21."⁵⁰

One major obstacle to accessing the arts and culture community, characteristic of sprawling suburbs such as Atlanta's, is a lack of mobility and transportation. Many older adults do not drive at night or have relinquished their keys; and the heavy cost and incurring paperwork of automobile ownership is one that many immigrant families cannot afford. To assure that they have access to services and the arts,

Immigrants Dramatically Increase the Population of the Atlanta Area

- The Atlanta Area's population in 2009 was 4,124,300, larger than that of 24 states.⁵¹
- According to the 2009 U.S. Census estimate, Hispanics comprise 10% of the metropolitan region's population.⁵² From 2000 to 2009, the Hispanic population increased by 99.6%.⁵³
- Asian-Pacific Islanders make up 4.3% of the metro region population.⁵⁴
- In 2008, the percentage of Black or African American persons in the city of Atlanta was estimated to be 55.8%, with 38.4% white, 4.9% Hispanic, and 1.9% Asian.⁵⁵
- "According to the U.S. Census, Atlanta has experienced the most rapid Hispanic growth rate of all major U.S. metro areas during these years [past two decades]."⁵⁶

Metropolitan Atlanta's Older Adult Population

- According to the Atlanta Regional Commission, the older adult population in the Atlanta region doubled between 1970 and 2000.
- Between 2000 and 2015, it will double again.
- By 2030, one in five residents will be over the age of 60.⁵⁷
- From 2000 to 2005, the older adult population grew by 30.6%, more than double the growth rate of the total population (13.7%) during the same period of time.⁵⁸
- 8.8% of the city of Atlanta's current population is age 65 and above.⁵⁹

government agencies and community organizations must focus outreach efforts on creating cross-county and even cross-city partnerships. This is especially needed in exurban areas, where public transit may not be available at all.

As they develop arts programming that is culturally relevant and appealing, arts and cultural institutions often face the challenge of ensuring that their prospective audience has transportation access to their venues. If the organizations are to attract a large number of immigrants and older adults, they may have to depend on independent agencies or services that can transport their audiences, or create the transportation services themselves.

The arts in Atlanta are very well represented; ranging from large museums, galleries, and theaters, to small neighborhood venues. The Atlanta Community Foundation offers a thumbnail sketch of an arts and cultural scene that holds great variety and richness. While the ACF asserts that the most recognizable “[cultural] icons are the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra and the Hip Hop recording industry,” it clarifies that “for people from the Atlanta metro area, the cultural landscape is much more complex, with a dizzying array of activities spread over a large geographic area.”

The Foundation takes great pride in the opportunities Atlanta offers to residents and visitors alike to enjoy the arts. It notes the presence of an art museum, theatre companies, and a symphony, and adds that “the city is home to opera and ballet companies, a puppetry center, multiple regional theatre companies, chamber orchestras, modern dance companies, choral ensembles, nonprofit art galleries and community centers. Experiences for participation are available to persons regardless of age, gender, ethnicity and physical ability.”⁶⁰

Larger venues such as the Woodruff Arts Center, the Atlanta Ballet, Theater of the Stars, the Atlanta Opera, the National Black Arts Festival, The Children's Museum, Callanwolde Fine Arts Center, and Theatre in the Square in Marietta fill the need for grander scale productions. However, approximately 50 medium size arts organizations and 200 that are smaller can experiment in niche markets and feature programs that are accessible to Atlanta's diverse cultures and far flung neighborhoods. The Atlanta area's many colleges and universities add to the array of choices, as do community arts centers that mix classes, performances and galleries. ■

Kenny Leon’s True Colors Theatre Company: Engaging the Community
Best Practice: Develop Marketing Strategies That Build on Relationships

Kenny Leon’s True Colors Theatre Company is located in the Southwest Arts Center, a neighborhood facility that serves the African American community. Founded and directed by Kenny Leon, a veteran African American director who directed *A Raisin in the Sun* on Broadway, True Colors is well known in Atlanta for its arts and cultural entertainment.

Leon has been named one of the “Top 20 Southerners to Watch” by the *Financial Times* and has received Tony awards and nominations for over five productions. After directing the Atlanta Alliance Theatre and a move to New York to pursue a career on Broadway, Leon returned to Atlanta to start True Colors Theatre and focus on the African American theater canon.

True Colors does not operate as a silo of arts entertainment separate from the interests of the community. Curtis King, Director of Community Relations for the Theatre, immerses himself in the community and is present at everything from the weekly Concerned Black Clergy meetings to community forums with local civic leaders. He networks diligently and makes the Theatre a familiar and welcome presence—and he conveys his findings about community needs, preferences, and interests to Leon. He has found that the arts “open a door—when people learn I am with the Theatre they open up, they feel like they are being invited to something.”

To reach the older adult community, King developed a directory of all community-based organizations serving those 65 and older to create sustained channels of communication. Using the directory, he

built lasting relationships with influential leaders of faith-based organizations, senior centers, and church ministries—all institutions which have routine contact with older adults. Through his close relationship with the community, King also builds goodwill, which is important in developing new partnerships with funders, policymakers, and other key stakeholders.

In meeting with organizations that serve the older adult community, King makes sure to represent the mission of the Theatre and its pertinent appeal to older African American audiences. By making connections with church ministries, for example, King tapped into the powerful sense of community and strong member-base that African American churches engender and brought to True Colors. By actively engaging in the life of the community, King becomes a very accessible link to the Theatre and what it offers.

For True Colors, older adult audiences are a critical constituency, and the Theatre has enhanced its programming to attract this growing population. A new weekday matinee, with doors open at 2:30 P.M., is attended by groups of students and older adults alike. The Theatre often sells out the matinees, validating its success in building an audience.

King has made it his job to make the Theatre an integral participant in the network of organizations that support the community. With little budget for promotion, King must be constantly visible to community members, act as the eyes and ears of the community, and continue to act as liaison between the diverse community and the Theatre.

Key Lessons:

True Colors Theatre develops a true understanding of its community, long-lasting relationships with community partners, and knows its audience.

- Formed relationships are used to shape Theatre programming and its marketing of productions to accurately reflect and relate to community interests, and attract target patrons.
- True Colors views itself as a “neighbor” and benefits from engaging with the surrounding community, while Curtis King acts as a community liaison to create a constant human presence that can break down barriers.
- The purpose of True Colors Theatre is not solely to be a provider of entertainment and the performing arts, but to make a vital contribution to the community.

“Theaters will say that they can’t do without older audiences. But ask them if they hire older actors, and they will be much more equivocal.”

Robert Drake, Artistic Director, The Academy Theatre

The Academy Theatre: The Performing Arts as an Inclusive Cultural Hub

Best Practice: Develop an Asset-Based Model

Founded in 1956, The Academy Theatre is the oldest professional theater in Georgia. The Theatre has always been imbued with a social and community vision as well as dedication to artistic excellence; it was the first professional theater in the South to be integrated. Since the late 1970s, the Theatre has produced, in addition to contemporary and classic plays, programs focused on social problems, and has worked with a variety of community partners, such as the DeKalb County Drug Court.

The Academy Theatre has been a breeding ground for drama talent and leadership, and can count among its talented alumni, directors of four major Atlanta theaters. With a strong commitment to community development, the Theatre tailors its performances to meet the needs of the surrounding area.

The Thoroughly Modern Senior Ensemble embodies the Theatre’s recognition of older adults as an invaluable asset: the ensemble features 12 to 18 older adult performers and is described as “refreshing, upbeat, musical, and moving, *The Thoroughly Modern Senior Ensemble* offers honest and entertaining views of living, loving and aging.” Mira Hirsch, artistic director for the Jewish Theatre for the South (JTS), brought the program to the Academy Theatre when JTS closed. Initially all Jewish,

the ensemble now includes a full racial and cultural mix of actors.

Performing dramatic reinterpretations of real life, the ensemble often focuses on relationships between generations. In one performance, the actors break into two groups, with one group reciting a letter from a grandmother to her unborn granddaughter, while the second group recites contrapuntally a letter from a grandfather to his unborn grandson.

Any given ensemble show consists of several sketches. The performers write their own material, with support from Hirsch, and one out of every four meeting sessions is dedicated to writing new material. The ensemble has performed at schools, community centers, prisons, senior centers, and other community venues, which provide commissions for their performance.

Robert Drake, the artistic director of the Theatre, says that Academy Theatre seeks both a diverse audience and diversity in choosing its actors. Though participation in the ensemble is by audition, Drake estimates that only 40 percent of the ensemble members have professional acting backgrounds; the others work concurrently in other professions or are retired.

Drake comments on the significance of the relationships that the ensemble encourages. These actors “not only enjoy performing, but they have made bonds of friendship. You make special bonds performing and creating, bonds that are often missing in older people’s lives. This is helping them not only live, but also to thrive.”

Key Lessons:

- The Academy Theatre uniquely harnesses as one of its strongest assets the growing older adult community which is most commonly defined by its needs; the Theatre understands tapping into this community unleashes a breadth of endless life experiences, yielding stories often untold, that contribute to make a great theatre.
- Older actors have great appeal to a wider, diverse audience: older adults, families, and an all-ages audience find commonality in these shared experiences.
- *The Thoroughly Modern Senior Ensemble* gives older adults a chance to be in the spotlight and to alter the perceptions of aging for some of the audience. A 16-year-old boy, after seeing this show, said that “I see my grandparents more as real people.”
- If a cultural organization focuses all of its attention on younger or more affluent populations, the older and less affluent will feel less valued and will influence the thinking of their peers negatively.

Kenny Leon’s True Colors Theatre

The weekday matinee at Kenny Leon’s True Colors Theatre, beginning at 10:00 a.m., serves an older adult population otherwise unable to attend the Theatre performances during the evenings.

Image courtesy of Kenny Leon’s True Colors Theatre



**The Latin American Association:
Keeping the Latino Heritage Alive**
Best Practice: Understand the Community
and its Residents

An extremely important community group and liaison with Latino immigrants, The Latin American Association (LAA) defines itself as the “leading service provider for Latin Americans in metro Atlanta.” With outreach centers in three locations, Atlanta, Marietta, and Norcross, the LAA’s vision is remarkably ambitious. It “seeks to further the full integration of all Latino immigrants into American society as workers, family members, students, and leaders into a community that welcomes them and values their contributions.”

The LAA takes a very broad view of its work in assisting Latinos to participate fully in American society. For the LAA, assimilation does not mean the abandonment of Latino arts and culture. In fact, its approach is very much the opposite. The LAA creates a myriad of opportunities for those from Latin American countries to celebrate their vibrant heritage. At the same time, however, it devotes some of its resources to meeting the many needs of immigrants in the Atlanta area. The range of services offered includes community and family support, assistance with immigration rights issues, language and educational programs, Spanish classes, and services for individuals and families living below the poverty line.

The Latin American Association promotes traditional and modern Latin American song and dance, movies, art, and theater. In the *Siente Latino* program, the LAA offers classes in acting and Latin dance for children. For adults, the curriculum boasts classes in painting and drawing, as well as classical guitar and Mexican

Folklore dancing. Salsa classes, for everyone from beginners to advanced, are one of the LAA’s most popular offerings.

The LAA also sponsors *¡Inspira!* youth programs, which provide a range of services including a four-week summer camp created to improve academic achievement for Latino students. Each summer around 300 students are instructed in math and science, take weekly field trips, and participate in daily exercise. The importance of the arts is fully recognized—*¡Inspira!* also engages participants in the visual arts, dance, and drama.

The LAA also hosts its EnLAAce series: several events throughout the year that feature a lively evening of music, dance, and art, while showcasing cultural heritages of Latin American countries. In 2010, themes included Cuban art, music, dance, and Peruvian folklore, artesanía, and traditional song. Argentina was celebrated through Tango lessons and performances by the Emory Tango Ensemble and the Tango Orchestra Club of Atlanta, attracting a diverse audience from the local community and beyond.

The *Latin Fever Ball*, the Latin American Association’s largest fundraising event, highlights a different Latin American country or theme each year. In 2010, the theme was “España: Descubre la Pasión,” with flamenco guitar and dance performances as well as Spanish cuisine. The Amazons were featured at the 2009 *Latin Fever Ball*, “Misterios del Amazonas,” which included traditional dance and food from the Amazon region of South America.

Atlanta is a city where collaboration has become a way of life. The LAA’s partnerships, which number in the hundreds, have proven to be a great boon to the LAA members. They have had the chance to enjoy the Atlanta Symphony perform

Venezuelan works, attend a series of Latino films, or take their children for a tour of the Children’s Museum of Atlanta, conducted in Spanish, or for a Latino Day at the zoo.

The Atlanta area’s Latin American immigrants bring with them their inheritance of a rich, distinctive, colorful, and diverse culture and artistic sensibility. This binds them as a community—and enriches those with whom they share their heritage.

Key Lessons:

- The LAA focuses on intrinsically understanding the community. All of its programs, including social services and arts and culture, incorporate strategies that address holistically the needs of the LAA’s Latino members.
- The Latin American Association recognizes the deep human need to participate in arts and culture that affirm one’s heritage—and confirms for them the great importance of the arts and culture of their origins.
- While supporting assimilation, the LAA celebrates Latino heritage, and very importantly, includes all generations.
- The LAA opens its doors to all community members and in doing so builds bridges of understanding between diverse cultures.



The Latin American Association

La Tentación del Tango event is one of a series of events sponsored by the EnLAAce program, highlighting the cultural, artistic and musical contributions of Latinos in Atlanta.

Image courtesy of Sarah Marske, The Latin American Association



The National Museum of Mexican Art

The Annual *Día Del Niño Festival* draws over 14,000 children and their families, and begins with a one mile health walk ending at the University of Illinois Pavilion to accommodate the great growth in participants. The Festival combines the arts, with social and health awareness.

Images courtesy of The National Museum of Mexican Art

Chicago: Building on Its Many Assets

While its Midwestern counterparts struggle to attract jobs and new residents, Chicago continues to grow. Always a diverse city, historically defined by waves of first-generation immigrants, it is no less so defined today. Chicago is characteristically known for its well-defined ethnic neighborhoods, populated by descendants of those who immigrated during the 19th and 20th centuries.

Chicago is also host to a great range of arts and cultural organizations, including its major attractions: the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and Lyric Opera, the Art Institute of Chicago, the Museum of Contemporary Art, the Field Museum of Natural History, and theaters in Millennium Park. Additionally, Chicago is home to hundreds of smaller arts venues, some that are tucked into Chicago's 77 discrete neighborhoods. According to the Chicago Office of Tourism, the city has more than 50 museums, over 200 theaters and nearly 225 art galleries, among many arts organizations and facilities.

While immigrants continue to settle in Chicago, its arts and cultural community has recognized and harnessed a leadership role to adapt to the sweeping changes in the area's demographics. The Chicago

city government has been innovative in fostering partnerships to connect all of the city's diverse communities with the arts. Chicago's vibrant philanthropic funder community has used its purse strings and convening power to encourage arts and cultural organizations to reach out to new audiences, form partnerships with community-based groups, and become players in community development issues.

Chicago's abundant arts and cultural scene make it an ideal location for an

Chicago: A Long-Time Home to Immigrants

- According to U.S. Census estimates, 5.3% of the city's residents are Asian; 33.2% are Black or African American; 33.3% are white and, 27.3% are Hispanic or Latino.⁶¹
- Chicago has a rapidly growing Latino population. In 1970, only one of every 20 residents of the Chicago metro area was of Latino origin. Today, one in every five is Latino.
- The Latino population during this period has grown from 320,000 to 1.71 million residents in the Chicago metro area.
- More than 750,000 Latinos live in Chicago. People of Mexican origin comprise the majority of Latinos in the region (79%).
- Between 2000 and 2006, Latinos represented almost all of the region's population growth.
- Latinos will account for almost all of the region's population growth in the next two decades. By 2030, one in every three Chicagoans will be Latino.⁶²

Older Adults in the Chicago Metropolitan Area

- In 2009, the U.S. American Community Survey estimated that 10.2% of the population of the City of Chicago was 65 or over.⁶³
- By 2030, one in six residents of the region will be 65 or over. Those 65 or over will represent 17% of the region's population by 2030, out of a total population that is expected to reach 10 million.⁶⁴

examination of access to arts and culture for those who are aging. Consequently, Chicago was selected as the site for a workshop on that subject hosted by Partners for Livable Communities and the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging with funding from the MetLife Foundation. “Engaging Older Adults through Arts and Culture: Developing a Livable Chicago for All Ages,” pointed out that many Chicago leaders of arts and cultural organizations have been sensitive to the importance of access for older adults.

However, workshop participants suggested that older adults are under-represented on arts and culture boards and other positions of leadership. They maintained that opportunities to hear from older adults, to understand their needs and preferences are an essential step in creating events that attract their interest and participation. Chicago is lavish in its arts and cultural offerings, but nonetheless, like most communities, must focus more attention on their aging residents and visitors.

The Chicago Parks District provides free space to arts and cultural organizations in exchange for their providing community-based programs. This has helped incubate a diverse array of performing and visual arts that engage youth, immigrants, older adults and other arts audiences. The Parks District also has a resident artists’ program that connects arts with neighborhoods throughout the city. But perhaps most

important is the city’s ethos of engaging with communities and drawing on their unique assets.

In recent years, in the creation of Millennium Park, Chicago has given itself a face lift, taking over a public space previously viewed as an eyesore and developing it into a beautiful, multi-faceted space that is accessible and utilized by diverse residents and visitors alike. The 24.5 acre park, which replaced railroad tracks and parking lots, is now a hub for art and music, gardens, sculpture, theaters, a pedestrian bridge that offers a stunning view of the Chicago skyline, restaurants and an ice skating rink. It is the home of the Grant Park Orchestra and Chorus and the site for the Jay Pritzker Pavilion, designed by architect Frank Gehry, the world renowned architect.

The spacious Chase Promenade crosses the park and is an inviting scene for free, year-round programming. It is a favored location for families, who can choose from an array of ethnic festivals, fairs and exhibitions during the year. ■

The National Museum of Mexican Art: Preserving a Culture

Best Practice: Be a Leader and Good Model—Collaborate Outside the Arts and Culture Sector

In 1982, a group of educators began to develop a community-based arts program in Chicago's Pilsen neighborhood, to reflect the rich, diverse culture of Mexican Americans. Led by Carlos Tortolero, a Chicago public school teacher and counselor, this small group of volunteers began by offering small exhibitions and holding folkloric dance performances at different community venues. It took five years for the program to find a permanent home to host the exhibits. By then, it had become a community institution by providing art with which Pilsen's mostly first- and second-generation immigrants could creatively engage.

Today, the National Museum of Mexican Art (NMMA) is the premier repository for Mexican art in the nation. Its permanent collection includes more than 6,000 art objects, from folk art to textiles, paintings, and sculptures. Even as it has become a museum of national stature that attracts audiences throughout the Chicago region, the Museum has continued and expanded its community focus. The NMMA's educational programs have provided local youth with career pathways in arts and culture. NMMA runs *Yollocalli Arts Reach*, which each year provides 200 young people with career training in the arts. In 1996, the NMMA acquired WCYC, a community radio station run by the Boys and Girls Club of Chicago that has been providing area youth with on-the-job training in radio broadcasting since the 1940s.

The NMMA worked with the City Empowerment Zone to secure funding for a new building for the station, and persuaded the Federal Communications Com-

mission to increase the station's wattage. The program, *Radio Arte*, now broadcasts to approximately 500,000 people and employs 120 youth staff members.

The NMMA's community focus can also be seen in its annual *Día del Niño Festival*. "Day of the Child" is a children's celebration created to raise awareness around the alarming, rising rates of obesity among children. Through a partnership with the Illinois Department of Public Health, and sponsorship from several health insurance companies, the festival offers free dental cleanings, health screenings, and other health-related activities to festival participants. Admission to the festival is free, as is admission to all of the Museum's exhibits and permanent collection. At last year's event, 1,700 people received health screenings. Working as an equal partner with public agencies such as the Chicago Parks District and the state Department of Public Health, the NMMA has leveraged its community credibility to build its educational programs and extend its community reach.

The NMMA also has initiated performing arts festivals such as the annual *Sor Juana Festival*, celebrating the 17th century Mexican poet Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz and paying tribute to the rich artistic accomplishments of Mexicanas from Mexico and the United States. The festival features culinary arts, dance, film, literature, music, theater, and visual arts. The festival is now held in six other cities besides Chicago, including Dallas, Houston, and Milwaukee.

In *The African Presence in México: From Yanga to the Present*, Tortolero began approaching Chicago African American leaders about developing an exhibition to explore the influence of Africans on Mexican culture. This was a controversial topic among African Americans and Mexican Americans alike. "Black-brown" tensions were common on the West Side in and

around Pilsen. A stark line separated the nearby African American Lawndale community from the Mexican American South Lawndale community. While supportive, African American community leaders were concerned about how such an ambitious collaboration would be received by their constituents, funders, and other stakeholders.

For Mexicans and Mexican Americans, the topic was particularly charged. “You can talk about God and politics, but walk into a Mexican family’s home and talk about skin color [and] they get very nervous,” says Tortolero.

“We encourage our staff to look at exhibits in a different kind of way—in terms of what conversations they can invoke,” says Juana Guzman, Vice President of the NMMA. *The African Presence in Mexico* was conceived as a traveling exhibit that would be displayed in neighborhoods of Chicago and around the nation. To host the exhibit, museums and community partners were required to convene community dialogues on race and provide health screenings. “African Americans and Mexican Americans face many of the same issues. Diabetes and obesity are huge issues in both communities. This was a great opportunity to bring them together and get us to work on these issues together,” says Guzman.

The basic tenets of partnership made the exhibit work. Guzman identified the key community leaders in nearby African American communities, approached them, and listened a great deal. Leaders of churches, many of whom also run health clinics and community development corporations, were the key partners. “The church leaders turned out to welcome new ideas more than most ‘progressive’ people. But you had to be very respectful in approaching them—you can’t assume they

want what you have. And you don’t move forward until everyone signs on.”

Seventy-two thousand people attended the 2006 Chicago exhibition; more than half of the audience was African American. The exhibition has since traveled to Mexico City; Washington, DC; Albuquerque; and several other cities, with partners including the Smithsonian, Museo de Historia Mexicano, and the National Hispanic Cultural Center. The NMMA has also been able to expand the exhibit’s reach by providing high-quality replications of the artwork in Chicago communities and using the exhibit as a fulcrum for community dialogues and health screenings.

Key Lessons:

- The credibility that the NMMA earned as an arts institution responsive to its surrounding community helped it build a range of partnerships outside of the arts and culture sector with city agencies, federal agencies, and key civic leaders; it is highly trusted and respected as a partner.
- Throughout its existence, the NMMA has found ways to support the community’s youth, even to the point of helping to create career paths in arts and culture.
- The Museum has been a model for supporting the community in ways that exceed the normal boundaries of arts and cultural institutions. Its annual festival, sponsored in partnership with health organizations, also serves as a site for health and dental screenings.
- As was demonstrated in *The African Presence in Mexico*, the Museum used an art exhibit as a bridge to cross a cultural divide, thus engendering greater trust for its inclusive approach.

Deeply Rooted Dance Theater: A Grassroots Perspective

Best Practice: Understand the Community and its Residents

Founded in 1995 by dancers Kevin Iega Jeff and Gary Abbott, Deeply Rooted Dance Theater teaches and performs dance as creative expression and community and spiritual healing. Jeff calls it “world class art from a grassroots perspective.”

Working within an African American dance aesthetic, Deeply Rooted explores topics as varied as the Somali civil war and famine, the quest to live in the face of AIDS, and early 20th-century African American cultures. Jeff and Abbott’s choreography stresses both technical virtuosity and the deep exploration of character and community.

As one dancer explains regarding Deeply Rooted’s *Life*, which deals with personal struggles to live with AIDS, “I know I’m telling experiences of things I see every day. Right outside these doors, there’s some things about this piece that are going on.”

Staged in various venues throughout Chicago, the ensemble’s performances attract a diverse audience. Dance connoisseurs attend, but so do people who are not typically patrons of dance, but who find something uniquely cathartic and revealing in the ensemble’s performances.

From the beginning, community outreach and teaching have been as much a part of Deeply Rooted as the ensemble performances. The company works with partners both in and outside Chicago to develop customized, community-oriented dance programs.

The company provides dance education for a continuum of talents and personal goals. The staff offers rigorous trainings for aspiring professional dancers and experi-

enced dancers interested in working within an ensemble structure, open by audition, as well as youth dance classes and open dance classes available on a weekly basis. Personal exploration is as integral to the company’s dance pedagogy as it is to its performance philosophy.

It made perfect sense for Jeff and Abbott to develop a new dance program based on feedback from audience members. “A lot of women who came to our performances were telling us how intimate and powerful it was for them,” says Jeff. “They wanted to experience that.”

In January 2007, Deeply Rooted launched *Mature H.O.T. Women*, a dance class geared toward baby boomers and active older adults. The program’s spirit is captured in its acronym: “Health-conscious, Optimistic, Triumphant.” Deeply Rooted now holds four eight-week sessions of *Mature H.O.T. Women* each year. Sessions are offered during the evening, attracting both retirees and women who are in the workforce. The classes are held at Deeply Rooted’s dance studio in downtown Chicago and in the predominantly African American neighborhood of South Shore. Each weekly two-hour class has extended warm-up and cool-down periods. The class is open to all ages, but the core participants are 45 to 75 years of age.

More than 100 women have participated since the program began three years ago. At the end of each session, the students have the opportunity to perform with one another. Deeply Rooted also weaves the students into its other programs and its professional ensemble. In 2009, several students performed with the dance company as part of a featured performance. Several other students also performed with *Up Close & Personal*, a Deeply Rooted outreach program that is offered at different com-

munity venues to allow people to see the artistic process unfold.

Now Deeply Rooted is considering replicating the program in other parts of the country. A partner group has expressed interest in offering the program.

Key Lessons:

- The connections made by Deeply Rooted Dance Theater to understanding its surrounding neighborhood is profound, as expressed by the dancer who said that, “I know I’m telling experiences of things I see every day. Right outside these doors, there are some things about this piece that are going on.”
- Deeply Rooted uses its ‘cultural IQ’ to understand the unique aspects about a particular neighborhood and community.
- Deeply Rooted started *Mature H.O.T. Women* in response to audience feedback, and the company’s performance and education programs feed off of each other.
- Evening hours and multiple locations for *Mature H.O.T. Women* enable a range of age groups to participate.

The Old Town School of Folk Music: New Communities, New Customers

Best Practice: Assess the Organization From the Inside

In 1957, when the folk music movement was in full bloom, Win Stracke started the Old Town School of Folk Music, named after the Old Town neighborhood where its offices were first located. The school helped popularize folk music and spread its practice in many ways—by teaching the art, by offering free concerts, and by providing a steady paycheck to folk musicians.

Bob Dylan went electric 45 years ago, but the Old Town School of Folk Music is more popular than ever. Enrollment in the Old Town School tuition programs averages close to 6,000 students per week, 2,700 of them children. Its Lincoln Square and Lincoln Park facilities hold hundreds of classes and workshops in music, dance, and art for adults, children, and teens seven days per week, 48 weeks per year. The School presents performances by internationally known touring artists, local artists, and its staff and students virtually every weekend.

The Old Town School still provides free concerts, but the music has broadened from American folk music to world music through programs such as AfroFolk Live and La Peña. Some 85,000 people come to these concerts and attend the Chicago Folk & Roots festival in nearby Welles Park annually. The Old Town School’s \$8 million plus budget is still derived mainly from music lessons, but the music being taught reflects the updated interests of the participants.

However, the School was not always popularly attended. In the early 1980s, enrollment and concert attendance were declining and the school was on the brink

of bankruptcy. The Old Town School rebounded by responding to the cultural interests and assets of the increasingly diverse residents of Chicago. “There were opportunities that were not being taken advantage of,” says former executive director Jim Hirsch. “As I looked around the city and saw increasing diversity, I wasn’t really seeing that diversity represented in programming anywhere.”

The Old Town staff worked with ethnic service organizations and other community partners to better understand what their constituencies wanted—and to market to these audiences through familiar ethnic organizational channels and the ethnic media. The school began to offer more “point of entry” programs such as *La Peña*, a Latin-based open stage night at Old Town School’s beautiful concert space. These community programs brought people through the Old Town School’s doors—the key first step toward interesting students in their classes.

In 1998, the Old Town School moved to the former Hild Library, an old art deco building that had been vacant for over a decade, in the Lincoln Park community in Westside Chicago. Entering a new community that was growing much more diverse, with an increasing Latino presence, but that had also experienced disinvestment and blight, the Old Town School did its community homework and took full advantage of its new converted space. By spending a lot of time listening and getting to know the community leaders and ethnic service organizations in Lincoln Park, the Old Town School was able to develop community programs that worked for the cultural interests and assets in the neighborhood. They revived the old library’s function as a community gathering place.

By offering free music and dance that

reflect community cultures, the school has made the building a community anchor and a potent student recruitment tool. Funders and civic leaders recognize the School’s instrumental role in the community. The students and concertgoers who come from other parts of the Chicago area get a different view of the neighborhood from what they see in the media. “All the music and dancing at the Old Town School is in service to building community,” says School executive director Bau Graves. “In turn, this grows both the audience and the student base.”

Key Lessons:

- The Old Town School of Folk Music would probably not exist now had it not been for its listening carefully to the ideas of representatives of the community and its ethnic groups—so that it could adapt to their needs as customers.
- The School staff spent a lot of time working with ethnic service organizations to understand the needs and interests of their constituents, and re-shaped their community programs accordingly.
- The Old Town School broadened its product without changing its mission, and reaped enormous dividends in both financial and social capital.
- The Old Town School has strategically used its building to make the organization a neighborhood anchor and build its credibility with the community, civic leaders, and funders.

Ollimpaxqui Ballet Company

The Ballet Company dancers perform a Mexican Spectacular Show encompassing centuries of traditions that have evolved from European, Oriental, Indian, and American influences.

Image courtesy of the Ollimpaxqui Ballet Company, Inc.



Dallas: Making Arts and Culture Broadly Available

Dallas is a big city in a big state. Its population of 1.3 million makes it the eighth largest in the nation; its many ethnicities make it one of the most diverse. Dallas is at the center of the Sunbelt's economic and population explosion. The region expects to add three million residents and 1.5 million jobs during the next two decades. That growth is being fueled by immigration.

Dallas is an immigration gateway. Mexican Americans comprise by far the largest immigrant group in Dallas. One million Mexican immigrants live in the Dallas region—more than ten times the number of residents than from any other nation. And Mexican immigrants in Dallas are finding jobs and homes where immigrants for generations have found jobs and homes—in the city.

The age profile of Dallas is also changing. Dallas County, the vast and dense urban area surrounding the city, is home to an estimated 264,000 people over the age of 60; 35.7 percent are minorities and 10.5 percent live in poverty.

Older adults in Dallas County stand to gain from a statewide initiative called Aging Texas Well, a pioneering statewide project to expand the capacity of Texas communities to enhance their livability for older adults. Its goals include “intellectual growth and lifelong learning” and support for “volunteering within a wide range of civic and educational settings.” Dallas County has areas of urban sprawl, which can severely limit the mobility of older adults. Many of its older residents who want to reach arts and cultural venues and cannot or do not wish to drive can travel via the Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART) system, which is

Dallas: A City of Immigrants

- According to the U.S. Census estimate in 2009, the population of Dallas County was over 2,450,000.
- The percentage of the white population was nearly 56.5%; the Black or African American population was 20% and those of Hispanic origin were 37.9% of the population.⁶⁵
- Hispanics accounted for roughly one in five Dallas residents in 1990; by 2000 more than one-third of the city's population was of Hispanic origin.⁶⁶
- Nearly three-fourths of Dallas's foreign-born come from Mexico; smaller numbers hail from Central American and Southeast Asian countries.
- 60% of the city's foreign-born population arrived in the country in the last ten years.⁶⁷

Growing Older in Dallas County:

- According to the U.S Census estimate of 2009, those 65+ in Dallas County comprised 8.5% of the population.
- The Area Plan for Programs of the Dallas County Area Agency on Aging forecasts that by 2020 the total population of 60+ adults will rise to over 353,000.⁶⁸ It is expected that over 55% of this population will be minorities.⁶⁹ These will largely be Hispanic persons and those from a variety of Asian countries.⁷⁰

bus and light rail. DART offers discounted monthly passes for older adults and offers formal educational programs at senior centers, retirement homes, health fairs, and seminars.

Dallas prides itself, rightly, for its many world-class cultural institutions and the largest arts district in the country. With the recent opening of a Latino Cultural Center in downtown Dallas, the city's new reality is beginning to be reflected in its cultural landscape.

And Dallas has emerged as a leader in broad-based arts education, providing

opportunities for cultural participation for its students and residents that reflect their backgrounds and values.

The size of the county, its diverse population, and the profound changes in the demographics make service delivery and programming a challenge. Nevertheless, the extraordinary cultural infrastructure available is an opportunity to engage this sector in developing programs that serve older adults and immigrants. Many programs have been instituted in the Dallas area, and surely many more could come to life given funding and commitment. ■

Texas State demographer, Steve Murdock, emphasizes that: "By 2040, 68% of consumer expenditures, 80% of kids in Texas elementary and secondary schools, and 70% of students in colleges and universities are going to be non-Anglo. If we don't change the socio-economics between our groups as we go forward in time, Texas will be poorer and less competitive, and the nation will be poorer and less competitive."⁷¹



Big Thought

Free field trips to Dallas museums and cultural centers are offered year-round to students, parents, and children providing interactive arts, exercise, and cultural activities throughout the city.

Image courtesy of Big Thought

Big Thought: Bringing the Arts to All Elementary Schools in Dallas, With Focus on Immigrant Communities
Best Practice: Build Trust, Relationships, and Partnerships

Big Thought of Dallas discovered the importance of understanding community values when community organizers canvassed communities largely composed of immigrant families and received blank stares at the mention of ‘art.’ “They were telling us, ‘Art is not something I do,’” says Erin Offord of Big Thought. “But when we framed it differently, and asked them what they *did* do, art was very much a part of their lives.” For Big Thought, that shaped the development of new community-based art programs such as quilting and folklórico dance classes. Reframing the discussion to link culture with the creative expression of identity is key to engaging immigrant audiences.

Some Dallas cultural leaders, cognizant of its abundance of arts organizations, identified the serious absence of arts education in Dallas schools as a gaping hole in the educational experience of children, especially those in immigrant communities. A remarkably innovative organization, Big Thought determined that the logical solution was to bring the arts to the schools. Many of the arts organizations in Dallas signed on as participants in the program. Big Thought concentrates its work on arts that complement a community’s culture, and on organizing arts education in immigrant-rich Dallas communities. It has helped spur arts education and community-based arts in urban Dallas neighborhoods and in the Dallas public schools. The key programs of interest are *Dallas ArtsPartners* and *Thriving Minds*.

Dallas ArtsPartners is the name of the

arts education program through which Big Thought connects various cultural institutions with Dallas public schools. Since the 1990s, Big Thought has worked in partnership with the Dallas Independent School District (DISD) as an advocate and service provider for promoting broad access to the arts. The impetus for creating *ArtsPartners* was an outcome of an assessment of those who attended arts performances, conducted by the City Office of Cultural Affairs (OCA). The OCA found that audiences were very homogeneous. This study prompted a more comprehensive, system-wide approach to exposing all children to the arts.

Dallas ArtsPartners was created in 1998, launched as a pilot in 13 Dallas elementary schools. By 2002, a school district study indicated that children exposed to the arts performed better in math and reading than those who did not have the same opportunity. As a result, school officials introduced the program in all Dallas elementary schools.

Through *ArtsPartners*, 57 cultural institutions offer programs in the schools. The programs, while they support the mandated curriculum, include museum visits and performances. According to the report, *From Hip-Hop to Shakespeare*, Big Thought has instituted a number of measures to make sure the programs are educationally sound. One measure is to provide arts training for both teachers and the arts and cultural organizations. Another is to “offer classroom teachers close to 60 program-related curricula, complete with sample lessons that have been prepared by teachers and vetted by a panel of educators and cultural mavens.”⁷²

Big Thought has also created *Thriving Minds*, which coordinates the role of over 100 organizations in engaging “students in

the classroom by using arts and culture to help teach subjects like reading and math.” It has also reintroduced formal arts instruction to elementary schools by hiring fine arts specialists and increasing the amount of class time devoted to music and visual arts. Finally, *Thriving Minds* is organizing neighborhoods to coordinate and boost creative activities for families outside of school, during evenings, weekends, and holidays.

An \$8 million grant from the Wallace Foundation and \$9 million from the private sector enabled Big Thought to create *Thriving Minds* in 2007. *Thriving Minds* states that each year it serves “more than 300,000 students, teachers, parents, caregivers, and mentors by coordinating the efforts of schools, libraries, cultural institutions, community-based organizations, and others to provide children and families access to quality programs from many disciplines, including music, dance, theater, creative writing, science, technology, and more.”⁷³

Now Big Thought runs after-school programs in the Dallas Independent School District using federal Department of Education 21st Century Learning Funds. Big Thought is tapping into a new source of arts funding in federal education dollars because it has demonstrated that the arts can be instrumental to meeting Standards of Learning. Big Thought now has five community service staff members who canvas communities, map them, and hold community meetings. The 21st Century Learning funds have led to significant expansion of Big Thought, including 100 new staff.

Key Lessons:

- Big Thought has developed core partnerships with schools and community-based arts organizations to create the foundation for *ArtsPartners*, enriching Dallas public schools with the arts, and providing access to the arts and culture to those populations who previously lacked the opportunity to participate.
- With over 57 cultural organizations and *all* Dallas Public Elementary schools participating, Big Thought maintains a key intermediary role into the city’s arts and cultural programming, proving the organization is a trusted partner.
- Big Thought retains core insight into Dallas’s diverse heritage, making the case for the arts to exist in the schools, tailored to the cultural identity of the students.
- Assuring participation through many disciplines, Big Thought includes dance, theater, music, creative writing, science, technology, and more in its programming for the schools.

Ollimpaxqui Ballet Company: Bilingual Dance

Best Practice: Develop Intentional and Inclusive Programming

Originally from Mexico City, Eduardo Gutierrez started Ollimpaxqui in Dallas 25 years ago. He explains that, “When we started in 1985, the Spanish-speaking population in Dallas was not that big. Most of the audience members were Anglo. Then about 15 years ago there started to be more Hispanic teachers and they wanted to have a program in the schools representing their culture. When we asked the audience 20 years ago, ‘How many of you speak Spanish?’, only a few people would raise their hands. Now about 70 percent of our audience members speak Spanish.” Gutierrez says that part of the performances include explanations of the costumes and the meaning of the dances. He notes that, “We get them doing Colombian dances, [and] Latin rhythms.”

Ollimpaxqui is a bilingual dance program; the dances are explained and interpreted in both English and Spanish for students from ages 6 to 18. The company mixes ballet and folklorico dances to increase the comfort of students and adults with “high” dance forms through mixing in folk dance and showing how the forms interrelate.

The program is promoted through word of mouth, mostly by teachers. The dance company currently comprises eight dancers and three musicians. Gutierrez, the artistic director, and a program director manage the company. Gutierrez estimates that they spend 30 to 40 percent of their time in Dallas and the rest traveling. Ollimpaxqui is funded in Dallas by a City of Dallas Department of Cultural Affairs grant, school system funding through Big Thought, and audience fees.

In their early years in Dallas, the company performed mostly Mexican dance for an Anglo and then Anglo/African American audience. As the audiences became more Hispanic, they wanted a broader range of dances. Ollimpaxqui started a *Dancing Through Latin America* program that features dances from many different cultures of Latin America, including but not limited to Mexico.

Now, this traveling dance company completes more than 300 performances and 150 workshops each year throughout the U.S. and the world, mostly in schools. Dance is a form of release for the students. Whether they are a mostly Caucasian group of students or a largely Latino audience of students in the City of Dallas, artistic director Eduardo Gutierrez leads them in a highly physical, whimsical, and accessible way through various Latin American folklorico dance styles that make them scream, laugh, and move.

Whatever the make-up of his audience—whether it is a mostly white group of children in Maine or a largely Mexican American audience in Dallas public schools—the company interprets the dances in both English and Spanish and mixes folklorico and ballet. Asking the audience to be hands on, to join the performers, can add immeasurably to the pleasure of both and mixing cultures and genres can be both educational and entertaining. No matter the ethnic or racial identity of children, their exposure to the arts of many cultures enhances their appreciation for their astounding complexity and range.

Key Lessons:

- For this dance troupe, keeping current on community issues has meant keeping a close eye on changing demographics; developing intentional and inclusive programming has led Ollimpaxqui to become one of the most accessible programs for all audiences.
- Providing access to diverse audiences as a travelling dance troupe includes flexibility in terms of time, location, and language—for students in Dallas, and around the country and the world.
- A characteristic providing the troupe with its well-known accessibility is its bilingual programming, to make the interpretation of dances accessible in English or Spanish.

Pedroche likes to tell Latino visitors in Spanish, “My museum is your museum.” It is like saying, “Mi casa es tu casa,” or “My house is your house.”



The Dallas Museum of Art

Museum patrons enjoy exhibit as part of the *Late Night* program when the Museum is open until midnight one day a month to offer performances, concerts, readings, film screenings, and more for an intergenerational audience. The program makes the Museum accessible for those who cannot attend during the work day. Image courtesy of The Dallas Museum of Art

Dallas Museum of Art: One on One Outreach to Immigrant Communities

Best Practice: Develop Marketing Strategies that Build on Community Networks

While the Dallas Museum of Art (DMA) has always been an outward looking institution with a comprehensive collection that includes art from all world cultures, African Americans and Latinos have not always felt any compelling reason to become patrons of the Museum. DMA has taken steps to change this, and become more inviting to a broader constituency. The Museum staff now goes directly into the communities to meet with families and youth who have not traditionally been visitors. This approach is now integral to the Museum’s strategy for expanding its reach.

Maria Teresa Garcia Pedroche, the head of Family Experiences and Community Engagement for the Museum, and an artist herself, spearheads outreach to the Latino community. She explains that she often talks with Latino immigrants “one-on-one,” because she must overcome language barriers, lack of familiarity with the Museum, and their conviction that it is not welcoming.

Pedroche supports a thriving partnership with Avance, whose mission is “to unlock America’s potential by strengthening families in at-risk communities through effective parent education and support programs.”⁷⁴ While this would not seem to be the usual location for promoting the many benefits of an art museum, Pedroche has made it an avenue to the arts for many immigrant families in Dallas.

She promotes the Museum by joining teachers and parents at the Avance Centers, where she converses with them, in Spanish, about the variety of programs that are available for families. Pedroche believes

that, “All parents want their children to excel in school and to interact with the community so they have better opportunities.”

With this conviction in mind, she speaks with this vulnerable audience and, with all her powers of persuasion, urges them to become involved. The Museum, she explains, offers many opportunities for whole families to learn and to enjoy. Pedroche then invites parents to share their personal stories—creating rapport to break down barriers.

After outreach sessions, Pedroche asks the mothers to share ideas for the toy making competition, a yearly Avance event during which they make an educational toy for their children. This year the award winners will be showcased in DMA’s Art Studio.

Following Pedroche’s visits to the centers, Avance teachers reserve times for families to attend a guided tour of the Museum, to be followed by studio activities. Parents then attend the tour with their children and are advised about ways to continue the creative process at home. Parents are also invited to examine other resources and books in *Arturo’s Nest* and are given free bilingual family passes for museum visits.

Pedroche is also a frequent guest on Univision radio. She uses her interviews to describe upcoming events and programs at the Museum as well as to invite Hispanic listeners to visit their museum. Stressing her experience with the Museum, Pedroche explains that engagement with the community is “important and imperative to museums, if they want to grow and prosper in the future.”

The Museum’s special exhibits are now often designed to attract intergenerational visitors and an array of cultures. The recently launched *Center for Creative Connections* (C3), supported by the MetLife

Foundation, presented “Encountering Space,” an exhibition exploring how artists shape and define space in their work.

C3 is a hands-on section of the Museum. A number of works of art and interactive areas rotate every six months. And there is no language barrier there. Through the DMA’s extended hours, 9 p.m. every Thursday and until midnight on the third Friday of each month, the Museum is creating entry points for new audiences, including Dallas’s rapidly expanding Mexican immigrant population.

Partnerships supporting immigrant communities are extensive, to include those with: schools and libraries; Oak Cliff Cultural Center; Cathedral Guadalupe; the African American Museum; the South Dallas Cultural Center; the Latino Cultural Center; Preservation LINK, Inc.; Parents Step Ahead; and other organizations. In many cases, the museum participates in events with its partners “on location”—taking the art to community events.

Key Lessons:

- Dallas Museum of Art uses marketing strategies to appeal to diverse prospective visitors in a familiar and commonly-used environment, and a variety of languages to help create a sense of invitation.
- Many immigrant families need to plan in advance around work, school, health, and other family obligations; the Museum’s marketing of extended hours accommodate their schedules.
- Through partnerships with many organizations favored by immigrants, the Museum introduces its art to them and encourages their direct involvement with the Museum.

Artreach Dallas: Making the Arts More Available

Best Practice: Eliminate Barriers—Door-to-Door Access and Beyond

For far too many people in any community, the arts are inaccessible. The reasons are many, and include disability, frailty, poverty, and mobility constraints. The loss to those who are cut off from arts and cultural experiences is incalculable, but can include costs to health and important opportunities for forming social ties.

Artreach Dallas decided to overcome the barriers to participation through appealing to the generosity of the arts and cultural institutions in the city. Through its *Community Events Program*, Artreach arranges with cultural institutions to offer free admission to events to economically disadvantaged children and adults, those with disabilities, and those who are aging. The organization intends, through its program, to increase the well-being as well as reduce the isolation for its participants.

Supported by over 150 institutions, collaborating organizations provide from 10 to 2,500 tickets for any given event. Volunteers then place calls, gather groups, represent Artreach at venues, and act as liaisons between the box office and attendees. This matching of people to arts events fosters a sense of community, which Artreach says is the true nature of its program.

As an example of the opportunities Artreach provides, in one week its clients received tickets for the Dallas Wind Symphony, the Greater Dallas Youth Orchestra, and the Undermain Theater. Dalta Waggoner, executive director of Artreach, notes that it is able to provide arts and cultural opportunities to over 100,000 persons a year.

According to Artreach, its clients get to know each other and form enduring friendships. Their connections are deepened and their isolation diminished through their shared experience of varied arts and cultural programs. And the arts and cultural institutions also benefit with increased attendance.

Artreach also provides hands on opportunities for older adults. Its *Senior Theatre Arts Program* includes creative writing, improvisation, and standard theater. For one program, older adults worked with local playwrights, directors, and theater artists to develop a play based on their life experiences. After ten weeks of preparation, a standing room only performance was held in a professional theater space. Artreach explains that these programs serve to increase “self-awareness, esteem, and analytical thinking, all critically important to maintaining a lively and vibrant mind.”

Artreach makes it possible, for many who otherwise might not have the chance, to enjoy the pleasures and benefits of the wealth of arts venues and talent Dallas has to offer. As Artreach puts it, its clients “can experience the life-enriching magic we all know our city’s rich arts community provides.”

Key Lessons:

- Artreach offers hands-on arts programs for older adults and also serves an extraordinary role in Dallas. It overcomes seemingly insurmountable barriers through collaboration with over 150 arts and cultural organizations.
- Artreach is a model for successfully creating a link between arts and cultural institutions and social service organizations, which often identify prospective clients of Artreach.
- Artreach serves as a model in the context of arts and cultural institutions, for it has found a way to make them accessible to a broad constituency that would otherwise not be served.



The Dallas Museum of Art

The Museum celebrates the opening of *African Masks: The Art of Disguise* as part of the *Late Night* program.
Image courtesy of The Dallas Museum of Art

Queens Botanical Garden

As an urban oasis in one of the most culturally diverse counties in the nation, Queens Botanical Garden celebrates the connections between people and nature through 39 acres of inspiring gardens, innovative educational programs, and demonstrations of environmental stewardship. Image courtesy of Queens Botanical Garden Staff



New York: Countless Opportunities for Experiencing Arts and Culture

At home and abroad, New York City is recognized as one of the premier centers of arts and culture. Many young, would-be actors, dancers, singers, painters, and writers have sought the glory of success on Broadway or the supportive milieu of Greenwich Village and other New York City neighborhoods. Many of the venues, from Lincoln Center, the largest arts complex in the world, to the Guggenheim, The Museum of Modern Art, Radio City Music Hall, Carnegie Hall, and The Metropolitan Museum of Art attract visitors from around the world.

New York City, comprising the five boroughs of Manhattan, the Bronx, Brooklyn, Queens, and Staten Island, is often identified as the archetype of the American melting pot. As one of the most diverse and culturally-rich cities in the world, New York City often presages the population changes and demographic shifts that will eventually occur in cities around the country. At the turn of the 20th century, the city's extraordinarily abundant and diverse cultural life and economy were built on the contributions of immigrants. That is no less true today. Although immigration is integral to the city's history, it has not always been as prevalent as it has been in recent years.

Between 1910 and 1970, the percentage of city residents who were immigrants

declined from 41 to 18 percent. Since 1970, however, New York's immigrant population has more than doubled, to reach 3 million, even as the native-born population has declined by more than 1 million—immigration has fueled New York City's renaissance.⁷⁵

The diversity of public and cultural life created by New York's immigrant communities is one of the city's best-known and most important assets. A walk through the streets of Brooklyn is a veritable world tour: a sometimes overwhelming mélange of languages, cuisines, clothing, and other cultural experiences.

The Brooklyn Children's Museum has captured the essence of New York City in *World Brooklyn*. As the Children's Museum describes it, "A walk around the block becomes a trip around the world in the new *World Brooklyn* exhibit, because Brooklyn is home to everyone from everywhere!"

The museum further explains that the exhibit is, "a vibrant cityscape—shrunk to a child's scale—lined by a series of kid-sized shops." Children can participate in the Chinese New Year, make fake dough in the Mexican Bakery, and enter the International Grocery that boasts cans of ghee from India, ackee from Jamaica, and candy from Turkey and Poland. They can review

New York City: The Archetypal Melting Pot

- More than 125 languages are spoken in Brooklyn and more than 200 languages are spoken in Queens.
- According to a report by New York's Fiscal Policy Institute, immigrants' share of wage and salary income is equivalent to their share of the population (37%).⁷⁶
- A quarter of New York's CEOs are immigrants who live in the city.⁷⁷
- 57% of the children in New York City (1.1 million of 1.9 million) are children of immigrant families.⁷⁸
- Immigrants represented 36.4% of the City's population in 2008 (twice the 1970 share) and 43% of the workforce.⁷⁹

shopping lists appropriate for a kosher Shabbat or Kwanzaa.

In the West African Import Store, kids can, according to the museum website, “shop” for African health and beauty products, groceries, instruments, jewelry, dolls, textiles, masks, and furniture. In the Travel Agency they can fly over the Caribbean. The Italian Restaurant offers play pizza. In the Global Beats Theater, children can be either the audience or performers on stage, where they are invited by local troupes to perform Russian ballet, Irish step dancing, Arab debkah, Bangladeshi folk dances, and more.

New York's immigrant population is as varied as the city itself. While New York's Latino population was formerly majority Puerto Rican, today's New York Latino

population is increasingly made up of immigrants from the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Colombia, Peru, El Salvador, Mexico, and other Latin American countries. The Fiscal Policy Institute reports that, “In the 1970s there were few Vietnamese, Koreans, or South Asian immigrants, and Chinese immigrants came from only a few of China's provinces. Today, in addition to China, Vietnam and Korea, significant numbers of immigrants come to New York from India, Bangladesh, Hong Kong and Taiwan, as well as from parts of China excluded from earlier immigration, such as the Fujian province.”⁸¹

Meeting the needs of its expanding numbers of older adults, to include access to the arts and culture, is a huge challenge in a city that spans five densely populated boroughs in which hundreds of languages are spoken. New York City is also characterized by great wealth and great poverty, and many older adults survive on very low incomes. Fortunately, in a city with plentiful arts and cultural resources, the needs of older adults are receiving some attention.

If comfortable with its hectic pace, older adults seeking arts and cultural experiences in Manhattan or the other boroughs do have some advantages. The array of choices is almost limitless and public transit is widely available. Much of the city is walkable, though the crowds that fill many of

“Immigrants make-up a quarter of securities, commodities and financial service sales agents living in the city, and a third of financial managers. In real estate, they are a third of all brokers, four out of ten property managers, four out of ten architects, and seven out of ten construction laborers. Immigrants are half of all doctors, six out of ten registered nurses, and seven of ten nursing aids.”⁸⁰

the city's sidewalks can be hazardous to anyone who is frail or has a disability. For many in New York City, however, arts and cultural events are available in their own neighborhoods.

Many older adults in the city congregate in the 104 senior centers that span the five boroughs. To bring the arts to the centers, the City Council in 2008 decided to fund a collaboration between the Department for the Aging and the Department of Cultural Affairs. The two agencies identified 57 arts groups to pair with the senior centers, which could then provide artistic performances on senior center premises. The senior centers were happy to offer stimulating new programs to their older adult clients, and the performers relished their chance to perform for new audiences.

While New York City is the ultimate arts and cultural center, it will need to continue to find ways to be more inclusive of both immigrants and older adults. New York City clearly holds a richness of arts and cultural resources for both populations, but needs to promote greater methods for access, to share its plentitude more broadly. ■

The Museum of Modern Art: Meet Me at MoMA

Best Practice: Be a Leader and Good Model—Collaborate Outside the Arts and Culture Sector

A precedent setter for museums around the country, MoMA has a long history of serving people with disabilities, dating back to 1945, when the Museum offered art programs to help veterans acclimate to civilian life. It has been a longstanding goal to make the Museum as accessible to everyone as possible.

Growing Older in New York City

- New York City's older population will grow significantly during the next 20 years, though more slowly than in other parts of the country.
- According to the New York City Department of City Planning, "The number of persons age 65 and over is projected to rise 44.2%, from 938,000 in 2000 to 1.35 million in 2030."⁸²
- In Brooklyn, the largest borough, the older adult population will increase by 45%, even as the school-age population declines by 5.8% during this period.⁸³
- Many non-English speaking older adults have never been assimilated into the melting pot of New York.⁸⁴
- 45% of older residents of the Bronx have not graduated from high school.⁸⁵
- Over one-half of the residents of Queens age 60 and above are foreign born.⁸⁶

To assure that older adults could share and connect with the Museum's collection, for many years the Museum staff has traveled to senior centers, assisted living facilities, nursing homes, and other locations. Its educators also visit immigrant communities to enable the community to partake in the benefits of an American arts institution. Francesca Rosenberg, director of Community, Access & School Programs in the Department of Education, explains that, "We want them to think of the Museum as theirs."

According to Rosenberg, these off-site programs ideally have three stages that move the audience through an educational continuum. First, educators go to the site with reproductions of works of art—which may be highlights of a current exhibition—and focus the discussion around a single theme. For the second session, the students come to the Museum to view the originals, with the same educator providing insights into the selected art works. A third session might include a hands-on art project.

All of these programs are carefully tailored to the specific audience. Some of the 25 partners with which the Museum conducts on-site programs include the Midtown Community Court (for ex-offenders) and LaGuardia Community College—one of the most diverse schools in the city and the country.

The Museum's Alzheimer's Project grew organically out of its off-site educational programs in senior centers and other venues. Initially, the staff started working with Mount Sinai Hospital and the Alzheimer's Association to learn more about brain patterns and how to engage people with Alzheimer's. To test the effectiveness of various methods, the staff started with small pilot programs.

Through the pilots, the staff found that many activities in which family members and caregivers could participate were not suitable for those with dementia. Movies, for example, cannot be shared because Alzheimer's patients cannot follow the action. Through the research completed via the pilots, the education staff developed *Meet Me at MoMA*, a program that engages everyone, from the Alzheimer's patient to families and caregivers, with the Museum's works of art.

The program does not patronize dementia patients by limiting attention to simpler art forms, but instead focuses on the full range of art in the museum. Participants enjoy the program for many reasons, including the ability to escape the crowds. Special tours are scheduled every Tuesday (when the museum is closed) from 2:30 to 4:30 P.M. About 100 people total (people with dementia, family members and caregivers) attend each session, and break up into six groups.

Perhaps most important, families and caregivers often witness an almost magi-

cal transformation during the program. Alzheimer's patients, who may have been very withdrawn, will begin speaking, prompted by the art and the presence of families and caregivers. Rosenberg comments that, "Often you can't tell who has the disease and who is the caregiver." The program also has fostered great connections between families.

The community educators responsible for conducting the program are planning to leave more time for interaction among participants. They will open the sculpture garden to participants to give them more of an opportunity to talk to one another.

The staff walks the galleries once a month and brainstorms about ways the exhibits can be worked into *Meet Me at MoMA*. The educators are attuned to different signs of engagement, to include non-verbal communication. Those with dementia may take a long time to say something, but the educators wait and encourage them—they do not want to ask caregivers to intercede at a significant, opportune moment!

After each tour, those serving as guides give everyone, caregivers and those with dementia, an evaluation form. They also hold focus group discussions. Getting direct feedback from people with dementia has been key to improving the program.

The Museum's robust Community and Access Programs are grant-funded. A two-year grant from the MetLife Foundation funded training on the Alzheimer's program for museums throughout the U.S., and included workshops, webinars, and conferences. Some museums had already created programs for those with Alzheimer's, in which case the trainings helped them to expand and fine tune them. For example, some museums had incorporated art making, and MoMA has started experi-

menting with adding this to their program.

With another two-year MetLife Foundation grant, MoMA is extending its influence globally. Its staff is conducting trainings with museums in Australia, Spain, Mexico, and Great Britain. A symposium at MoMA is scheduled for March 2011.

The staff has found that the most effective way to link dementia patients with museums is by encouraging regional liaisons at Alzheimer's chapters and other groups to contact local museums. MoMA is now enhancing its website to include modules and lesson plans for caregivers to use outside of the museum. The staff is continually seeking feedback within the community of practice about the usefulness of the website and how well the training materials are working.

Key Lessons:

- The *Meet Me at MoMA* program is a model for demonstrating the effectiveness of partnerships that cross sectors, in this case the arts sector and a non-profit health organization.
- *Meet Me at MoMA* is also a model for creating, through partnerships, an incredibly innovative melding of knowledge, experience, and understanding. It took the combined expertise, experience, and empathy of MoMA staff, Mt. Sinai Hospital, and Alzheimer's Association staff to develop a program that is now being replicated by many other arts institutions.
- MoMA's success has inspired others to work across sectors and it now serves as a resource nationally and internationally.

Queens Botanical Garden: Welcoming a Diverse Community

Best Practice: Build Trust, Relationships, and Partnerships

Queens Botanical Garden (QBG) has long made it a practice to promote consistent interaction with its neighboring ethnic communities, including the Chinese, Filipino, Latino, and South Asian communities in and around Flushing. *The Ambassador Program* is one notable example: Through the program, QBG recruits and trains volunteers in various ethnic groups to represent the Garden in their communities. But this is not something the Garden started from scratch. It happened after many years of community engagement, spearheaded by Susan Lacerte, the executive director of QBG.

Lacerte explains that the key is finding “the leader in each community. I noticed when I first became director that the diversity of the borough was not reflected in our attendance. We’ve learned through trial and error. We first tried to be all things to all people. What we’ve learned is that you have to work with each community on its own terms.”

“Every culture has its own social service network,” Lacerte notes. For Korean Americans the church is central because it’s how they stay in touch with their culture. It’s not so important in Korea, but it is central here. You have to engage with different cultures in very different ways. The Korean American community looks inward. They like to observe you when they’re planning.”

According to Lacerte, when the Garden tried guided tours, they failed to attract additional visitors from the community. Communication with leaders in the community proved to be the best way to get a start on enticing residents into the Garden. Lacerte explains that, “The leaders com-

municated what they wanted. We learned that the Chinese wanted to do Tai Chi. We started hosting a Tai Chi session on our grounds. Now 250 to 300 people are on our grounds doing Tai Chi each day, most of them Chinese.”

To entice visitors from the many ethnic communities to the Garden, QBG drew them in by planting flowers and trees that they value. For example, the Chinese community values tree peonies; the Korean community values orchids, and the national flower of Korea, the Rose of Sharon; and the Latino community shows value in a vibrant, diverse, and colorful garden. However, because of the Garden’s extensive outreach, it now will avoid particular colors in displays because they violate the sensitivities of certain cultures.

When possible, the Garden piques the interest of the various cultures with special programs. The staff identified a Korean botanical leader who spoke to the audience in Korean. And with their South Asian neighbors, the Garden celebrated the Festival of Diwali.

Describing a recent tour she was leading, Lacerte notes that of the 35 to 40 people, “There were a few Caucasians, some Chinese, South Asians, and Latinos. It really validated what we were doing. The people who come to our public events now are so much more diverse than 15 years ago. That’s how you know that your efforts are working.”

Community leaders form an informal sounding board for vetting proposals for changes in the Garden. As one example, recently the Garden started to charge an admission fee during peak months, though formerly admission had been free. The staff discussed this extensively with the surrounding communities beforehand and posted the new admissions policy in Spanish, Chinese, and Korean as well as English. The result

was creation of a *Community Access Pass*, which was suggested by the Tai Chi leaders and other ethnic community leaders. The pass was sold for \$20 for the first season and made available to community residents. The careful vetting and outreach has enabled the Garden to adopt this practice with the community’s understanding.

The U.S. Census Bureau used QBG as a station where people could fill out the census form. As Lacerte comments, “Every community wants to have a place to gather.” The Garden is now recognized as an important community gathering place.

The Garden’s goal is to become a resource for cultural research that explores the unique connections between plants and people. The success of such research depends on a continued and open dialogue between the communities of Queens and the Garden. Queens Botanical Garden is uniquely qualified to serve as a site in which individuals living in the very diverse community can enlighten Garden staff about their traditions and the role of plants in their cultures.

Key Lessons:

- The Garden’s staff has developed and nurtured trusting relationships with the community that bring benefits to the Garden and its clientele.
- QBG leadership, with Board, staff, and others, identified various ethnic leaders and their strong social networks as a key asset for spreading the word about QBG.
- QBG has also used its relationship with leaders of the community to garner support for changes in the Garden.
- Meaningful relationships take time; they don’t happen overnight and they don’t happen without considerable effort and careful thought.

The Queens Museum of Art: Breaking Barriers, Re-Defining Access to the Arts

Best Practice: Step Outside the Walls

The Queens Museum of Art, housed in the iconic World's Fair building of 1939, is set in the nation's most diverse neighborhood that is home to more than 200 spoken languages: Queens, New York. The Museum's mission, "to present the highest quality visual arts and educational programming for people in the New York metropolitan area, and particularly for the residents of Queens, a uniquely diverse ethnic, cultural and international community," rings true to its invaluable presence in the community. Since 2005, the Museum has re-dedicated its programming to reflect and engage the local community, "attempting to exert the same sort of imagination, experimentation, and resources to community engagement as in the galleries⁸⁷," through a museum department titled The Queens Museum of Art in the Community.

The Queens Museum works tirelessly to engage the community outside its four walls. Not only does the Museum have a full-time community organizer on staff working actively in the immediate Corona neighborhood of Queens, a position cur-

rently unmatched by any other art museum in the country⁸⁸, but it provides numerous, ongoing partnerships to community organizations specifically within the immigrant and older adult communities. Catering to the diverse immigrant populations of Queens, the Museum hosts *Passport Fridays*, sponsored events showcasing a different country every week from South Korea to Colombia to India.

The Queens Museum of Art with the Queens Public Library, one of the largest urban library systems in the world containing 66 branches, created the *New New Yorkers* (NNY) program—education classes to meet the needs of immigrant adults. The program hosts ESOL classes that teach English as a second language, and provides myriad multi-lingual research tools, citizenship materials, and arts publications.

The Museum operates as one of its feature community engagement programs: *El Corazón de Corona* or *The Heart of Corona Initiative*, a project that "aims to address the health of residents and to activate and beautify Corona's public space."⁸⁹ The Initiative boasts several cross-sector projects created in collaboration with local health, business, and elected leaders: Beautification and Clean-Up, a *Healthy Taste of Corona* cook book, and numerous public arts proj-

"Museums need to be engaged if they want to remain vital institutions. With the 21st century, artists became open to the possibility of the viewer being a shaping element, and even a generator of their artwork; consequently, much of 21st century artwork is about relationships [e.g. between people and objects]. The public expects a similar approach from arts organizations, [but] museums have been slower to catch-up: their mandate is to acquire first, preserve second, and educate third. Our program is a way to break those strict divisions and roles, and to make sure artists see the sharing of their work as an integral part of their careers." José E. Rodríguez, Manager of NNY, The Queens Museum of Art



The Queens Museum of Art

Volunteers from the Corazón de Corona project take a break during the clean up and beautification of public space near the Museum. Image courtesy of The Queens Museum of Art

ects as well as popular street festivals such as the recent 107th Corona Block Party, *My Street My Home*.

The Corona neighborhood is an historic hub of ethnic diversity, home to such legends as Ella Fitzgerald, Louis Armstrong, and Malcolm X. In the last three decades, Corona has experienced major demographic shifts aligned with national trends; the neighborhood has become home to a steady increase of immigrant populations. As a premiere institution located in the heart of Corona, the Queens Museum of Art engages as a primary stake holder in the community to serve as a vehicle for community revitalization. With high-quality public engagement programs, the Museum promotes such unique initiatives as: *The Immigrants & Parks Collaborative*, immigrant-led civic engagement programs in public parks; and *The Corona Studio*, which curates new works of community-engaged public art to traditionally underserved audiences.

Beyond providing ample community engagement and recreational events, the Museum strives to meet many of the social challenges facing neighborhood residents through the umbrella art therapy program,

Art Access which serves community members with special needs. An award-winning program recognized by the Institute of Museum and Library Services for exemplary leadership and community partnership, *Art Access* was launched in 1983 with a mission to “promote exploration through the arts and to highlight the creativity that exists in all people.” Originally, the program was created to provide art education for the visually impaired; today, *Art Access* has widely expanded its mission and capacity to serve over 5,000 New York City school children enrolled in special education programs each year. The program primarily staffs therapists trained in creative art therapies who are able to adapt their expertise to meet community needs.

Acclaimed programming within *Art Access* includes: The Autism Initiative, Gallery Gatherings, in-house programming for families hosting children in the foster care system, the Multi-Sensory Tour Kit, Sign Language Tours, and more. This extensive, diverse programming proves the Queens Museum’s priority in maintaining an accessible institution beyond the parameters of what most consider eliminating barriers to access: The Museum goes above and beyond opening its doors to simply pave the path for all patrons to first get to the door step.

The Queens Museum of Art, through incredible outreach programming designed for the older adult and immigrant populations, as well as those with diverse special needs, proves itself as an institution which extends far beyond its four walls to not only conduct programming in community venues but to also bring back residents to the Museum for engaged learning. The Museum today acts as a good leader and role model for all institutions attempting to break down barriers to access and to reach-out to all community residents.

Key Lessons:

- The Queens Museum of Art breaks down traditional ideas of a museum and its relations to the surrounding community, and rather presents the institution as community-based, structuring a majority of its programming based on community needs and outside of its four walls.
- The Museum uses a community organizer to expand beyond the institution to engage the community in places and with methods meaningful to the residents.
- Access to the arts is considered an inherent right for all residents, especially for those experiencing barriers to access in their daily lives. The Museum provides programming for all specialized populations: immigrants, older adults, and those with disabilities.

Pregones Theater: Inextricably Bound to the Community

Best Practice: Assess the Organization From the Inside

Pregones Theater in the Bronx, or Teatro Pregones, states as its purpose the creation and performance of “original musical theater and plays rooted in Puerto Rican/Latino cultures,” and presentation of other performing artists “who share our twin commitment to the arts and civic enrichment.” Very committed to its mission, the Theater describes itself as “the incubator of new works and a leader in arts-based community development.”

Alvan Colón Lespier, the associate artistic director of the Theater, believes that theater arts in general are an integral component of the development of communities, and in that context, Pregones Theater strives to engage all sectors of the community. From Colón Lespier’s vantage point, the Theater makes an important connection to the history of the Latino and Puerto Rican community in the Bronx and beyond, and brings it to life through dramatizing it in very compelling ways.

Colón Lespier explains that Pregones was created in 1979, when “a group of like-minded Puerto Rican actors thought to group in the fashion of Caribbean and Latin American ‘colectivos,’ or performing ensembles.” It was first a touring company, performing original works in Spanish throughout New York City, the greater tri-state metropolitan area, Philadelphia, and Boston.

At the outset, Pregones was one of the few professional arts organizations offering both Spanish and English performances for low-income residents in the community. Colón Lespier says that it was the “deep connection to a growing and diverse Latino

population” that inspired the decision to establish a resident theater in the Bronx.” As a powerful symbol of its permanence, the Theater opened a new performing arts facility in 2005, which was funded by the government, foundations and individual contributions.

Colón Lespier’s evident pride in Pregones is clearly associated with both the artistic rigor reflected in its flagship programs and the profound connection it has to the community. Pregones has been the recipient of many awards, and Colón Lespier explains that the Theater has matured “through meaningful interaction with the local community of the South Bronx, many of them Latinos, both longtime U.S. residents and more recent immigrants.”

Colón Lespier reports that the Theater’s artists, managers, and volunteers, for more than 30 years, have succeeded “in building and growing a performing arts audience where others said there was none.” The Theater, Colón Lespier adds, proudly identifies itself as a community-based professional theater.

Many of the productions performed at the intimate Pregones Theater, with its 130 seats, are inspired by or make reference to historical events of profound importance to the Puerto Rican/Latino community. The Theater has nearly 70 premieres to its credit, representing a repertory of original plays and musicals in Spanish, English or both, including workshops, forum theater plays, and full-scale productions.

A recent production, *The Harlem Hellfighters On A Latin Beat*, portrayed the collaboration during World War I of 16 Puerto Ricans with the all-Black 369th Infantry Regiment. When the 369th was asked to form a regimental band, it was found that reed musicians were scarce.

James Reese Europe, a prominent Black composer, conductor, and a Lieutenant in the 369th, requested to be sent to Puerto Rico to recruit reed instrument players to complete the band. After Europe recruited the musicians and led the band, the comingling of the Puerto Rican and Harlem sounds was heard in Europe, and a demand for jazz, then in its infancy, grew worldwide.

For Colón Lespier, when a play like this “recaptures memories” and the community’s heritage is explored and celebrated, Pregones Theater builds social capital and tightens its bonds with the community. After some performances, the Theater staff engages the audience in conversations about the plays, to reinforce the connection between those on the stage and the audience—and the community. Through these conversations and in many other innovations, this Theater constantly seeks new ways to exploit the power of the dramatic arts to enrich the lives of the community.

The Theater also uses the power of drama to educate everyone from school children to older adults in the community. From school classrooms to senior centers, Pregones actors have dramatized the dangers of AIDS, teen dating violence, text-based bullying, domestic violence, and other threats to health and safety.

For young students, a dramatic presentation that makes them think about their world and the decisions they will make is a powerful way to learn. And the students also learn another great life lesson—that theater arts are relevant to their own lives.

As a way to draw in older adults to the world of theater, the staff meets them at senior centers and helps them to develop their life stories as performances. Every year this activity culminates in a full day at Pregones, when all of the older adults

perform their stories for a very appreciative audience of their peers. For some, this exposure to the Theater piques their interest, and they return again and again.

As Colón Lespier defines it, “We have a long-term aesthetic, cultural, and organizational investment in the Bronx and the greater Latino community.” In celebrating the Puerto Rican and Latino art and cultural heritage, Colón Lespier says that the Theater “provides a tool for understanding who we are.” He adds that, “When you are able to identify cultural traits that are unique, it’s great.”

Colón Lespier also emphasizes the contribution the Theater makes to economic development of the neighborhood where the Theater is located. As a major attraction in the burgeoning South Bronx cultural corridor since 2005, the Theater draws a diverse audience from across the City.

Pregones also reaches beyond the Bronx and New York City to partner with other artists throughout the U.S. and internationally. For nearly 20 years, the Theater has collaborated with Roadside Theater in the Appalachian mountains of Kentucky, the Yuyachkani collective in Peru and the Worldwide Virtual Theater Carrousel cohort in Peru, Belgium, South Africa, and Slovakia, among others.

Key Lessons:

- The goal of Pregones, to offer “original musical theater and plays rooted in Puerto Rican/Latino cultures,” has been achieved as a result of the Theater’s great care in choosing and executing programming that is focused on the culture and history of the community.
- Its investment in major performances celebrating Puerto Rican and Latino

culture and history reflects the Theater’s longstanding commitment to building social capital in the community.

- Throughout its existence, the Theater’s staff, artistic directors and artists have focused collectively on their stake in enriching the lives of the residents of the Bronx community where it is located.
- Its bilingual presentations and conversations between those on stage and the audience also reinforce connections with the community.
- As part of its support of the community, the Theater schedules workshops and public dialogues and other opportunities for learning. The Theater also serves as a model for multi-cultural, national, and international collaboration, and for Latino theater management.

ASU Gammage

ASU Gammage Older Adult Volunteers attend a Cultural Participation event in their honor. ASU Gammage Cultural Participation programs create access for older adult and diverse audiences to community arts programs, world-class artists, and innovative academic learning tools and initiatives.

Image courtesy of ASU Gammage



Phoenix: Expanding Access to the Arts

With its prime location in the heart of the Western Sunbelt Region, Phoenix has become one of the nation's fastest growing cities. Given that both the city's retiree population and immigrant populations continue to grow, Phoenix has become increasingly diverse, allowing it an opportunity to test new ideas and serve as a bellwether for other communities facing similar growth in the West. As the city continues to expand, it garners a national reputation as a regional metropolis, similar to Los Angeles and other western cities.

The city's status as a far flung region can at times obscure its economic growth and urban density. Phoenix boasts a diverse downtown consisting of commercial, technology, and service sectors. The region is relatively young and will continue to grow in population. Indeed, Maricopa County, which comprises Phoenix and the city's immediate surroundings, was the fastest growing county in the United States from 2000 until 2006, adding an impressive 696,000 residents. With this upward trend in population growth, the city is expected to add another 2.2 million between now and 2030—larger than the entire population of metropolitan San Francisco. In addition to its expanding Hispanic population, the state of Arizona has the third

highest number of Native Americans in the country, positioning the state to become a “minority-majority.” The diversity of Phoenix has long been established, however. The roots of many Latinos in Phoenix date back numerous generations.

The region also has a large and growing first-generation population. According to the Phoenix-based Morrison Institute, “the growing proportion of Hispanic and foreign-born residents—from 7.3 percent to 14.1 percent between 1990 and 2000—has marked the region as a new immigrant gateway. In keeping with that trend, a sizable proportion (11.5 percent) of Phoenix's population reports not speaking English

Phoenix: An Immigrant Gateway

- The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that the population of Maricopa County in 2009 was 4.02 million people.
- In Maricopa County, which includes Phoenix, 31.8% of residents are Hispanic.
- One in every seven residents is foreign-born.
- One in every five residents age five and above speaks a language other than English as the first language at home.
- Phoenix is the county seat of Maricopa County and capital of the state. Its population, estimated in 2009 was 1.59 million.
- The estimated 2009 Hispanic and Latino population of Phoenix, according to the U.S. Census American Community Survey, was over 644,000 or 43.2%.⁹⁰

well.” From the standpoint of the Institute, “A more diverse, more Hispanic, population calls for institutions and programs to change to remain in tune with the region’s residents.”⁹¹

The Brookings Institute concludes that, “Because nearly 60 percent of the city’s foreign-born residents arrived in the country in the last [17] years, Phoenix may face unique challenges in connecting these newcomers to the economic, political, and educational mainstream. Only one-fifth of the city’s foreign-born are naturalized U.S. citizens.”⁹²

At the same time that the area continues to develop into an economic hub of the West, the Phoenix region remains a top destination for older adults and retirees relocating from throughout the country. In 1960, the newly created Del Webb Corporation developed its first “active adults” retirement community, Sun City, a short distance west of Phoenix. Since then, the Phoenix metropolitan region has become nationally known as a Sunbelt destination for older adults. With the increasing numbers of residents who are aging and those newly relocated to the area, Phoenix has an opportunity to enlist the expertise of its older population in support of arts and culture in the region.

New arts and cultural venues have been opening in Phoenix and Maricopa County,

and over 300 more local performances, festivals, and programs add to the richness and cultural diversity of the area. Maricopa County can claim the Phoenix Symphony, the Phoenix Art Museum, the Heard Museum, the Arizona Theater Company, the Arizona Science Center, Taliesin West, and very importantly, the many contributions to the arts of the Herberger College of Fine Arts and Arizona State University’s (ASU) Public Events. The Morrison Institute states that, “The many venues, companies, programs, and events—more than 1,000 annually—under the university umbrella make it not just the largest presenting organization in the county, but also a substantial leader in cutting-edge programming, education, and outreach. For example, ASU Public Events seem to have mastered the balance of mass market, audience-friendly series—such as the Broadway Series—with avant-garde events that help to expand and diversify arts audiences.”⁹⁵ ■

Phoenix Art Museum: Including Locals Only

Best Practice: Develop Intentional and Inclusive Programming

When the Phoenix Art Museum (PAM) hosted an exhibit from the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) in 2009, the Museum decided to use this as an opportunity to simultaneously showcase local Latino artists. *Phantom Sightings: Art after the Chicano Movement*, the exhibit from Los Angeles, was paired with a *Locals Only* exhibit comprising the work of 12 Latino artists currently living and working in metropolitan Phoenix. These included a graffiti artist and several artists born in Mexico, such as the muralist Claudio Dico-

Older Adults in Maricopa County

- Some of the older adult population in Maricopa County is concentrated in retirement communities. Sun City’s population is 47,901, its median age 75.⁹³
- The population 65 and over in Maricopa County is over 449,000, or 11.2%.
- The percentage of the population 65 and over in the city of Phoenix is 7.5%.⁹⁴

“Looking at your community and seeing where the unrealized strengths are is a tremendous thing to do and that’s what museums should be doing. They lead to dialogues that are really fulfilling and exciting. There is a world of opportunity out there and it’s a matter of finding it.” Sara Cochran, Curator, Phoenix Art Museum

chea and the sculptor, fashion designer, and toy maker Roy Wasson Valle.

Two key decisions influenced the character of the exhibit. The Museum staff chose to display a broad range of local art, including “high” art as well as art forms such as clothing and graffiti that reflected everyday experiences of Latino youth, whether native Arizonan or immigrant. It was also determined that, instead of exhibiting *Locals Only* in a separate space, PAM would weave the exhibit throughout the Museum’s permanent collection, thus enabling visitors to make connections between the local artists’ work and other parts of the collection. Those who attended the exhibit numbered over 34,000 people, including 900 schoolchildren.

The PAM Latin American and Mexican art collection is robust, with 32 exhibits to its credit on Latin American and Mexican art since 1959, but it had never developed an exhibit focused on Chicano art. *Phantom Sightings* included very few artists from Arizona or nearby New Mexico. Sara Cochran, PAM’s curator, and PAM’s leadership recognized that it would be problematic to host the exhibit without offering art that more closely reflected the local art scene and the work of local artists.

For Cochran, curating *Locals Only* “was a great excuse to go into a lot of local artists’ studios and see their work.” It was a way of getting to know the artists and to showcase their work.

One sign of the focus on *Locals Only* was the presence of locally relevant and popular art related to the lowrider (cars with very low suspension) culture studied throughout the exhibit. Because Phoenix has a very strong lowrider culture, PAM’s marketing director reached out to Lowrider Car Clubs and made a key connection with the editor of *Lowrider Magazine*. PAM encouraged the lowrider car clubs to bring their motorcycles and cars into the Sculpture Garden, and one artist outfitted a lowrider car as a mobile gallery. Though one event was a *Kids’ Day*, the exhibit also gave a nod to the macho and bikini aura of lowrider culture that is a major reference point in many of the artists’ work.

The director of PAM and its board supported Cochran every step of the way, and the exhibit was sponsored by the local utility company. A major art collector also supported the exhibit. All told, it took just six months between the conception of *Locals Only* and its launch. The result, Cochran says, is a sense of belonging [at the Museum] that was not there before.”

Key Lessons:

- To be as broadly inclusive as possible, the Phoenix Art Museum intentionally mixed “high” and “low” art to engage its local artists and the Chicano community with the Museum and involve them on a more permanent basis as patrons.

- The Museum drew on its pool of artists in the community and interweaved their works with those of a less relevant exhibit in order to build relationships with the artists and with prospective visitors from the community.
- Its leadership committed itself to providing an exhibit that Chicanos would find very relevant and thereby reinforced its relationship with the Chicano community.
- The Museum took advantage of marketing opportunities and targeted lowrider leaders and related media to reach a broader audience that may have felt excluded before this exhibit.

ASU Gammage: Cultural Participation and Programming

Best Practice: Eliminate Barriers: Door-to-Door Access and Beyond

Housed in a stunning building designed by Frank Lloyd Wright, ASU Gammage, one of the largest university-based theaters in the world, at Arizona State University, has been broadening its audience for many years, and its outreach extends to both immigrant and older adult audiences. Widely recognized for its work in Phoenix, ASU Gammage's commitment is evident in the role of one of its staff members: Michael Reed is the Senior Director of Cul-

tural Participation and Programming and is responsible for developing and overseeing an astonishing array of performances, explorations of theater arts for all ages, and programs highlighting the arts of various cultures.

The commitment to accommodating older adults, for example, was demonstrated while *The Phantom of the Opera* was at the theater for a four-week run. To better suit the preferences of older adult audiences, some performances were scheduled as matinees. Reed also explains that the house staff is very experienced in working with older adults and those who are frail or have disabilities. The staff works with ARTability, an Arizona organization that promotes accessibility to the arts for those with disabilities. Before each season begins, the staff reviews issues related to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), though Frank Lloyd Wright's design, while handsome, has made retrofitting ASU Gammage to meet the requirements of the ADA, and other evolving audience needs, quite difficult.

ASU Gammage's desire to prioritize outreach which promotes cultural diversity is reflected in its programming for school children in Phoenix. Reed explains that, "The Phoenix Elementary School District has up to 90 percent of Latino students in many of its schools," and he seeks to give them the chance to benefit from exposure to diverse arts and culture. Through a "bus-

“The Cultural Participation programs are the heart of ASU Gammage’s mission of ‘connecting communities.’ The programs take the artist’s voice, community identities and the innovation of ASU to create a shared cultural place; uniquely inspiring and bringing thousands of Arizonans together for extraordinary shared experiences that create community and foster learning.”⁹⁶

ing” scholarship funded by the Nationwide Foundation, students and teachers, for \$3.00 each, are transported to ASU Gammage for one-hour performances throughout the school year. To support teachers, the Cultural Participation program provides a complementary guide filled with interactive lesson plans.

In 2010, performances included *Dancing Earth*, recommended for grades six to twelve, in which an indigenous contemporary ensemble presented a symbolic dance program. The program, according to ASU Gammage’s description, imparted “stories of creation, bio-diversity, history, and sustainability, to bring to young audiences a revitalized understanding of humans in relationship with the planet.”

Another was *Step Afrika!*, suggested for grades three through twelve, that featured a touring company whose “stepping” reflects African traditions in dance. According to the description of the performance, the artists demonstrated the “ties between stepping, college life, and academic achievement, while introducing the concepts of team work, discipline, and commitment. The performers incorporated world traditions, demonstrated through the lively South African gumboot dance.”

Reed says that “We’re flexible and we try to really understand what’s happening in our community. And we try to make our programs reflective of what’s needed.” He notes that strong leadership explains Gammage’s success: Colleen Jennings-Roggensack, Executive Director, is very community-oriented and the senior staff has been working together for some time. Connecting communities is their mission.

Jennings-Roggensack is a prominent local personality, and is frequently on morning talk shows and Reed is also interviewed on television and radio. This gives

them the chance to share their vision for the theater with the community.

Reed adds that ASU Gammage has made inroads in attracting individual donors; cultural participation is a strong draw for Gammage donors and funders. The number of individuals restricting donations to cultural participation programs has increased, and funding is also available from the Arizona Lottery for these programs. Reed explains that, “When donors find out they do this broader programming, they are impressed.”

Key Lessons:

- ASU Gammage eliminates major barriers to access and responds to the needs of the community through specialized hours of performances, accessibility of the venue by meeting ADA requirements, and reduced ticket costs.
- ASU Gammage’s concern for making its building accessible to older adult patrons, and for those with disabilities is demonstrated by its willingness to schedule matinees and to routinely review compliance with ADA requirements.
- ASU Gammage prioritized outreach to the Phoenix Elementary School District by providing transportation to performances developed specifically for the students.

Arizona Science Center: Engaging the Community and Volunteers

Best Practice: Value Audiences and Volunteers

The Arizona Science Center has long engaged adult volunteers age 50+ as docents, and in other conventional volunteer roles, but only recently the Center began to tap volunteers' science and technology skills to enhance its programs. Jan Stonebraker, the Science Center volunteer coordinator of four years, entered the position as the Center launched a large traveling exhibition titled *Body Worlds 3*, an exploration of biology and anatomy.

Stonebraker identified knowledgeable volunteers to help staff the exhibition. At around the same time, the Virginia G. Piper Charitable Trust funded a leadership grant program, through the National Council on Aging (NCOA), to engage adult volunteers age 50+ in leadership roles. The Science Center development staff and Stonebraker developed a program that would qualify for a grant.

Stonebraker found that many volunteers were retired mechanical and electrical engineers, information technology specialists, and science teachers who wanted to help the Center—it made eminent sense to use their skills to enhance educational programs. A proposal was submitted to NCOA to create a new role for the Science Center's volunteers that would encourage the use of their experiences and skills on the Center's behalf. The Science Center was awarded \$43,000 over a two-year period, to become the seed for Friends of Science and Technology Education (FOSTE). Since the grant has ended, FOSTE has become self-sustaining. The adult volunteers age 50+ with science backgrounds now serve as a FOSTE advisory council, and are an integral part of the everyday operation and activity of the Science Center.

Stonebraker describes a volunteer who serves as testament to the impact of FOSTE volunteers on the Center and its visitors. One FOSTE volunteer is a science teacher who created a new activity for the museum: dissecting a sheep's brain in the Science Center's theater. Described as a born teacher, the volunteer can talk to five-year-olds and Ph.D.s with equal facility; after finishing the dissection of the brain, she completed the same procedure with a sheep's heart. Stonebraker says that the teacher creates so much enthusiasm, she literally gets people jumping up and down in excitement about learning. Additionally, the volunteer's work is so impressive that she was asked to present her Human Brain demonstration at Alan Alda's preview of the PBS documentary, *The Human Spark*.

The FOSTE volunteers manage to accomplish a great deal with very little. Referring to several of them, Stonebraker comments that, "These folks are from the old school, where you build a crystal skull out of what's in the dumpster."

Prior to the start of a new program, a volunteer orientation serves to employ the professional skills of all volunteers, as Stonebraker learns the volunteers' backgrounds and assigns them roles to comport with their skills and preferences. Volunteers always have a long, and diverse list of activities, to which they can be assigned, and additionally are encouraged to suggest their own ideas—today volunteers have created over 50 new activities.

Lastly, the advisory council has also created a training and mentoring program for student volunteers, and today works closely with the senior managers at the Science Center. In the midst of a major construction project at the Center, the advisory council has been working with staff on devising methods to keep patrons comfortable in the midst of construction and demolition.

The Arizona Science Center is truly a hub for volunteer activism, marking professional skills and experiences within a corps of volunteers as an enormous asset. This creates a truly reciprocal relationship, with the Center benefitting from services at no charge, and adult volunteers age 50+ filling more open schedules with truly meaningful and fulfilling work.

Key Lessons:

- The Science Center ensures that adult volunteers age 50+ are offered opportunities that fit their skills and knowledge.
- In enlisting adult volunteers age 50+ in important work, the Center deepens its relationship to the community and its older residents, and fulfills the need for older adults' engagement with community institutions.
- The volunteers with science backgrounds have created new activities that broaden the scope of the Science Center's work and increase its value as a resource for the community.
- The lives of the FOSTE volunteers have been enriched by their involvement with the Center, and the Center is clearly enriched by the volunteers—a truly reciprocal relationship.



The Arizona Science Center

The Arizona Science Center 50+ volunteer Nikii Johnston trains student volunteers on her SCAT tabletop activity. Image courtesy of The Arizona Science Center

Life Enrichment Center
The "Koehlers" attend a Life Enrichment Center art class at one of the Center's numerous art courses offered for older adults.
Image courtesy of the Life Enrichment Center



Tampa: Innovations in Arts and Culture

Situated on the picturesque Tampa Bay, the City of Tampa takes a great deal of pride in its location. The Port of Tampa, one of the largest and busiest ports in the United States, serves both commercial and tourist needs year round. Tampa boasts many miles of beautiful coastline and an abundance of sunshine, which support a strong tourist industry. Tampa also boasts many colleges and universities, such as the main campus of the University of Southern Florida and the private University of Tampa, as well as liberal arts schools and the Hillsborough Community College.

Often described as one of the most diverse cities in the country, Tampa's local leaders have collaborated to create the *Tampa Bay Your Way! Multicultural Visitors' Guide*. The city's deliberate focus on the multiplicity of its cultures and ethnic groups testifies to its appreciation of diversity and the welcome it extends to all who visit. The guide, which was developed as an incentive to attract tourists and convention business, traces some of Tampa's history and highlights the arrival and the impact of the varied racial and ethnic groups that comprise the Tampa we know today.

As the guide reports, Native American tribes originally lived in the Tampa area, but their numbers were decimated following the arrival of Spanish and other Euro-

pean explorers in the 16th century. Some African Americans, after being freed from slavery, settled close to Tampa and helped to build the city. They were also employed as longshoremen at Tampa's port or as porters on the trains that passed through Tampa.

Tampa Bay Your Way! traces later immigration waves to the establishment of hundreds of cigar factories in Tampa. Afro-Cubans came to Tampa to work in these factories, where they labored "side-by-side with the Spanish, Italians and white Cubans," for the most part in cigar factories.

Asian Americans did not settle in any great numbers in Tampa until the 1970s,

Multicultural Tampa Metro Area

- The Tampa area encompasses all of Hillsborough County, about 80% of which is unincorporated, as well as the City of Tampa.
- In 2009, the population of Hillsborough County was estimated to be 1,195,317.
- The white population totaled 77.3%; African Americans were 16.9% of the County's population; 3% were Asians. Hispanic or Latino persons were 23.4%.
- 20.9% of the population spoke a language other than English.
- In the city of Tampa, the U.S. Census estimate in 2009 indicated a total population of 343,879. White persons were 45.6% of the population; Blacks or African Americans were 29.4%; and Hispanic or Latino persons were 24% of the total population.⁹⁷

Aging in the Tampa Metro Area

- The U.S. Census estimated that, in 2008, those 65 years of age and older in the city of Tampa numbered 36,848 and were 11.3% of the population.
- The 2009 U.S. Census estimates for Hillsborough County indicated that 11.8% were 65 and over.⁹⁸
- Nearly 20% are expected to be 65 or over by 2030.
- 60% of those 65 and above will be African American or Hispanic.⁹⁹

when Tampa's universities attracted Vietnamese students and still others who came to escape war and political turmoil. *Tampa Bay Your Way!* reports that the approximately 55,000 Asians now settled in Tampa are from China, Taiwan, Korea, Japan, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, Laos, Thailand, Myanmar, Cambodia, the Philippines, Malaysia, Pakistan, and Indonesia.

Though Spanish explorers arrived in 1528 and 1539, the Hispanic role in Tampa did not become central to its history until 1885. Vicente Martinez Ybor, whose name survives in historic Ybor City, established his hugely successful cigar business in Tampa. The industry collapsed in the 1930s as machines replaced workers, but they and many of their descendants stayed in the city. By the beginning of the 21st century, the Hispanic population had tripled, as many relocated from Latin America, Mexico, and other states in the U.S.

Designated by Florida's Department of Elder Affairs as a "Community for a

Lifetime," Hillsborough County has taken many steps to make it a good place to live for those who are aging. The county is committed to supporting its older residents' desire to stay in their homes and communities, as most wish to do.

One of the hosts for the 12 workshops held across the county as part of the Aging in Place Initiative, Hillsborough County's meeting focused on *Aging with a Comprehensive Approach: Developing a Livable Tampa Bay Region for All Ages*. As sponsors, Partners for Livable Communities and the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (with funding from MetLife Foundation) recognized the county's groundbreaking leadership in developing a comprehensive master plan to enhance the livability of Hillsborough County for older adults and all others. The county's arts and cultural institutions are also doing their share to attract older arts patrons, with many innovative programs that meet a range of needs and interests.

Many major arts institutions add immeasurably to the character and appearance of the city. The Tampa Museum of Art opened a new facility in 2010, located in the Curtis Hixon Downtown Waterfront Park, which will also be the site of the Glazer Children's Museum. The imposing Straz Center for the Performing Arts, situated on the River Walk (the Hillsborough River bisects the city), boasts five theaters and is known for its Broadway series, grand opera performed by Opera Tampa, concerts, dance, drama, and cabaret.

Restaurants that reflect the diversity of its cultures dot the city. The cuisines represented include Spanish, Middle Eastern, Asian, Indian, Caribbean, and Japanese. Several cultural centers that date back to the earlier influxes of immigrants are important city features. ■

Country Music and Button-down Oxfords

Tampa residents describe their city as the cultural midpoint between Charleston, S.C., and Miami. It is a sprawling city of around 333,000 people, where car radios twang with country music, and the button-down oxford seems to be the dress code for football games, church and barbecue stands.¹⁰⁰

The Life Enrichment Center involves older adults directly in the arts, as artists themselves rather than observers.

Life Enrichment Center: Hands On Engagement With the Arts

Best Practice: Develop an Asset-Based Model

The Life Enrichment Center describes itself as the “only private, non-profit community-based center for adults in the Tampa Bay area and one of the few of its kind nationwide. It is the only agency providing classes specifically for active adults, from the baby boom generation and older.”¹⁰¹

The Center involves older adults directly in the arts, as artists themselves rather than observers. It offers classes in contemporary dance, painting, digital photography, and creative writing. The Center also offers Spanish language courses and fitness and computer classes. In close touch with older adults, the Center understands their aspirations. Its programs recognize the need and desire of older adults for creative outlets.

The Center ensures that the influence of older adult artists is felt all over the city. Paintings by Center members hang in local libraries and many other locations. The dance company, comprised of 10 to 15 dancers, performs in a variety of community venues. It has performed several times at the University of South Florida. The company was created through a small grant by The Arts Council of Hillsborough County, which also provided a choreographer.

The choreographer guided the dance company in mastering a variety of dances, from hip-hop to flamenco. The executive director of the Center, Ronna Metcalf,

describes the dancers as doing “a little bit of everything.”

A drawing class typifies the Center’s technique for supporting adult learning in as inclusive a manner as possible. Students start with the basics, such as perspective, and the creation of three dimensional effects through the use of fundamental shapes: cubes, cones, cylinders, and spheres. Tim Gibbons, a highly experienced artist and teacher, stresses the “five rules of drawing, contour lines, tone, shading, shadowing.”

Gibbons has been teaching art for more than 25 years. He emphasizes the role of creativity in art, and describes art as “10 percent skill, which any student can learn, no matter what their age, and 90 percent creativity.” According to the announcement for the class his goal is “to provide students with the techniques, skills, and inspiration to further appreciate and create a lifelong love and understanding of art in their everyday life.”

Written by those in the life writing class, an anthology of pieces on life experiences has been published by the Center. Metcalf describes the anthology, *Pages of My Life*, as a “beautiful book.” It is available to members, grantors, and others.

On the back cover of the book, Paula Stahel, the writing teacher, has written: “In the winter of 2010, a group of people came together to write at the Life Enrichment Center. A few had experience working with words, others none. Each had stories to tell, and all were powerful writers. In voices that range from vividly straightfor-

ward to incorporating creative non-fiction techniques, all shared stories that resonate. Stories about life, love, laughter, sadness. All revealing fascinating individual, yet universal, journeys.”

For many older adults, the time for reflection that writing permits might have eluded them when they were younger. They can now plumb the depths of their experiences, shape and share them. And an important bonus in all of the Center’s classes is the many friendships formed by the students.

Classes are offered weekdays, evenings, and weekends. Professionals in the business or academic communities or certified instructors teach the classes. According to Metcalf, the Center is always open to suggestions for new classes and prospective instructors.

The Center is funded by private donors, corporate sponsors, civic groups, and fundraising events. Metcalf says that the Center is a model for communities around the country, but keeping all the programs adequately funded can be a struggle. The budget for the Center is tight and fundraising a continuing challenge.

Key Lessons:

- Though not a conventional arts or culture venue, the Life Enrichment Center is an educational organization with classes and programs reflect the Center’s clear understanding of older adults as a community asset. While its mission is focused on older adults, the Center is inclusive in its provision of a range of options relevant to the interests of many older adults in hands-on engagement with the arts.

- The Center draws on the talents of local artists, performers, and writers, and in so doing develops new classes and attracts new members to the Center and broadens engagement with the larger community.
- The Center makes the work of older adults visible throughout the Tampa region, reinforcing their relationship to the community.
- Older adults treasure their life experiences, and the Center views these experiences as assets to be shared with others through the arts, and connect with their peers and the community.

Patel Conservatory at the Straz Performing Arts Center: Taking the Show on the Road

Best Practice: Step Outside the Walls

The 45,000 square foot Patel Conservatory, the educational arm of the Straz Performing Arts Center, offers more than 100 performing arts classes. The Conservatory describes the arts that are included as “dance, theater and music for students of all ages and experience levels. Our instructors are passionate, working artists with extensive experience in their specific disciplines.”¹⁰²

The Conservatory’s artists do not confine their work to their facility—instead they share their artistry by taking their show on the road. They teach dances to migrant students and perform operas for older adults. The Conservatory’s dancers also assist Parkinson’s disease patients by demonstrating movements that can ease their rigidity, a debilitating symptom of the disease.

RCMA Academy, located in Wimauma in southeastern Hillsborough County, is a charter school directed by the Redlands Christian Migrant Association. Students from the Academy relish the two hours each week when a resident artist from the Patel Conservatory travels to the Academy to lead the students in song and dance. The artist immerses the students in the

music and dances of their Latino culture. The focus varies, from ballet to jazz, salsa, meringue, and hip-hop. Tina James, the Center’s education programs coordinator, says, “The kids love it.”

Established as a school for children of migrants, RCMA Academy’s students are pre-kindergarten through fifth grade. The purpose of the Academy is to educate children of migrants in a supportive environment that encourages a resilient bond with their families and their heritage. For RCMA Academy students and Patel Conservatory educators, however, the two hours together connect both to a wider world. The joys of music and dance can be widely shared across cultural, language, and geographic boundaries and enrich everyone who participates—and in this case, for both students and the Patel Conservatory artists, these differences temporarily collapse.

Patel Conservatory artists also share their talents through partnerships with an assisted living facility and with the Hillsborough County Department of Aging Services. Members of Opera Tampa, the resident Opera Company at the Straz Center, meet older adults where they congregate in assisted living facilities or senior centers. Though the Conservatory originally varied its programs, its staff found that older adults in the county love opera—so it is not surprising that Opera Tampa now performs mini-concerts on location.

“For many people, a visit to the Straz Center is impossible. We meet this challenge by ‘taking the show on the road!’ Through our Educational Outreach programs, we provide unique opportunities by opening our doors and sending faculty, staff and visiting performing artists to reach individuals and organizations in the community and teach them how to dream, reach, discover and create.”¹⁰³

A very creative Conservatory dance teacher has devised ways to use the movements and exercises of dancers to improve the function of patients of the University of South Florida's Parkinson's Disease and Movement Disorder Center. With accompanying music from the 1950s and 1960s, Conservatory dance teachers demonstrate breathing techniques, voice warm-ups, exercise, and the basic movements and touch that can enhance the ability of the Center's patients to move with greater ease.

Key Lessons:

- The Conservatory steps outside its four walls by taking its "show on the road."
- Patel Conservatory artists provide access to audiences in their own facilities, such as in senior citizen centers or assisted living facilities, who would have previously not been able to attend.
- By expanding beyond its four walls, the Conservatory promotes dance as a truly accessible medium to all ages.

Tampa Museum of Science & Industry: Commitment to Tampa's Immigrants

Best Practice: Value Audiences and Volunteers

Its IMAX Theater, special exhibits, and collections are impressive, but the Museum of Science & Industry (MOSI) serves a more unique role in Tampa: as the operator of a school half of whose students are immigrants. MOSI also offers a Head Start program that has served 600 children in the last 20 years and the *YES!* program (Youth Enriched by Science) serving at-risk youth to enhance self-confidence, and improve communication and leadership skills.

More than 200 students have participated in the *YES!* program since it was launched in 1992. Serving as museum docents and mentors to other students, the youth in *YES!* are given the opportunity to prove their capabilities and perform in responsible roles. A current *YES!* program coordinator, Vivian Santiago, is an alumna of the program who entered the program as a 14 year-old; 90 percent of *YES!* participants continue on to college, the military, or technical trade schools.

Founded along the banks of the Hillsborough River in 1962, MOSI has grown to a 74-acre campus that includes a back woods nature preserve and the nation's largest children's science center. MOSI's *Kids in Charge!* is just one of several programs that exemplify MOSI's community-oriented approach. When community surveys revealed a strong desire for a children's science center, MOSI developed *Kids in Charge!* and assembled a youth advisory board to oversee it. Advisory board members, ranging from ages 9 to 17, do everything that an adult board would do—

“The Museum’s sustainability is grounded in its dedication to listening to the community and is ensured through a commitment to research and evaluation. With more than 100,000 volunteer hours over the past three years and deeply rooted community partnerships, MOSI provides an outstanding example of bringing community service to life.”¹⁰⁴

audience research, planning and organizing events, and fundraising.

In 2009, the Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS) awarded its prestigious National Medal for Museum Service to MOSI for its many programs dedicated to serving a very diverse Tampa. MOSI’s *Meet the Scientist Day*, held annually in conjunction with the National Hispanic Scientist of the Year Award event, provides access to more than 1,000 public school students, a majority from underserved communities, to over 450 MOSI hands-on exhibits.

Meet the Scientist Day was created to enable students to hear about the lives of some of America’s most important Hispanic scientists, who succeeded after overcoming poverty and hardship. Speakers have included Fernando “Frank” Caldeiro, NASA astronaut; Dr. Antonio Coello Novello, U.S. Surgeon General from 1990 to 1993; and Dr. Mario Molina, Nobel Laureate in Chemistry. Many of the students are children of farmworkers; the program gives them a glimpse of alternate career paths.

This event is but one example of the Museum’s dedication to creating unique opportunities for Hispanic residents and was one of the programs that the IMLS cited in granting its National Medal.

Key Lessons:

- MOSI truly values its audience and volunteers, particularly focusing on at-risk youth, and children of immigrants in several innovative programs.
- Volunteers, who contributed 100,000 hours over three years, help to sustain MOSI’s community-oriented agenda.
- MOSI listens to the community: Its development of the *Kids in Charge!* children’s science center followed a survey that demonstrated its strong appeal to the community.



Tampa Museum of Science & Industry

The *YES! (Youth Enriched by Science)* project is a career and educational enrichment program designed to help at-risk youth, between the ages of 13 and 17, develop and progress in a supportive peer-group environment.

Image courtesy of Tampa Museum of Science & Industry

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