



Strategic Plan for 2016-2017

On January 1, 2013 we became CultureSource (formerly the Cultural Alliance of SE Michigan): *The source for arts & culture in SE Michigan.*

CultureSource has been serving the arts and culture sector for nearly a decade with impressive results. Some of these accomplishments include:

- **Community Foundation Challenge: Arts & Culture**, raised \$4.92 million for general operating support of 75 organizations in 2009, thanks to the Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan.
- **Strategic Alliances Initiative**, which nurtured the formation of five permanent operating partnerships that have increased the capacity of more than 100 arts and culture organizations, as well as several spin-off projects. The Strategic Alliances model is now being used by our partner, the Michigan Nonprofit Association, to benefit other nonprofit sectors. This work was supported by the Ford Foundation and The Kresge Foundation.
- **DeVos Arts Management Institute** provided high-level organizational development training for 52 organizations in 2011 and 2012, brought to Detroit by the Kennedy Center, with funding from the Ford Foundation, The Kresge Foundation and the Knight Foundation.
- **Peer Review Panels for Grantmaking of The Kresge Foundation and the Erb Family Foundation** conducted in 2007, 2008, 2010 and 2012, which contributed to the award of more than \$3,000,000 in general operating support for over 60 mid-sized and small arts and culture organizations.
- **Continue to build a climate of Collaboration and Unity** through monthly meetings that connect diverse arts and culture organizations to one another and by facilitating numerous collaborations that have increased the ability and willingness of our member organizations to work together.



- **Marketing Initiatives** generated new audiences and taught us what it takes to connect audiences to arts and culture programming. Programs included *IXITI*, Museum Adventure Pass, the Cultural Concierge, and Culture Ed.
- **Membership Growth** from 30 nonprofit arts and culture organizations to over 110 with 87% retention.
- ***IXITI.com***, a destination web portal for arts, entertainment and culture news, features and information in SE Michigan, launched in 2014 the site has grown to 78,000 unique visitors in two years.



Our Mission:

CultureSource strengthens the arts and culture sector in SE MI through advocacy, capacity building and marketing resources, cultivating a collaborative, diverse and vibrant creative community.

As we begin our 9th year, our sector faces new challenges. CultureSource will address these head on with our revised Strategic Plan.

“With over \$610 million in total expenditures, including \$208 million in salaries supporting 25,490 jobs, and more than \$2.8 billion generated toward state tourism revenues, arts and culture is a critical contributor to Michigan’s economic reinvention” (Creative Many, 2016, p.3). The arts and culture sector draws tourists, generates earned revenue, and attracts creative talent, but economic impact alone cannot demonstrate the full impact of the sector. The arts and culture sector has improved health through enrichment and compassion, educated students of all ages, and provided intrinsic societal benefits that create a vibrant region. Though difficult to measure, CultureSource needs to capture this comprehensive regional impact to convince community stakeholders’ to increase their sector investment. Without a complete picture, resources may be inadequately or inappropriately allocated. And what would life be like without culture?



“Life without the collective resources of our libraries, museums, theatres and galleries, or without the personal expression of literature, music and art, would be static and sterile – no creative arguments about the past, no diverse and stimulating present and no dreams of the future” – Sir Peter Bazalgette, the Chair of the Arts Council of England.

Regional impact is just one part of the investment strategy. Community stakeholders will also want to know where the sector is headed and what outcomes will be achieved as a result of their investment. CultureSource will guide its members and partners to build a Regional Arts and Culture Vision that defines how the sector will influence societal concerns such as transit, infrastructure, health, education, and neighborhood exclusion through a cultural lens. This vision will enable CultureSource to identify sector gaps and weaknesses; create programming, policy, and tools to resolve issues; and advocate for funding to support solutions.

This process has already begun. Creative Many’s advocacy efforts increased funding from \$2.56 million in 2012 to \$10.15 million in 2016. However, this falls woefully short of the past \$25 million annually in state investment the sector historically received (Creative Many, 2016, p. 3). Even external experts such as Sustain Arts have observed, “Local public funding remains conspicuously absent in the Southeast Michigan context” (Sustain Arts, 2014, p. 39). We will use our strength as a strong collaborator to build key regional partnerships, our role as a capacity builder to design sector tools that empower and mobilize our membership to advocate, and provide our members opportunities to engage directly with our legislators.

We will also partner with funders to strengthen the sector. In the past, we have successfully served on peer review panels for the Kresge Foundation and the Erb Family Foundation. We plan to transition from this role into a resource intermediary to bring nonprofit organizations the resources they need. This may require working as a liaison between funders and our membership, creating connections within the funding community through pooled funds and programming and providing business referrals to members in need of services. Our goals as the resource intermediary will align with the regional vision and strengthen the arts and culture sector.

Next, we will restructure how we build awareness to expand our breadth of impact. *IXITI* is the online resource more than 78,000 people use each year to find performances, events, and exhibits across seven Michigan counties. This tool has been successful in funneling new



audiences to our members, but we want it to grow. We will seek new ways to increase the traffic of *IXITI* as we transition it to a more integrated part of the culturesource.org site. Media partnerships have the potential to launch *IXITI*'s audience from tens to hundreds of thousands. Since our members know their events and brands best, we will transition content creation to our members and focus our limited resources on building the culturesource.org audience for our membership beyond their current reach.

We will also build awareness through a more inclusive, collaborative membership. First, we will introduce meaningful benefits to corporations to engage with our members and strengthen their commitment to arts and culture. Second, we will continue to build collaboration and unity among nonprofit members through our Culture series events, targeted roundtables, collective impact projects like the Detroit Public Schools STEAM Enrichment Experiences Project and more.

As a unified sector, we will realize these actions through goals supported by collaboration and aligned with our three strategic pillars:

1. **Advocacy**
2. **Capacity Building Programming**
3. **Marketing Resources & Building Awareness**



1. ADVOCACY

CultureSource is in a unique position to act as an intermediary between the arts and culture sector as a whole and the larger community of which we are a part. Advocacy is a two-way street: on the one hand, helping the community to appreciate and to maximize the benefits of arts and culture for education, civic engagement and community development; and on the other hand, helping arts and culture organizations to understand their potential for community impact and to improve their contributions to the greater good of the region.

CultureSource will increase our advocacy efforts in three ways: policy, funding and research.

OBJECTIVE 1A: CONNECT ARTS AND CULTURE TO LARGER COMMUNITY INTERESTS

CultureSource aggregates information about our sector and its impact upon the community and acts as a thought leader in matters of public policy and collective action. Whenever possible, information will be drawn from existing sources such as Data Arts, rather than conducting original research. Our overall goal is to collect, analyze and share information to support sector sustainability and to identify the market potential for arts and culture.

Strategies

- a) **Publish a Regional Impact Report for SE Michigan in 2016** to demonstrate the health of our sector, leverage the information to garner more support from funding resources and utilize it as a benchmark in which to grow and measure progress. Measurements will include economic for 2016, then social and community impact going forward.
- b) **Convene members and community partners to create the SE Michigan Arts and Culture Vision.** This Vision will define how the sector will collectively impact social problems plaguing our region. create organic connections with community influencers and serve as a framework for demonstrating the impact our sector has on overall community.
- c) **Work closely with other arts advocacy organizations to connect southeastern Michigan to efforts on the national, statewide and local levels,** including Americans for the Arts, Michigan Council for Arts and Culture Affairs, Creative Many Michigan, Detroit Creative Corridor Center, and the Arts Alliance in Washtenaw County.



- d) **Offer tools and opportunities for member organizations to advocate on their own behalf** that will include a legislative action center, RSS feeds with legislative updates, actionable alerts, organized events to meet with legislative leaders locally and statewide, and a toolkit to help them educate and mobilize their own supporters.
- e) **Continue to manage and grow the Detroit Public Schools STEAM Enrichment Experiences Program**, designed to deliver hands on experiences to school aged children through CultureSource's arts and culture members in SE Michigan. In the 2015/2016 school year, every DPS 4th and 7th grade student (7,200) experienced a hands on enrichment experience aligned to STEAM curriculum and their 200 teachers received credited professional development at their 100 schools. In the 2016/2017 school year, the program will grow to include grades 5th, 6th, and 8th for an estimated 17,000 students.

Objective 1B: FACILITATE REVENUE SOURCES FOR PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SUPPORT

CultureSource acts as an intermediary to create new funding opportunities to sustain arts and culture nonprofits.

Strategies

- a) **Create a sector investment strategy to solicit support and funding for the SE Michigan Arts and Culture Vision.** CultureSource will create the framework to communicate and solicit support from community stakeholders that may include but are not limited to local and national foundations, corporate and business supporters, community partners and institutions. CultureSource, its members, and its network of supporters will collectively work together to implement this strategy.
- b) **Serve as a resource intermediary for our members.** Whether it is funding from foundations, MCACA, fiduciary assistance, or brokering business referrals, CultureSource will help our members find the resources they need to realize their missions.
- c) **Enable our members to connect with and encourage county and local governments** to financially support arts and culture in their jurisdictions through a concentrated effort by our members and in partnership with Creative Many Michigan.

2. CAPACITY BUILDING FOR ARTS & CULTURE NONPROFITS



CultureSource provides or facilitates professional development programs that help member organizations to improve their individual effectiveness and align with the Regional Vision. CultureSource will focus primarily upon professional education through partnerships rather than providing direct services to member organizations. Whenever possible, CultureSource will combine such training with funding opportunities to give member organizations the resources to implement new ideas.

OBJECTIVE 2A: CREATE A SECTOR GAP ANALYSIS TO BETTER IDENTIFY AND IMPLEMENT RESOURCES NEEDED. Working with leadership within our member organizations, we will document the gaps within the sector and the solutions CultureSource and our partners can provide to close those gaps. This analysis will outline the capacity training and resources the sector will need to reach its future collective vision.

OBJECTIVE 2B: DEVELOP LEADERSHIP IN ARTS AND CULTURE NONPROFITS
The single greatest asset of any organization is its leadership, both volunteer and professional. If board members are better informed and supported, they will be better advocates for the organizations they serve. If emerging leaders are nurtured and mentored, our sector will have strong professional leadership in the coming decades.

Strategies

a) **Provide opportunities for board leadership development.** CultureSource will work with community partners to recruit, educate, and place high quality board candidates based on members' needs. We will also create arts and culture specific board training aligned with phases of board development.

OBJECTIVE 2C: PROVIDE NETOWRKing, PReOFessional DEvELOPMENT AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO MEMBERS OF ALL SIZES

CultureSource will provide opportunities to all members to build their skills, experts to deepen their knowledge, and the member network to work together on areas of planning, financial, HR, marketing, audience building, operations, etc. matters.

a) **Provide opportunities through training** in partnership with other capacity organizations such as the Michigan Nonprofit Association and subject matter experts within the sector and other industries with deep knowledge as well as facility management to control costs.



- b) **Create opportunities for collaboration and networking** to connect staff in different organizations to best practices and tools. Create opportunities for ongoing networking, so that members can leverage and sustain a network of their peers.
- c) **Offer a robust, sector-focused program for nonprofit members that supports their needs.** CultureSource will incorporate industry expertise, professional development, and networking opportunities for members to connect with one another and thought leaders. Programming will include:
 - a. CultureConversations - Member meetings designed to bring new trends and subject matter expertise to our community, share innovative approaches, and inspire strategic alliances and partnerships throughout our community.
 - b. CultureSocial - Informal networking coffees and happy hours to foster partnerships and build relationships.
 - c. CultureLeader – roundtables and leader forums that connect arts and culture individuals based on title, area of responsibility or tenure (i.e. CEO and COO Roundtables, etc).
 - d. Re:Source - annual conference of 150+ cultural arts organizations designed to educate and inspire the arts and culture community.

3. MARKETING RESOURCES AND BUILDING AWARENESS

Marketing remains a challenge for arts and culture organizations, the media industry is still difficult to reach even with the successful launch of IXITI, and niche markets boosted by the Internet and social media are elusive. CultureSource can build more targeted awareness with the right redistribution of resources. Through 2017, we will create a more inclusive membership program that engages individuals and corporate partners with nonprofit members as well as restructure the IXITI program to bring a larger, more devoted audience to our members' doorsteps.

OBJECTIVE 3A: BUILD A LARGER, MORE INCLUSIVE MEMBERSHIP WITH MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT

- a) **Offer more valuable benefits and programming for non profit organizations and corporate partners** that build stronger connections with individual members and the



sector as a whole. Opportunities may include exclusive access, one of a kind experiences, corporate partnerships that benefit the business community and the sector, building a bridge between arts, culture and business.

- b) **Launch a membership campaign to build a more inclusive regional voice for arts and culture.** We have nearly 110 unique and innovative members both large and small across five counties. However, over 75% of our members come from Oakland and Wayne County. To ensure that the broad arts and culture sector is represented, we would like to launch a major membership campaign in Fall, 2016 growing our membership base by 25% and build a more inclusive, regional voice for arts and culture.

OBJECTIVE 3B: RESTRUCTURE IXITI PROGRAM TO CREATE A MORE ROBUST AND INCLUSIVE ARTS & CULTURE PUBLICATION

In 2014, we launched *IXITI*, a destination web portal for arts, entertainment and culture news, features and information in southeastern Michigan. The 78,000 annual users love the content - we need to grow the users, to help our members build their audience. To facilitate this process, we will:

- a) **Transition the site to fall under the www.culturesource.org umbrella**, thus creating one site, one voice, one brand.
- b) Focus on building the traffic to culturesource.org which will in turn **build audience for our members**, through strategic partnerships and placement.
- c) **Transition individual content creation to meet demands of new audience-building partners.** In order to create new content required for our strategic partners, we will work to shift individual content to our members who know their brands best and use our resources to cover:
- a. Upcoming productions, exhibits, festivals, focused on CultureSource members
 - b. Monthly interviews with leaders at different member organizations, providing an insider's peek into their job, programming, viewpoints on the arts and the community
 - c. Monthly guest articles from industry experts writing about issues and trends happening in the sector



- d. Monthly feature articles on how arts and culture influences and impacts the region, society, community, individuals and beyond

We will also provide weekly *The Source* newsletters that may include featured stories and events, job postings, upcoming CultureSource events, partner events, and sector happenings. Last, CultureSource will continue to oversee the content/editorial calendar as well as manage reporters, freelance writers, scouts, and photographers.

Implement the *IXITI* Transition Plan:

- New site goes live Q2
 - We will send new logos to our members
 - Newsletter will announce that *IXITI* newsletters will become "The Source".
 - Media Campaign – to include Press Release with exclusive story in Crain's about CultureSource, first 6 months of new leadership, new brand, strategic direction, new site. This will also include a comprehensive social media campaign.
- b) **Create partnerships with media for sharing content, increasing traffic and building brand:**
 - Crain's Detroit Business
 - Metro Parent
 - Metro Mode, Model D, Concentrate (Ann Arbor online publication)
 - WDET
 - c) **Seek out other partners to drive cultural tourists to Michigan and improve the visibility of the arts and culture sector:**
 - Detroit Visitors Convention Bureau and Pure Michigan
 - Airlines – Delta, Virgin Atlantic
 - Pure Michigan, Travelocity, Expedia, and other travel sites
 - Social media influencers



CONCLUSION

The next two years, 2016-2017 will be pivotal both for CultureSource and for the sector that we serve. Detroit and the region are changing, and the future of arts and culture in southeastern Michigan will depend upon the ability of our sector to demonstrate relevance, inclusion and innovation.

CultureSource will focus resources, time and talent on capacity building programming, collaborations that unite the sector and advocating on behalf of the non profit arts and cultural organizations that we represent.



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