The Alchemy of High-Performing Arts Organizations, Part II: A Spotlight on Organizations of Color

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SMU | DataArts

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Research Question

- What are examples of performing arts and community-based arts organizations of color that have financially out-performed others in substantial ways?
Methodology

Analyzed key performance indicators (KPIs) on:

- 7 financial and operating metrics
- Over 4-7 years
Performing Arts Cohort

- 5 LED BY FOUNDING DIRECTORS
- BUDGET RANGE: $278,000 to $15M
- MEAN BUDGET: $2.7M
- MEDIAN BUDGET: $1.4M

- Dance 27%
- Theater 37%
- Music/Orchestra 18%
- Multidisciplinary Performing Arts...
Community-Based Arts Cohort

- 4 LED BY FOUNDING DIRECTORS
- BUDGET RANGE: $146,000 to $2M
- MEAN BUDGET: $639,000
- MEDIAN BUDGET: $468,000

- Cultural & Ethnic Awareness 50%
- General Arts & Culture 10%
- Arts & Humanities Councils 10%
- General Arts & Culture/Youth Services 10%
- Folk Arts 20%
Research Questions

- What kinds of strategies were used to achieve this financial performance?
- Were there particular contexts or conditions in which these strategies seemed to be more effective?
Methodology

- Theories-in-Use: Seeks to capture the mental model of how things work from the perspective of individuals who are closest to the problem (Zeithaml et al. 2020).

- Project timeframe: August – September 2020
Community engagement is my job! Develop relationships across communities, develop relevant programming and client services that serve those relationships...Be purposefully relevant.”

“When you build community with a group of people that have been historically underrepresented, it builds a lot of loyalty. Organizations rooted in their community are very valued because it’s where people find their people.”

“Revere your community. We build relationships around what the community needs, not what a funding initiative dictates.”

“We have really built a community around outstanding theatre and education programs. Artists want to work here, fans want to come, funders want to support it.”

“If you have a strong artistic vision and have a strong social justice vision, too, and are connected to the community, you can inspire artists who want to create relevant art.”
“How will you have created value, and for whom?”

“How are signs that the strategy is getting traction?”

“Eurocentric organizations get buildings and resources. Organizations of color don’t.”

“Funding for artistic creation is given by budget size. No theatre of color has a budget over $3 million. Until we reach $5 million, we don’t get access to...new work development support. There’s an inherent bias against providing organizations like us support.”

“We don’t get EDI support. It’s embedded in us, and yet large Eurocentric organizations are getting millions to diversify their programming. Then they call us to get our audience list. I’m very mindful of the relationships. The field funds the problems, not the successes.”

“Everyone’s running out trying to find a ghetto to serve to get the [EDI] money...It takes away from the organizations that have always done this work, and will be there forever. We should all be treated equitably. But that isn’t the case.”
Linking Strategy and Financial Sustainability

“How will you have created value, and for whom?”

“What are signs that the strategy is getting traction?”

**Cornerstones for Success**

**Short-Term Outcomes**

**Community Orientation**

**High-Quality Programming Standards**

**External Moderating Factors**
- Disasters/Crises
- Racism
- Gentrification
- Access to funding

**Tactical Wins**
- Stronger Brand
- High-Functioning Board
- Relationship Development & Buy-In

**Internal Moderating Factors**
- Mission alignment
- Organizational culture
- Investment in marketing & fundraising
- Adaptive capability
- Multiyear horizon
Linking Strategy and Financial Sustainability

“How will you have created value, and for whom?”

“Do we have a solid financial foundation on which we can build mission and vision?”

“What are signs that the strategy is getting traction?”

“What does balance look like once the organization builds momentum?”

**Cornerstones for Success**

**External Moderating Factors**
- Disasters/Crises
- Racism
- Gentrification
- Access to funding

**Community Orientation**

**High-Quality Programming Standards**

**Tactical Wins**
- Stronger Brand
- High-Functioning Board
- Relationship Development & Buy-In

**Intermediate Outcomes**

**Increased Audience & Donor Financial Participation**

**Increased Organizational Capacity**

**Deeper Community & Donor Engagement**

**Long-Term Outcome**

**Increased Financial Sustainability**

**Internal Moderating Factors**
- Mission alignment
- Organizational culture
- Investment in marketing & fundraising
- Adaptive capability
- Multiyear horizon

- Mission focus

- Discipline
Participating Organizations

Dance
- Anita N. Martinez Ballet Folklorico
- Chen Dance Center
- Dallas Black Dance Theatre

Music/Orchestra
- Chicago Sinfonietta
- Herbie Hancock Institute of Jazz

Multidisciplinary Performing Arts
- Apollo Theater
- The King Arts Complex

Cultural and Ethnic Awareness
- Chinese Culture Foundation of S.F.
- Cultural Odyssey
- Kaisahan of San Jose Dance Company
- Oakland Asian Cultural Center
- Purple Silk Music Education Foundation

Theater
- Detroit Repertory Theatre
- East West Players
- Mixed Blood Theatre
- Theatre Mu

General Arts & Culture
- Sitar Arts Center

Folk Arts
- Center for Traditional Music and Dance
- Sones de México Ensemble

General Arts & Culture/Youth Services
- CircEsteem

Arts & Humanities Councils
- Grandville Avenue Arts & Humanities