

Organizing for the Arts & Culture Industries:
A Better Future for All

REPORT on the TOWN HALLS

August 19, 26, and 31, 2009

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

to

City of Albuquerque
and
Arts Business Culture Industries Leadership Team

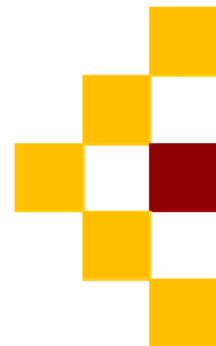
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for the cultural economy*

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INTRODUCTION

The City of Albuquerque Public Art Program, with guidance from the Arts Business Culture (ABC) Industries Leadership Team, contracted with Cultural Econ to plan, conduct and document a series of arts community town halls. As follow up to the final report from the September 2008 arts and cultural industries Search Conference event, the Leadership Team is seeking to identify or create, and empower an organization that can implement the recommendations from the Search Conference, and lead the arts and creative economy community towards a more sustainable and vibrant future.

The Leadership Team wishes to solicit input from a large cross section of arts community leaders via a series of moderated town halls. The purpose of the town halls is to determine the organizational structure of a “go-to” arts organization that is able to carry out the recommendations identified at the Search Conference. Such an organization will be the leader in this community for critical issues affecting the future of the arts and creative economy such as funding, advocacy, economic development, and quality of life initiatives. A secondary purpose of the Town Halls is to determine if the Arts Alliance is able to become this “go-to” organization, with the support of the arts community.

Cultural Econ met with and assisted the Leadership Team in identifying Town Hall participants, selecting an appropriate location for the Town Halls, and developing an invitation and agenda. It was determined that Town Hall participants would be guided in a moderated dialogue to identify what the structure of a lead arts organization would look like. They would be asked to address what type of structure would be needed (board, staff, mission, etc), how would such an organization be financially supported, who would it serve, and were there suggestions for a name. Participants would also be asked if the existing or a reconfigured Arts Alliance could be such a lead arts organization, and what would it take for them to support its efforts.

This report contains the executive summary with findings, desired outcomes and conclusions. It also contains a list of attendees. Notes, background presentations, each group’s work, the agenda, and written comments from attendees can be found in the full report. Minor modifications were made to the agenda, as needed. All three Town Halls were facilitated by Regina Chavez, Principal of Cultural Econ.

We hope these findings will assist the City, the Leadership Team and the Arts Alliance with their next steps.

Regina Chavez
Cultural Econ

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

FINDINGS

The Leadership Team tasked the Town Hall participants with three outcomes: 1) identify an organizational structure that can implement the recommendations from the Search Conference; 2) determine what kind of support a successful “go-to” arts organization will need in order to fulfill the goals of its constituents; and 3) determine how or if the Arts Alliance can be this organization. These outcomes were based on an overarching “Meta Goal” derived at the September 2008 Search Conference:

By mid 2009 create an organization to accomplish the following key initiatives:

- Information and communication
- Advocacy
- Implementation of a strategic plan
- Develop and distribute new funds
- Track trends to promote the economic vibrancy of arts and culture

The general theme throughout the Town Halls was clearly about organizational issues and how would the Meta Goal be accomplished. One participant noted she was glad that the dialogue was not ego-driven, but instead was focused on what participants believed to be important in order to move forward for the arts and cultural community as a whole.

Five categories of organizational structure were selected for participants to consider: membership, leadership/board, infrastructure/staff, location/service area, and funding mechanisms. The participants were separated into small break out groups to facilitate brainstorming and discussion, and were asked to arrive at their best recommendations. Their group notes are included later in this report (pages 13-21). What follows is a summary of their large group discussions by each category:

1) Organizational Structure Identified

Membership

Participants were mostly in agreement with what type of structure would be needed for a successful “go-to” organization. They identified that a 501c3 not-for-profit organization with a strong inclusive membership base comprised of individuals, artists, arts & cultural (A&C) businesses, non A&C businesses, A&C not-for-profits, A&C institutions, and with a multi-tiered membership dues structure. Attendees also thought it important that the “go-to” organization serve non-members.

Leadership/Board

A board structure was identified that should be comprised of visible, powerful and influential board members with the ability to help secure sustainable funding. Board members should represent the local arts community at all levels and disciplines, business and civic leaders, and that the board be held accountable to its members. The Town Hall participants were clear that they did not want government appointed board members, but instead would accept ex-officio voting members.

Infrastructure/Staff

Recommendations included a very strong and visible executive director/CEO and a supporting staff focused on development, political advisor, marketing, and advocacy. Some groups also suggested that the “go-to” organization have a programmatic component, but then that raised the question of whether the organization should be competing with its membership.

Location/Service Area

Location was more specifically defined as the service area. The consensus was that this could be a multi-county organization including Placitas, Rio Rancho and the East Mountains, but would first need to be clearly defined and established in the Albuquerque area. Some suggested that the existing office space of the Arts Alliance was not suitable and instead should consider Downtown, Nob Hill or Uptown. Some also suggested a new facility to celebrate this new beginning for the arts.

Funding Mechanisms

Several participants suggested that a mix of private and public funding would be ideal, thus not relying too heavily on government funding, but feeling that the City, County and State could be regular funders. In addition, a strong effort to capitalize on private foundations and grants at the national level should be pursued. There was also discussion on whether this organization should be a distributor of funds, especially if quality of life or Lodgers’ Tax initiatives are pursued. Concern was raised that this organization would also be competing with its members for limited resources. Membership should also be a significant means of support for the organization.

2) Support Needed

Although it was clearly defined that the “go-to” organization would need a significant and diverse budget (of an undetermined amount) outlined in “Funding Mechanisms” (above and in the matrices) to successfully carry out its mission, it was also clearly stated that this organization would not succeed without the moral and financial support of its members and the community. This support would not happen unless the organization had a strong vision, face and name to give it the status needed to be included with other community interests.

3) Can the Arts Alliance Be This Organization?

Discussions at the small group and large levels included very positive experiences as a whole with the services provided by the Arts Alliance. Some also expressed concern that the Arts Alliance was more focused on the individual artists and smaller organizations, and that the larger arts and cultural institutions did not feel represented. One individual asked, “Where is the cultural representation in the arts and cultural industries reference from the BBER Study?” After much discussion, the consensus was that despite its best efforts, the Arts Alliance, with its history and in its current state, would not be able to succeed as the “go-to” organization. The participants also concluded that there were no other existing organizations that could carry out the identified goals.

However, given that it would take a year or two to create a new 501c3, the group also concluded that with an “extreme makeover”, the Arts Alliance could become this organization. The August 31st Town Hall participants identified the following criteria necessary to support the Arts Alliance as the “go-to” organization:

- Adopt the Meta Goal as its essence
- Rewrite mission and bylaws (to support the Meta Goal)
- Be willing to change the AA name (a few suggestions are in the Comments section of this report, page 27)
- Replace entire board (with criteria identified in the Leadership/Board structure recommendations)
- Move to a new location
- Redefine the organization and its personality (to be more strong, visible, and progressive)
- Be fully responsive to the Leadership Team

CONCLUSIONS

The consensus from Town Hall participants is that with a timely and thorough plan monitored by the Leadership Team, the Arts Alliance has the opportunity to redefine itself into an empowered organization that can implement the recommendations from the Search Conference, and lead the arts and creative economy community towards a more sustainable and vibrant future. Such an organization will be the leader in this community for critical issues affecting the future of the arts and creative economy such as funding, advocacy, economic development, and quality of life issues.

ATTENDEES (from the Sign-In Sheet) at August 19, 2009 TOWN HALL

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Kelly Koepke	Arts Alliance	
Dona X Wilson	Arts Alliance	
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ATTENDEES (from the Sign-In Sheet) at August 26, 2009 TOWN HALL

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ATTENDEES (from the Sign-In Sheet) at August 31, 2009 TOWN HALL

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