An Introduction to Engaging Diverse Audiences

Part of the Regional Arts & Culture Council's initiative
to promote equitable access to arts and culture

Regional Arts &
Culture Council

Dear Friends and Colleagues:

We believe that all people deserve art and culture in their lives—from a moment of personal inspiration, to a neighborhood musical gathering, to a glorious production that brings thousands to their feet, to a movement that joins diverse people and cultures together, to the greatest of all: uniting nations through creative expression, not politics or conflict.

Arts and culture can be a vehicle to spark conversations, to spur social change and make our communities strong, healthy, and above all equitable. Together with you, we hope to build a community that prioritizes access to arts and culture resources for *all* of its people.

Tackling the issue of equity and inclusion requires commitment, respect, patience, determination, and flexibility. We discovered early on in our own work that there is no one right way to achieve equitable results and that we will make and attempt to correct mistakes along the way. With this realization in mind, we ask you to commit and continuously *recommit* to being part of a bigger conversation about equity and inclusion that aims at breaking down barriers and building bridges across communities.

When this topic was brought to the fore by the City of Portland and RACC, we clearly heard requests from many of you for practical methods and tools. We hope this document will provide some help as you plot your own course. We have been working with CRSmith Consulting, a research and evaluation firm, to develop this **"Introduction to Engaging Diverse Audiences."** The framework represents a series of building blocks, examples, and questions for creating more engagement within and across the region's diverse communities.

This document is designed to:

- Provide tools to promote equity and inclusion by reducing barriers to participation and increasing engagement.
- Create a common language among organizations and help organizations track progress.
- Remind ourselves that the bigger picture can be broken down into small, manageable pieces.
- Highlight, acknowledge, celebrate, and learn from the efforts and progress arts and culture organizations are already making.

Sharing our best practices with each other is as valuable as anything, and we are providing a forum to do so through a newly-established "Community of Learners" series for RACC-funded organizations. If you aren't already participating in this learning community, please reach out to us or visit www.racc.org/equity so we can tell you more.

This document is not a straight pathway to success because this work is, by nature, organic and complex rather than linear and easily digestible. We also recognize that this can only be seen as one piece in the bigger picture of making change happen. Some of you may be already focused on these efforts; others may be ready to launch or thinking about launching. With this document and some real-life examples of the work that many of you and others around the country are already doing, we hope to inspire and encourage you to move forward with us—or even take the lead!

My very best,

Eloise Damrosch

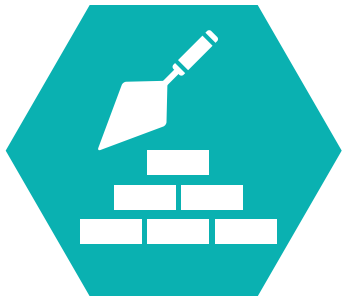# Six Building Blocks for Engaging Diverse Audiences

Based on local and national best practices for equity and inclusion work—and some promising applications in the local arts community—RACC has developed six building blocks to help organizations foster equitable access to the arts by increasing the participation of and engagement with diverse audiences. This framework draws from a comprehensive review of current research and best practices in addition to conversations with community leaders and professionals in local and national arts and culture organizations.

Relationship building is a cornerstone of success in engaging *any* community and is a thread that runs through the six building blocks. This work may require fundamental shifts in organizations that will take time to establish and execute. Although engaging with diverse communities and promoting equity is a long-term commitment, these building blocks help break down the work into bite-sized pieces to help you get started.

For each building block shown here, we have assembled tools and resources to help put them into action. We recognize that every organization has a unique structure, mission, and needs, so the building blocks are offered only as suggestions and may be adapted as needed. Also, these blocks are presented in a recommended sequence; yet again, each organization should feel free to work on a building block that fits in with its own current stage in the process and is consistent with its own size and resources. We all have to start somewhere.

Establishing a Foundation

Evaluating Progress

Assessing Your Current Audience

Building Community Relationships

Defining Audience Segments

Developing a Marketing & Communications Plan

Determining Programming & Events

Establishing a Foundation

Increased equitable access and engagement begins with creating a solid foundation and internal structure that supports these efforts. Each organization needs to determine what equity means and why pursuing it is important. Much of this work involves identifying and removing barriers that limit a community's full participation.

In order to move from "we are considering and thinking about" to "we are changing and improving," your organization's equity initiative needs to be embedded in your mission, values, culture, and structure. This step does not automatically require a complete rewriting of the mission statement; however, examining your current mission statement through an equity lens or creating a separate value statement can be an important step in whole-heartedly and structurally embracing the work from within. This first building block definitely requires conversations, reflection, and agreement among your staff and board members as to what equity and diversity mean and how they enhance your organization.

As much as this building block is a stepping stone for building equitable access to arts and culture, it is also an opportunity to be part of a bigger movement—away from barriers and discrimination and towards a community that prioritizes the equitable access to *all* resources for *all* of its members. These conversations are already happening on the legislative level, among private organizations as well as foundations. Rapid changes in the demographics of our region reinforce that being part of this movement is not only "the right thing to do" but vital for an organization's economic sustainability.

Putting It Into Action

It is crucial to ensure that everyone in your organization is familiar with key terms, and you are all working from the same vocabulary. Your definitions for "diversity" and "equity" may change over time as you advance your efforts, and the broader, public conversation about equity and inclusion will continue to evolve as well. Some examples:

- "Diversity" is defined as the range of unique characteristics of individuals including race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, age, physical abilities, religious beliefs or other ideologies, and relationship to place (rural/urban). (RACC Outreach & Equity Plan, 2012)

- "Equity" means when everyone has access to the opportunities necessary to satisfy their essential needs, advance their well-being, and achieve their full potential. We have a shared fate as individuals within a community and as communities within a society. All communities need the ability to shape their own present and future. Equity is both the means to healthy communities and an end that benefits us all. (The Portland Plan, City of Portland, 2012)

- "Equity" means that all residents from Portland's diverse and multicultural communities have access to the opportunities and resources they need to attain their full potential. (Guiding Principles of Equity and Social Justice, Portland Housing Bureau, City of Portland)

- "Equity" means removing systematic barriers to resources so that individuals can succeed. (Office of Diversity and Equity, Multnomah County)

 For more information: racc.org/buildingblocks

Questions to Consider

- What value does diversity and equity represent to your organization?

- Have you included all members of the organization in diversity and equity conversations (e.g., staff, board members, trustees, volunteers)?

- Is there a commitment to inclusion and equity at all levels of the organization? How do you know?

- Is equity integral to organizational operations? Are there policies, procedures, and practices in place that might intentionally or unintentionally create barriers?

Resources and Tools

Organizational self-assessments can help guide you to establishing a foundation. Which tool is right for you depends on a number of factors, such as your organization's size, needs, and evaluation capacity.

Several available assessments and resources can help you get started:

- Continuum on Becoming an Anti-Racist, Multicultural Institution illustrates and specifies the critical elements of an organization's transformation from exclusive to fully inclusive.

- Race Matters: Organizational Self-Assessment by The Annie E. Casey Foundation is an assessment designed for any organization that wants to raise organizational awareness and start focused conversations. The assessment results can contribute to the development of equity action plans and track organizational change.

- The Coalition of Communities of Color and All Hands Raised have developed an Organizational Self-Assessment Related to Racial Equity to help organizations of any size evaluate their current practices and policies as they relate to racial equity.

- Multnomah County's Equity & Empowerment Lens is a quality improvement tool to guide organizations toward more equitable policies and programs at all levels.

- The Diversity Toolkit from the Mississippi Arts Commission provides a questionnaire to help organizations self-assess their diversity and cultural proficiency and help identify activities and practices that are in place or need to be implemented.

Example

Ethos Inc.

Ethos' leadership team held a series of internal conversations with staff and board members to create a "baseline" for Ethos' equity evaluation process. The "baseline" was created as a measure for initiative impact, with the understanding that an effective and responsive culture of inclusion is ongoing, systemic and dynamic. Ethos' leadership team identified immediate solutions to increase access for internal and external stakeholders, including: a parent resource council that elects a parent to serve on Ethos' Board of Directors, gender-neutral restrooms in all Ethos facilities, a program delivery training for instructors to focus on inclusive language that is compatible with student's cultural and diverse backgrounds (including family composition), and a strategy for ongoing evaluation of Ethos' equity and inclusion lens.

Tip

If your organization does not have the resources to work with a consultant, there are other options available. You can create your own mechanisms to keep the focus on equity and inclusion present throughout your work; for instance, a recurring agenda item at regular staff meetings, posting an equity statement in all common areas, incorporating equity philosophy as a key piece of new employee/volunteer orientations, and/or ensuring that equity initiatives are included in each new program.

"We are practicing how to speak about diversity, and we have weekly staff meetings now where we keep everyone informed about what is happening with diversity. We learned that our focus needs to be internal, that we need to look at how welcoming we are to different people."

—Brian Weaver, Artistic Director, Portland Playhouse.
From the 2013 Portland Equity in the Arts Consortium (PEAC) report, a program of the August Wilson Red Door Project

Assessing your Current Audience

In order to determine future goals and direction, it is vital for an organization to know who its audience members are today. For some, audience demographic data may be readily available, while for others it may require some time and work to uncover the details. Small organizations with limited resources and staff may choose to move forward modestly at first. The data gathered in this building block is the starting point in evaluating progress as it provides a snapshot of the current audience and helps assess whether and where progress is made along the way. Future data collection will be compared to this starting point.

Assessing your current audience may include more than gathering demographic data. Audience measurement tools can also uncover useful information such as attendance frequency, motives for participation, how patrons learned about an event, or what they liked.

Putting It Into Action

This block establishes a baseline that your organization will revisit when you evaluate your progress (described later in this document). The goal of this block is to help you make key decisions based on data.

The first step is to identify what data should be collected. This data may include demographics, motivations for attending, and how patrons learned about the event. Once the types of data to be collected are determined, methods to collect the data should be identified. Examples include:

- Point-of-sale data collection. Ticket purchasers would be asked to self-identify according to the demographics being collected (e.g., age, ethnicity, educational background). This method requires staff training and an explanation to patrons of why the data collection is important. This may be conducted on an annual basis or one performance per year.

- Audience survey. A patron survey would be conducted at a performance or event. The survey could be administered by volunteers.

- Direct mail or email survey. A brief survey mailed to all subscribers with an enclosed self-addressed, postage-paid return envelope. This survey can also be administered using email. Completion incentives could be offered to increase the response rate.

- Current membership. Analyze membership and/or ticket sales data to describe your most typical members (e.g., purchaser's residence).

For more information:
racc.org/buildingblocks

Questions to Consider

- What information is already available (e.g., ticket sales, audience surveys, membership statistics)?

- What characteristics describe the most frequent attendees?

- Can the current audience be categorized into subgroups that reflect shared characteristics (e.g., age, gender, ethnicity)?

- What changes have occurred over the last three years? Five years? Ten years?

- Who is available to lead this effort?

- What existing resources can be utilized to complete an assessment (e.g., reaching out to local universities and asking for volunteer support from students needing community service/special projects)?

- Who will create the measurement process and tools?

Resources and Tools

Population and arts audience data already available that are helpful for establishing baselines, making comparisons, and identifying trends include some of the following:

- United States Census Bureau
- League of American Orchestras Statistical Reports

Software programs can automate the process of gathering audience data. Some examples are:

- Total Info: A fully integrated box office database program designed for performing arts organizations that manage ticket sales, audience and patron data collection, and financial reporting.
- Tessitura Arts Enterprise Software: Software developed for nonprofit arts and culture organizations that manage transaction and relationship data, marketing/communication efforts, and tracking of audience data and preferences.

"We need metrics and we need to know what the goal is. Until we actually know where we are, we don't know how to make change. What are the numbers? We need to know our own data and where we are in relation to the community.

—Adriana Baer, Artistic Director, Profile Theatre Company.
From the 2013 Portland Equity in the Arts Consortium (PEAC) report, a program of the August Wilson Red Door Project

Examples

Miracle Theatre Group/Milagro

Milagro measures the demographics and diversity of its audience though a variety of methods - audience surveys, internal demographic sampling of data collected through ticket sales and audience sign-ins, TRG demographic reports from box office data, and demographic information provided by public agencies and educational institutions. For its audience surveys, Milagro utilizes a SurveyMonkey survey to collect information about the plays Milagro's audience experiences, what brought people to the theater, what audience members appreciate most about visiting Milagro, what core values they share with Milagro, as well as the make-up of the audience in terms of personal dimensions relevant to Milagro (e.g. kids in the household under 19, bilingual—English/Spanish, gender, race/ethnicity, age, economic status and Zip code). The theater offers two free tickets as an incentive for audience members who complete the survey. Milagro sends out its survey annually after the end of the season.

The Dance Center of Columbia College Chicago

Audience surveys and focus groups are used successfully by The Dance Center of Columbia College Chicago to assess its audiences. Its surveys request patrons to self-identify which puts them in control of their participation and responses. The audience survey captures demographic data as well as why participants attend and what they like.

Tip

If resource constraints present a roadblock to success with this building block, consider hiring or engaging an intern to conduct research, collect data, or even assist with project planning and management. Our region is home to several universities and colleges which are excellent resources for finding qualified interns.

Defining Audience Segments

In this building block, an organization will categorize its current audiences into segments, and identify audience members whose engagement has been low in the past. Organizations should consider the various reasons why they haven't had meaningful engagement from certain communities in the past (e.g., programming that has not been culturally relevant, lack of relationship building with a particular community, or economic barriers). The more accurately the audience segments can be described, the more strategic and focused the programming and outreach can be in the future.

If your organization has limited resources and staff, you can begin with small steps, such as identifying one or two new audience segments. Then, as your organization makes progress in engaging communities, you can revisit this building block to specify other groups to broaden or deepen their engagement.

Putting It Into Action

Your organization might choose to reach out to an entirely new audience segment that is underrepresented, or the goal may be to increase the participation of a segment of the current audience. Reaching out to new communities is not about displacing or alienating current audiences, but expanding and deepening existing engagement. The following are some examples that show the goal and description that an organization might use to identify an audience segment.

- Reach adults with below-median incomes.

- Encourage participation from area families who have school-age children with disabilities.

- Connect with more Spanish-speaking adults under 30 from the tri-county region.

- Engage "new Portlanders," particularly refugees and immigrants.

For more information:
racc.org/buildingblocks

Questions to Consider

- What is the focus for this diversity and equity initiative (e.g., increasing participation among the current audience or engaging a completely new audience segment)?

- How does your current audience compare to local area demographics? Which groups are underrepresented?

- Who in your organization will lead this effort (e.g., executive director, volunteer, audience development manager, community engagement coordinator)?

- What resources/capacity do you have available to pursue new audience segments?

Regional Arts & Culture Council

Resources and Tools

- [Finding your Audience through Market Segmentation](#), from the National Arts Marketing Project, details the underlying rationale and market segmentation process for arts organizations. Included is a case study to illustrate the process and worksheets that organizations can use or adapt for their own needs.

- [Demographic Transformation and the Future of Museums](#) takes a close look at the factors that influence segmentation when seeking to attract more culturally and racially diverse audiences. "But it is strikingly clear that it is up to each museum to develop a nuanced understanding of its community and the very important differences—generational, political, historical, geographic and cultural—that exist within any labeled category." (p. 6). This document provides thorough coverage on these nuances of segmentation as well as case studies that illustrate some of the new and innovative ways that museums are identifying and attracting new audience segments. The end results are that their audiences better reflect the demographic makeup of their communities. Organizations might also find helpful the guidelines on how to use existing data and gather new data to support equity efforts as well as the list of resources.

- [The Incluseum](#), an initiative to encourage social inclusion in museums, highlights the work of the Whitney Museum of American Art to become more accessible to the Disabled community. This [Incluseum post](#) addresses the ways in which the museum overcame barriers to participation for these community members. Relationship building strategies that involved all stakeholders were key to the organization's success, which also led to programming and event changes that improved access, equity, and participation.

Example

Oregon Shakespeare Festival

The Oregon Shakespeare Festival held many internal conversations to determine why inclusion was important to the organization and how it would diversify its audience. These decisions resulted in the creation of an [audience manifesto](#) that specifically states intent to diversify audiences in the following areas: (1) age, (2) access issues, (3) race and ethnicity, and (4) socio-economic diversity.

"Portland Center Stage offers a wide variety of price points and engagement opportunities to help us expand the age range and socioeconomic diversity of our audience. We intentionally build partnerships that bridge differences in culture, age and socioeconomic status—and those partnerships help us build awareness, understanding, and social capital between community members who are different from each other."

—Kelsey Tyler,
Education & Community Programs Director,
Portland Center Stage

Determining Programming and Events

This building block requires research and a sustained commitment to building relationships. For example, an organization that seeks to better serve a particular community might consider organizing informal gatherings to ask what the greater cultural interests and needs are, as well as what roadblocks exist.

Consider the relevance and appeal of your current programming and events to the communities you want to engage. Many organizations already have resources for connecting with specific communities, such as staff members with professional and personal connections, volunteers who are community leaders or board members who are active in other civic organizations. Having a diverse staff and board definitely helps in connecting with communities, and examining your current hiring and board recruitment practices can help in making changes on this front. While an individual cannot represent an entire community, she or he may have connections and insight that bring a new perspective and voice to the table.

This building block heavily relies on relationships that are cultivated and nurtured genuinely and consistently. Continuity is key. Reaching out once or putting on a singular event or program will not create a long-lasting relationship between the organization and a particular community. Again, engagement is a two-way street and communities cannot be expected to participate in your activities if you do not participate in theirs.

Putting It Into Action

Let your mission and vision guide you in this work, but see if you can broaden your reach. Some suggestions for building deeper relationships with communities and creating programs and events that resonate with a wider range of community members include:

- Participating in the activities and celebrations of cultural groups, instead of only inviting the community to come to the organization's programs and events.

- Making events and programs welcoming by offering pre-show introductions, behind-the-scenes tours, or translation services.

- Integrating elements and traditions of a particular culture into programs and events (with feedback from community members before doing so).

- Including artists from various cultures and demographic categories.

For more information:
racc.org/buildingblocks

Questions to Consider

- Is there a need to create new programs or expand on current offerings to engage communities? Are more audience segment research and relationship building needed to effectively develop or enhance these programs?

- What existing relationships or skill sets can help get us started?

- Would collaboration with other arts organizations also wanting to reach the same audience segment be valuable and feasible?

- What challenges to participation exist for your identified audience segments? How will the organization reduce or remove these challenges?

- How can we engage new volunteers from different communities and engage ambassadors that way?

- How can the arts space or venue be made welcoming to all members of the community and not just one segment of it?

Resources and Tools

- The City of Portland's Community Engagement Liaisons (CELs) Program utilizes community engagement specialists who are fluent in the language and culture of newcomers to Portland as a means to connect with cultural communities and to build and strengthen these relationships.

- Invitation to the Party: Building Bridges to the Arts, Culture, and Community, by Donna Walker-Kuhne, describes in-depth strategies and methods to engage diverse communities in arts and culture, reflecting the content of many of the building blocks in this framework. Included are tools for building audiences, case studies, and descriptions of her successes at building diverse audiences. "We are not building audiences simply to increase earned income. Creating value is not always reflected in dollar-for-dollar in a changed bottom line. Initially the effort is to open the doors of your institution to diverse audiences and collaborate on programs they want to see. That is what will *keep* the doors open." –Donna Walker-Kuhne, *Invitation to the Party, pg. 30.*

Examples

Portland Art Museum

To serve as a platform for increased community dialogue, the Portland Art Museum has become an active partner with dozens of organizations, as well as amplified its communication with the community and the discussion around important cultural issues. The concept was launched in 2008 with China Design Now, when the Museum seeded a community-wide conversation with more than 20 partnering organizations about the evolution of design in China. The Museum now deploys this platform strategy to drive relevance with diverse audiences with all of its major exhibitions. The platform concept was profiled in a series of articles on FastCompany.com.

Houston Grand Opera

Houston Grand Opera's initiative develops locally applicable programming in order to reach the intended audience. Much of the programming is developed out of the strong relationships the organization has established with community cultural groups. Staff members engage artists from cultural communities and provide opportunities for them to tell their stories. River of Light tells the story of an Indian immigrant to Houston and was authored by an Indian librettist. The world's first Mariachi opera, Cruzar la Cara de la Luna, celebrates and honors the strong traditions of the Mexican community in Houston.

"The idea of equity as a component of overall audience development (as opposed to an end in itself) is now a leading component in our conversations regarding audience development strategies. We are also looking at ways to better incorporate equity opportunities into our artistic process through play readings for season selection and broadening our vision for what a 'Third Rail' play can be."

—Scott Yarborough, Artistic Director, Third Rail Repertory Theatre.
From the 2013 Portland Equity in the Arts Consortium (PEAC) report, a program of the August Wilson Red Door Project

Developing a Marketing and Communications Plan

The defined audience segments and programming goals set the stage for effective outreach and communications plans, which are essential to successfully engaging new audiences. This building block involves reaching out proactively, encouraging the identified new audience members to participate in the organization's programming and reducing or eliminating challenges to their participation.

Start small by focusing on what is organizationally feasible; experience some success; and then expand your efforts to achieve your goals. This effort, like all equity work, requires sustained relationships with the communities the organization strives to engage. These community connections will help organizations identify the best ways to communicate with the selected groups and to uncover and reduce barriers that have prevented prior engagement.

Putting It Into Action

Once an organization has created the messages it wants to communicate and has determined the most effective methods for delivery, these plans can be put into place. Some ways to do so include:

- Advertising a program or event in the selected groups' preferred publications
- Placing posts on cultural groups' social media pages
- Sponsoring a culturally specific community event
- Displaying flyers in cultural groups' community gathering spaces
- Providing language translations for print and online media
- Broadcasting through media channels that a particular group prefers; e.g., social media instead of print media, radio broadcasting instead of online promotion.

For more information:
racc.org/buildingblocks

Questions to Consider

- What community relationships are already established? What new connections need to be made?
- What are your resources in marketing and communications to successfully develop and implement a plan?
- Will you collaborate with other arts organizations or civic groups in your community outreach efforts?
- What types of media and other communication tools are feasible?
- Which communication channels does the specific community use most frequently?
- Are bilingual staff members or volunteers available to help translate, or will outside services be needed?

Resources and Tools

- **Culturally specific media outlets (RACC)**: RACC offers a list of media organizations that are culturally specific.

- **Su Público – Culturally Relevant Marketing**: Su Público is a full-service ad agency specializing in grassroots marketing, culturally relevant consulting, public relations, and translations in 50 languages. Su Público is comprised of a team of people tapped into the multicultural communities of the Pacific Northwest.

- **Google Analytics** provides tools to measure how well marketing and communications plans are reaching audience segments using websites, newsletters, social media, and video channels.

- **Increasing Relevance, Relationships and Results: Principles & Practices for Effective Multicultural Communication** is a comprehensive guide to effective multicultural communication in order to build strong relationships and create meaningful dialogue among cultural communities by recognizing, respecting, and engaging the cultural backgrounds of all stakeholders.

Example

Metropolitan Youth Symphony

In 2012-2013, MYS staff members revisited the organization's communication and marketing strategies to see what new opportunities existed to engage in outreach to the broader community. Organizational flexibility has allowed them to identify and take advantage of creative opportunities as they arise. For example, in 2013 MYS approached KUNPTV Univision/MundoFox about a spring recruitment and concert advertising campaign. Thanks to in-kind contributions and other funds raised, the organization was able to execute a set of ads in Spanish. There was an immediate uptick in interest from the Hispanic community with two families personally visiting the MYS office to sign up for programs. MYS has continued to use communication vehicles such as the Hispanic press, radio, and community organizations during the 2013-14 season, in addition to providing complimentary concert tickets to a range of multi-cultural organizations. For MYS, it is clear that experimenting with new avenues of communication is working as Univision recently ran a small feature pro-bono on MYS during the evening news.

"Probably the biggest change in my thinking is rethinking how to 'market' to diverse audiences. It really isn't about marketing; it's about learning and acknowledging the barriers to diverse audiences' seeing themselves as theatre-goers. Then trying to reduce the roadblocks to their seeing theatre and learning about theatre."

—Nicole Lane, Marketing and PR Director, Artists Repertory Theatre.
From the 2013 Portland Equity in the Arts Consortium (PEAC) report,
a program of the August Wilson Red Door Project

Evaluating Progress

This building block enables organizations to come full circle and determine whether they have successfully made progress in increasing equitable access. Measurement is a critical tool for understanding what impact the programming, outreach, and communication strategies had in connecting with a broader range of community members.

Measuring audiences can be challenging. It takes time and effort, and there can be discomfort in asking people to "check a box" to categorize themselves. Because some people choose to identify with multiple categories, such as multiple races or ethnic classifications, we recommend giving people the opportunity to self-identify or self-express their identity beyond any standard classifications whenever possible.

The data gathered in the building block "Assessing your Current Audience" serves as your baseline for assessing your progress. Evaluating progress requires data being collected, analyzed, and used on an ongoing basis.

Putting It Into Action

Now that you have gathered data before and after implementing programming changes and marketing plans to attract new audience segments, you can evaluate the progress of how well your efforts are working to engage the new audience. After about one year of your efforts, track the data to understand if there are any changes in who is attending the programs:

- If data shows an increase in attendance in the audience segment you wish to reach, this indicates that your strategies are working. This success validates the approach and you can continue to expand upon these successes.

- If data shows no change or a decrease in attendance in the audience segment you wish to reach, this is an opportunity to revise your approach. Where is the disconnect happening?

A focus group is a good way to understand the underlying causes of the results. A focus group is a small group of people (6-8) from whom you want to gather specific information. The process includes inviting people from the desired audience segment to attend a discussion group to share their opinions and feedback. In this group, explore why they are or are not attending your events: Is it the programming? Location? Economic barriers? Did they know about it? Once you identify the root cause(s), make appropriate program and marketing changes and continue to evaluate progress.

For more information:
racc.org/buildingblocks

Questions to Consider

- How do you currently measure your audience composition? How will measurements change in the future?

- What type of data will you collect? How will you use the data?

- Who will lead the measurement and analysis effort?

- Who will create the measurement tool, administer it, and analyze the data? Are staff resources or volunteers available to manage the measurement process or are external resources needed?

Resources and Tools

- A Post-Performance Survey from the Boston Lyric Opera was administered after family preview events intended to introduce families to this art form. The survey gathered valuable feedback on this new audience segment the Opera aimed to attract, including demographic information, motivations for attending, and evaluations of the performances, thus benefiting the marketing, education, and programming aspects of the Opera's outreach efforts.

- RACC's year one progress report on Equity and Diversity (November, 2011) shows an example of one way to summarize and examine progress over an identified period of time. A summative progress report is helpful to see the outcomes that an organization has achieved and an opportunity to identify future goals and strategies.

- Getting Started: An Arts Organization Guide to Program Evaluation by the Georgia Council for the Arts introduces the evaluation process for arts organizations and includes information on different types of data that are useful for arts organizations to capture, how to use marketing data, and how to apply these efforts to develop audiences.

- Increasing Cultural Participation: An Audience Development Planning Handbook for Presenters, Producers, and Their Collaborators provides a detailed look at the process of audience development from start to finish, including detailed information on many of the concepts presented in this framework. Case studies, worksheets, sample surveys, and reports in this document are helpful aids that can be adapted for use.

Examples

Houston Grand Opera

HGO utilizes post-performance surveys to measure participation. HGO has also evaluated its impact on the community by recording video interviews of audience members talking about the ways in which they were transformed by their participation.

Theatre Bay Area

To understand how a company might mirror the larger population in which it exists, Theatre Bay Area examined seven different types of diversity (race/ethnicity, age, household income, gender, educational attainment, marital status, and political affiliation) in theater audiences and compared those diversity scores to the same diversities in the general population to create The Arts Diversity Index. 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.

"Following our experiments with new programming and new communication channels, including advertising with KUNPTV Univision/ Mundo Fox, MYS saw an immediate uptick in interest from the Hispanic community, and Hispanic enrollment between the 2012-13 and the 2014-15 seasons doubled."

—Diana Scoggins,
Executive Director,
Metropolitan Youth Symphony

Additional Resources

The RACC website racc.org/equity provides numerous resources for the local arts community, including a literature review with more examples of how other arts and culture organizations nationally are increasing engagement with diverse audiences.

Each building block described here can also be explored in more detail at racc.org/buildingblocks.

To learn more about RACC's "Community of Learners: Best Practices in Equity" series for RACC-funded organizations, please contact Anna Rigby at arigby@racc.org or 503.823.5408.

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Nick Fenster, Northwest Children's Theatre and School
Nita Shah, Micro Enterprise Services of Oregon
Olga Sanchez, Miracle Theatre Group
Oscar Arana, Native American Youth and Family Center
Paul King, White Bird Dance
Phillip Hillaire, RACC Board Member
Phillip Reynolds, The Dance Center of Columbia College Chicago
Ronault LS Catalani, New Portlander Program, City of Portland
Ross McKeen, Oregon Children's Theatre
Sandra Bernhard, Houston Grand Opera
Walter Jaffe, White Bird Dance

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