

Arts and Culture - Strategic Conversation Proceedings

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Triton Museum of Art
1505 Warburton Avenue
Santa Clara, California 95050

This document summarizes key themes and discussion points shared during the Arts and Culture strategic conversation held as part of the Silicon Valley Community Foundation's Community Input Project. This was the second of nine strategic conversations convened by the community foundation as part of this project. A total of 70 participants attended the convening, representing artists, arts and culture organizations, public agencies, donors and others vital to the vibrancy of the arts and culture sector in the region. In addition, various representatives of the community foundation's board of directors and leadership team attended this convening, including CEO and President, Emmett Carson, Chief of Donor Engagement and Giving, Eleanor Clement Glass, Vice President, Community Initiatives, Convening and Research, Erica Wood and Vice President, Grantmaking, Ellen Clear.

Overview of the Community Input Project

Silicon Valley Community Foundation is committed to the best ideas and most effective solutions—at the local and the regional levels. With those goals in mind, the community foundation has initiated the Community Input Project, a series of strategic conversations, data review and community surveying around needs and issues that matter most. The issues were selected based on a review of local data, the many excellent assessments available about the health, social and environmental concerns in the region, and issues community members and leaders have raised.

The community foundation anticipates this process will spur a greater interest in regional partnerships as well as strategic solutions for meaningful, lasting and transformative change. The community foundation's board of directors will take the results into consideration when making decisions about future directions and strategies.

This project focuses on the following nine issue areas:

- Arts and Culture
- Child and Youth Development
- Civic Engagement
- Community Economic Development
- Education
- Environment
- Health
- Housing and Basic Needs
- Immigration

Structure of the Strategic Conversations

Each strategic conversation follows a similar model, designed to provide participants with a common context and framing for productive discussion. Community foundation staff opens the session with a welcome and overview, and then introduces a keynote speaker who delivers an inspirational presentation with the goal of creating a sense of energy and purpose for the group's conversations to follow. Participants engage in direct conversation with each other and the community foundation through facilitated small-group discussions organized around the key issues identified in the issue briefs prepared in advance of the conversation. Issue briefs are available for download at www.siliconvalleycf.org. These small-group discussions are generative in nature, as participants respond to two key questions:

- What are the region's key issues in the area under examination for today's conversation?
- What opportunities are ripe and have the potential for significant impact?

Participants reconvene as a large group following the small-group discussions to engage in integrative thinking. As a large group, participants share "big ideas" and strategies to impact the region's most critical issues.

All aspects of the conversations are recorded and synthesized for the community foundation to take under consideration.

Keynote Presentation

Dr. Harry J. Elam, chair of the Stanford University Drama Department and Olive H. Palmer, professor in the Humanities, provided the keynote speech for the arts and culture conversation. Dr. Elam challenged the group to consider the following questions:

- How will the arts and culture community incorporate technology and increase its relevance in the 21st century?
- How can the rich diversity of culture, artistic expression, and community in the Silicon Valley contribute to political and social change?
- What are the most appropriate "outcomes" for arts and culture organizations, and how can they be defined and measured?

Dr. Elam further encouraged participants to think about how arts and culture organizations can reach across groups not only to encourage audience development, but also to take leadership in creating community dialogue to address questions of how best to affect social change.

Issues for Discussion: Pressing Needs and Opportunities for Impact

The three issues for discussion that participants engaged with in the arts and culture conversation were:

1. Sustainability
2. Arts and Education
3. Arts and Community Building

The following summarizes the top-level themes from the small-group discussions on these topics.

Sustainability

Pressing Needs

- Lack of affordable and accessible facilities for artists
- Arts and culture in the region lack a sense of place and roots
- Approaches to fund development and sustainability are not regionally focused
- Transportation is a barrier to accessing artistic and cultural events
- Lack of sufficient funding by local governments
- Lack of leadership development and succession planning
- Lack of pathways to develop youth interest and leadership in the sector
- Need for business planning support for arts and culture organizations
- Challenge of reaching new audiences, particularly for endowment building
- Demographic shifts are affecting audience and fund development

Opportunities for Impact

- Develop and promote a three-prong sustainability framework: product, audience and leadership development
- Promote collaboration in the sector
- Research and disseminate best and promising practice model
- Research and review systemic and strategic issues affecting the sector
- Support internal professional development tracks including management, internships and other leadership opportunities
- Develop a regional approach to endowment building
- Consider multi-year grants and initiatives focused on promoting sustainability
- Explore public policy approaches to support local arts (e.g., San Francisco hotel tax fund, First Act)
- Cultivate partnerships across arts organizations of varied sizes, locations and areas of focus in order to support learning, leveraging resource, and expanding audience participation

Arts and Education

Pressing Needs

- Need to cultivate knowledge of and interest in arts and culture among young people and young families
- Replacement of the arts with individual and technologically-based entertainment in the homes of young children in the 21st century
- Diminishing value and role of the arts in education systems
- Lack of access to the arts for vulnerable populations and those in geographically isolated areas of the region
- Lack of a pipeline for developing new arts educators
- Lack of a coordinating body for arts education in the region, resulting in administrative redundancies, fragmentation and a lack of a coordinated approach to arts education
- Differing degrees of access to local art institutions across San Mateo and Santa Clara counties, resulting in varying degrees of understanding and value placed on the arts

Opportunities for Impact

- Increase access and reduce expense of artistic and cultural performances by bringing art to public or community settings
- Incorporate the technology of art into the educational system
- Work with schools to identify, direct and coordinate arts funding and programming
- Partner with local government agencies (e.g., parks and recreation) to incorporate arts programming into existing efforts (e.g., after-school programs) and identify other opportunities for integration of the arts into educational programming
- Strengthen the presence of art in alternative educational settings, such as continuation high schools and special needs programming
- Support artists in residence to consider arts education as a vocation
- Provide adults who are participating in the arts with a connection to arts organizations
- Identify and engage those individuals and communities who highly value arts and culture

Arts and Community Building

Pressing Needs

- Addressing the challenge of developing new audiences and reaching out across communities
- Developing linkages and partnerships with corporate partners
- Under-utilization of community gathering places and facilities
- Building stronger connections across issues of the environment, technology and the arts
- Incorporating the arts in community development and planning processes
- Realizing the potential in the arts for economic development
- Supporting the needs of artists in the community, such as health insurance and affordable housing

- Increasing the voice of the arts in regional print media

Opportunities for Impact

- Create a space and center for organizational and individual artists to create their art
- Articulate the civic relevance of the arts and develop a regional arts policy
- Support the use of technology to engage and expand the voice of arts in the community
- Support arts advocacy training at local colleges
- Identify strategies to support local artists' ability to remain in the region (address high cost of living)

Participants' Overarching Suggestions

Building on the ideas and discussions generated during the facilitated small group rotations, participants shared their overarching suggestions that are at the intersection of critical issues, ripe opportunities and potential for meaningful impact. The following provides a summary overview of these suggestions. Please note that there may be overlap with ideas generated in the small-group discussions previously summarized and some ideas may have been subsumed or categorized with others to reduce redundancies. It is also important to bear in mind that these overarching suggestions are not only for Silicon Valley Community Foundation's consideration, but also for all those who are interested in and support the arts and culture sector in the region.

Summary of Overarching Suggestions

- Expand after-school music programs to include instruments of ethnicities other than Western European; incorporate these instruments into public school music curriculum
- Create a regionally-based arts management internship program
- Establish a creative center for the arts to provide rehearsal space for groups and individuals and allow for the opportunity to combine back office operations
- Fund and facilitate large collaborative efforts
- Convene a regional conference for arts groups
- Support a process to tap into the resources of the area's diverse cultural groups by creating opportunities for access to and participation in local and regional arts training, event and performing activities
- Facilitate pro-bono assistance to arts organizations
- Create a clearinghouse or round table to bring all resources together: funding sources, what works, who are the best people to contact to get things done, etc.
- Leverage public resources: recreational programs and funding, city arts funds/events, school arts funds/events
- Support arts education in all schools with community, school district, staff and private funding support as well as adequate and quality training for new/upcoming arts teachers
- Support regional development of the arts
- Support a regional endowment for the arts, a convening of our major donors/stakeholders, and a framework for fostering the next generation of arts leaders
- Support group health plans and housing subsidy for artists and administrators

- Creation of a communications vehicle that serves the arts administration staff at the arts organizations to help foster discussions and collaborations throughout the region
- Dedicate support for underserved populations and small projects, help organize and coordinate candidates for collaborative projects
- Cross-connect events and publicity across communities
- Convene organizations in similar media (e.g., theater groups to share, learn and combine/collaborate)
- Provide an opportunity for arts groups to collectively be trained in business plan development, management skills and marketing opportunities
- Explore consortium funding and field-wide leadership around specific relevant initiatives (e.g. arts education or audience development/diversification etc.)
- Create collaboratives among large and small organizations to share resources
- Provide leadership in communicating the value and power of art to bridge divides
- Develop a cohesive public policy for the arts in the region
- Support online marketing and other internet outreach for arts organizations to promote programs, performances, fundraiser and exhibitions
- Support integration of transportation in the region so that patrons can attend at a reasonable out-of-pocket expense and reduce environmental impact
- Advocate for increased media coverage of the arts, instead of entertainment
- Convene a large regional arts festival, bringing together diverse groups of visual and performing arts

Next Steps

Silicon Valley Community Foundation staff is reviewing and analyzing content from all nine strategic conversations, alongside results from a community survey and comprehensive review of local studies, to provide recommendations for the Board of Directors to consider in determining future community impact work. These recommendations will encompass the variety of ways in which the community foundation can achieve impact, including grantmaking, initiatives, convening, research, donor engagement and policy/advocacy efforts.

For more information or to download the issue brief for the conversation, please visit our website at www.siliconvalleycf.org. You can also email questions, comments or suggestions to Charu Seth, administrative assistant at cseth@siliconvalleycf.org.