

**Regional Arts and Culture Council  
Diversity Research Study**

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**A Review of the Literature:  
Diversity Initiatives in Arts and Culture  
Nonprofit Organizations**

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**Prepared by**



**10028 SW Balmer Circle  
Portland, OR 97219  
Ph. 503-246-1412  
Email: [chari@crsmithconsulting.com](mailto:chari@crsmithconsulting.com)  
[www.crsmithconsulting.com](http://www.crsmithconsulting.com)**

**Regional Arts and Culture Council (RACC) Diversity Research Study**  
**A Review of the Literature**  
**Diversity Initiatives in Arts and Culture Nonprofit Organizations**

This document provides research-based lessons learned from diversity initiatives undertaken by arts and culture nonprofit organizations across the United States. Lessons learned come from previous and ongoing efforts to increase access to arts and culture events for diverse communities and how others are measuring this increase in access. All of the research was identified using the Internet (Google and Google Scholar) and one field-specific book. All works reviewed are referenced in the References.

## DIVERSITY DEFINED

The diversity initiatives reviewed did not share a universal definition of diversity, but rather, shared a desire to accept, respect and understand individual differences in their communities for the purpose of increasing the involvement of a diverse people in their organization's efforts. The individual differences of interest varied by organization, but encompassed the dimensions of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, age, physical abilities, religious beliefs, political beliefs, or other ideologies.

## DIMENSIONS OF DIVERSITY

Of this sample of 21 arts and culture nonprofit organizations reviewed, the elements of diversity focused on are (in order of descending frequency):

• age	57%	(12/21)
• race	52%	(11/21)
• culture	48%	(10/21)
• socio-economic status	33%	(7/21)
• ethnicity	29%	(6/21)
• place: urban/rural/etc.	24%	(5/21)
• gender	19%	(4/21)
• ability	19%	(4/21)
• family status	14%	(3/21)
• sexual orientation	10%	(2/21)
• prior art exposure	10%	(2/21)
• nation of origin	5%	(1/21)
• marital status	5%	(1/21)
• educational level	5%	(1/21)
• occupation	5%	(1/21)
• political affiliation	5%	(1/21)
• religion	5%	(1/21)

Below are the 21 diversity initiatives reviewed charting the dimension(s) of diversity that fell within their interest.

Initiative	Diversity Type of Interest																
	race	ethnicity	culture	nation of origin	age	gender	sexual orientation	physical/intellectual ability	marital status	family status	socio-economic status	educational level	occupation	place: urban/rural/community	political affiliation	religion	prior art exposure
<a href="#">The Arts Diversity Index</a>	X	X			X	X			X		X	X			X		
<a href="#">Measurements of Success: Outreach and Diversity Efforts (Seattle Art Museum)</a>		X	X														
<a href="#">The Arts Council of Metropolitan Kansas City</a>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X					X	
<a href="#">Tubman African American Museum</a>	X				X												
<a href="#">Making Contemporary Art Accessible at the Whitney Museum of American Art</a>								X									
<a href="#">Monterey Bay Aquarium</a>			X														
<a href="#">Children’s Discovery Museum of San Jose</a>		X															
<a href="#">CenterStage Theater (Baltimore, MD)</a>		X			X												
<a href="#">Boston Lyric Opera</a>	X				X					X	X						X
<a href="#">Japanese American National Museum</a>	X		X		X												
<a href="#">Brooklyn Museum</a>	X				X								X	X			
<a href="#">Museum of Art and History at the McPherson Center (MAH)</a>			X		X												
<a href="#">Santa Cruz Museum of Art &amp; History</a>			X		X					X				X			
<a href="#">Pacific Northwest Ballet</a>	X		X		X						X						
<a href="#">José Mateo Ballet Theatre</a>			X														
<a href="#">Oakland Museum of California</a>	X		X		X					X							X
<a href="#">The Old Globe (theater)</a>					X						X			X			
<a href="#">Cornerstone Theater</a>			X											X			
<a href="#">ArtPlace America</a>	X	X									X						
<a href="#">ASTC Equity and Diversity Toolkit</a>	X					X		X									

<a href="#">National Committee for Responsible Philanthropy</a>	x					x	x	x			x			x		
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## DIVERSITY INITIATIVES: LESSONS LEARNED

### COMMIT WIDE AND DEEP

Successful diversity initiatives make an institutional commitment by making diversity a priority in every aspect of the organization.

- Make the composition of board, staff and volunteers diverse. Consider:
  - Developing a Fellows Program to support the professional growth and retention of diverse professionals of currently working in the field
  - Assigning mentors/board buddies and senior staff to help all new board members function well by providing information and encouragement
  - Drawing on the diversity of Chambers of Commerce reflecting specific ethnicities, i.e. the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce or ministerial alliances
  - Use minority search firms to find quality diverse candidates for executive leaders
- Integrate the diversity plan across the organization. Consider:
  - Developing a diversity policy that is supportive of and referenced in the mission, vision statement and goals
  - Adding diversity initiative supporting responsibilities to job descriptions and performance evaluations, i.e., ask staff:
    - What activities have you participated in that have expanded your knowledge of diverse backgrounds? How did they change your view, attitudes and beliefs about diverse backgrounds?
    - Describe how you have incorporated your learning about culturally diverse backgrounds into your work with your staff and others.
  - Providing diversity competency training opportunities
  - Rewarding employees-awards, lunches, letters, monetary compensation-for their efforts at diversity competency
  - Designating a person charged with implementing the diversity policy person within your organization
- Create communication campaigns that promote the diversity initiative using all communication vehicles including website, newsletters, social media, etc.

### INVOLVE OTHERS

- Meet and collaborate with existing diverse community groups to:
  - Increase public participation in programming
  - Increase learning from each culture, benefitting all
  - Make better use of resources (funding, staff, volunteers, time)
  - Build relationships that can be called upon in the future
  - Attract larger and more diverse audiences
- Participate in partnerships with others-academic institutions, businesses, local government and foundations-who share an interest in fostering a robust civic culture and a creative economy and workforce
- Talk to your current and desired audience
  - Identify differences in motivation for participation among members of different ethnic groups

- Some [research](#) indicates
  - some African Americans value seeing Black directors and performers with Black themes, topics, stories
  - many non-Caucasians are motivated by an art experience that will speak to and reinforce their own cultural heritage
  - when there is a wide range of diversity within an ethnic group (i.e., Asian Americans, Latinos) there may be benefit in choosing to target a segment of that population rather than the whole

## BENEFIT FROM DATA

### MAKE USE OF EXISTING DATA

- [United States Census Bureau](#)
- [NEA's Participation in the Arts Survey](#)
- [Experian Simmons National Consumer Survey](#)
- [League of American Orchestras Orchestra Statistical Reports](#)
- [McKinsey – 2008 iConsumer survey](#)

### WHAT TO DO WITH DATA

- Establish baselines
  - [The Arts Diversity Index](#)- Theatre Bay Area examined seven different types of diversity (race/ethnicity, age, household income, gender, educational attainment, marital status, and political affiliation.) in theatre audiences (baseline), and compared those diversity scores to the same diversities in the general population to create a diversity index. The goal was to understand not how a company might achieve total parity, but instead to create a baseline of diversity so as to understand how a company might mirror the larger population in which it existed. It was developed with data from a large existing data collection project- [California Cultural Data Project](#)- a powerful online management tool allowing organizations to track trends and benchmark their progress.
  - Simpler indicators
    - track diversity within internal operations, i.e., track backgrounds and ethnicity of staff/new hires/board/volunteers/vendors
    - how many pieces of art are created by artists from an underrepresented group, how many exhibits appeal to multi-cultural audiences
- Create benchmarks/goals
  - Staff need a clear map of the road ahead with knowledge of resources available, actions to take, who is responsible and a timetable
  - Consider the use of the [Logic Model Development Guide](#) or a similar tool to give form to the process
- Standardized data collection processes
  - Accurate measurement of change requires a standardized process
  - Standards for the measurement of participation have not been established for the nonprofit arts and culture field, but staff can still use the same tools in the same way across the organization/initiative

- Assess change
  - Don't just collect data; analyze it and disseminate results
  - Continue to monitor the ongoing demographic changes occurring in your community and continue to compare this to diversity initiative results

## CHOOSE EFFECTIVE TACTICS

- Strive to provide relevant programming
  - Create programming with ethnically diverse directors, performers, themes, topics and stories
  - Support the inclusion of diverse artists and art forms in programming
- Create programs that are [accessible](#)
  - Provide sign language interpreters and assisted listening technologies for the hearing impaired at events
  - Remodel facilities to provide access for the disabled
  - Have accessibility information on your website
- Be affordable
  - Some infrequent arts attenders may not be used to typical ticket prices in the performing arts
  - Provide scholarships to events or sliding scale admissions ("pay as you can")
- Outreach
  - Have event coordinators, education coordinators, etc. who speak multiple languages
  - Provide publications and programming in multiple languages
  - Market with diversity in mind
  - Collaborate on promotion
  - Hold events in venues familiar to your desired audience, i.e., libraries, community centers, schools
- Diversifying is about persuading
  - Efforts "to diversify participation are most appropriate for individuals not inclined to participate. These people believe the arts are not likely to be of benefit to them and thus must be persuaded of the benefits they could derive from participation."

"The Cleveland Museum of Art, for example, introduced several new initiatives designed to counter its image as an "elite" institution and to broaden its appeal within the community. These initiatives included a program to bring 20 art exhibits a year into shopping centers, schools, and community centers; community-oriented programming that set aside specific days for target groups to come to the museum; informal barbecues twice a week at the museum; and an annual Mardi Gras-style parade that involved workshops on float and costume design located throughout the community. The St. Louis Symphony Orchestra instituted a community partnership program to send small groups of musicians into schools, churches, and civic organizations to perform and discuss their music."

## MEASURING DIVERSITY

The importance of measurement in diversity initiatives is a common theme in the literature. Even though standards for the measurement of diversity initiatives have not yet been established for the field of arts and culture, there can be value in seeing what others are doing. A number of tools used by arts and culture organizations engaged in diversity initiatives are listed below.

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## FREQUENTLY CITED TOOLS

- Staff surveys
- Audience surveys
- Community surveys
- Focus groups
- Phone interviews

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## INTERNAL ASSESSMENTS

### [ASTC Leadership Diversity Survey](#)

A performance evaluation instrument for executives, as a starting point for executive team discussions, or departmental level focus groups. [Survey Monkey](#) can be used to computerize this survey.

### [Arts Cultural Competency Skills Worksheet](#)

A worksheet designed to help organizations assess their arts cultural competency skills.

### [Diversity and Cultural Proficiency Assessment Tool](#)

A questionnaire to help organizations self-assess their diversity and cultural proficiency and help in identifying activities and practices that are in place or need to be implemented. The questions fall into the following categories:

- Community Diversity
- Cultural Diversity
- Leadership Team Diversity
- Workforce Diversity

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## AUDIENCE SURVEYS

### [The Dance Center of Columbia College Chicago Special 2010 Audience Survey](#)

### [The Dance Center of Columbia College Chicago: Experience Sampling Results, Cross-Ethnic Research & Marketing Initiative](#)

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## SUPPORTING TECHNOLOGY

### [Google Analytics](#)

For measuring how well it was reaching audience segments via marketing plans using website, newsletters, social media and video channels

### [Total Info](#)

An off the shelf database program designed for nonprofits with audience segmentation functionality. “Total Info allows you to see fundraising, box office and education involvement together for every constituent and across every family throughout your system. Total Info goes far beyond basic ticketing

systems, giving you the tools you need to help you reach and exceed your budgeted fundraising, box office and education goals efficiently and effectively.”

#### [Salesforce](#)

Software that can be used to gain/track/measure information on audience segments and leverage info to expand audience; can be used to track ticket purchasing data and donor info as well.

#### [Arts Enterprise Software](#)

Software adopted by over 200 larger nonprofit arts and culture organizations. Successful for managing sales, donations, and other transaction and relationship data, marketing/communication efforts, and tracking of audience data and preferences. Drawbacks: expense, not helpful for tracking relational forms of participation building.



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