



Strategic Plan

Adopted, January 24, 2018

BACKGROUND

On December 6, 2017, a group of stakeholders associated with the Des Moines Arts Festival® held a Strategic Planning Retreat with a follow-up meeting on January 23, 2018. The Organization engaged Smithink to guide the process. Smithink brought their extensive experience and unique perspective to the process. In addition to being an experienced facilitator, principal David Smith is Chair Emeritus of the St. Louis Art Fair.

The purpose of the Retreat was to identify and articulate the organization's key strategic positioning's as a basis for:

- Establishing a common vision & mission statement for the organization's future
- Helping to guide future development and decision-making
- Strengthening the potential for continued success of the festival

Retreat participants included:

Sarabeth Anderson, Chair-Elect, Des Moines Community Playhouse

James Bruton, Des Moines Arts Festival Operations Manager

Sally Dix, Executive Director of Bravo Greater Des Moines

Brian Dreesman, Event Management Team Volunteer

Jeff Fleming, Director of Des Moines Art Center, Ex-Officio Board Member

Leslie Guinan, Exhibiting Artist

Chaden Halfhill, Founder & CEO, Silent Rivers Design+Build, Sponsor

Trudy Holman Hurd, Philanthropist, Patron

Stephen King, Des Moines Arts Festival Executive Director

Robert Larsen, Treasurer, John Deere, Festival Executive Committee, Treasurer

Susan Patterson Plank, Executive Director of Iowa Newspaper Association, Festival Executive Committee, Board Chair

Robert Reeves, Professional Artist, Board Member

Kandi Reindle-Sullivan, City of Des Moines, Assistant to City Manager

Natalie Tomaras, VP of Corporate Integration at Athene, Past Board Chair

PROCESS INVOLVED:

- (1) Re-assessment of the organization's internal strengths & weaknesses, as well as external opportunities and potential threats it could face in the future
- (2) Evaluation of the organization's currently stated Mission, Vision and Core Values
- (3) Generation of a draft of Key Priorities for the next five years

THE FOLLOWING IS A SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

CURRENT SITUATION

Common agreement among participants surrounding the organization's current situation could be generally summarized as:

The Des Moines Arts Festival® is embraced by the community as the premier cultural event in the state of Iowa. Highly rated and recognized for excellence in virtually all dimensions among similar events, the organization is fortunate to be in a strong financial position and values both the wisdom and leadership of its current Executive Director.

SELF-ASSESSMENT

Two forms of “high level self-assessments” were undertaken:

- (1) SWOT Analysis
Identification of internal strengths & weaknesses, as well as opportunities and potential threats of which to be aware
- (2) Values Assessment
Set of beliefs shared within the organization that define the way it operates and conducts its business

Outcome of these assessment exercises contributes not only toward establishing alignment of current perceptions among stakeholders, but also provides tools for future decision-making:

- (1) Articulation of the organization’s current “baseline” position
- (2) Filters for decision-making and strategic assessment
- (3) Guide for long-term planning and establishing priorities
- (4) Identification of the organization’s fundamental values for quality & excellence
- (5) Integrity & responsibility commitment
- (6) Attitudinal style of the organization’s operating culture

SWOT SELF-ANALYSIS

STRENGTHS

(to build upon)

Quality Festival Experience

- Favorable Site
- Accessible (free admission, parking)
- Broad age appeal
- Fresh every year; repeatable

Quality Art & Artists

- Strong Reputation
- Strong buyers

Strong Leadership and Staff

- Excellent execution
- Efficient operations
- Financially strong
- Strong relationships with city, sponsors, businesses

Board Support

- Supportive of staff
- Broad Representation

Favorable Impact on Community

- Artists, Student, Businesses
- Economic contributor

Sponsor Activation

- Strategic Alignment with sponsors
- Hospitality Suites – VIP experience & revenue generators

Emerging Artists Program

WEAKNESSES

(to be sensitive to)

Organizational Sustainability

- Lack of succession planning
- Festival Site and businesses impacted
- Small pool of corporate sponsors in community

Image Considerations

- Perception that festival is the same every year
- Perception that all art is expensive
- Festival is accessible but is it inclusive?
- Measure of success beyond artist sales

Growth potential

- Staff size; institutional capacity
- Festival site constraints
- Board fundraising capabilities
- Small regional population

OPPORTUNITIES

(to leverage)

Extend Influence

- Beyond a three-day festival
- Beyond the region
- Leverage artist relations year-round
- Collaborate with other cultural organizations for diversity of ideas and audience

Image

- Position the organization as a leader in the arts, not just host of three-day festival
- Be a leader in the region of arts events year-round
- Be regarded as a strong economic driver

Community Engagement

- Activate and engage small businesses
- Connect with new urban audience
- Strengthen educational opportunities
- Engage surrounding community year-round
- Communicate diversity of activities at festival

THREATS

(to be aware of)

Competition

- Other local festival for audience time and money
- Other art festivals for top artists

Financial Considerations

- New tax laws
- Ability to maintain sponsor support
- Culinary participation/revenue share
- Ability to maintain volunteer pool

Image

- Patron/artist safety
- Maintaining balance of experiences at festival
- Perception that Festival is for “everyone” vs “elite”
- Quality of artist pool

CORE VALUES

(that we live by)

The values that we live by every day at the Des Moines Arts Festival® give us a basis for defining the responsibility and the character of our relationships, they are integral to the way we operate and they guide the decisions we make.

Inspire Appreciation of Arts

We cultivate, educate, and engage our audience toward a heightened appreciation of the arts.

Celebrate Original Art

We produce an annual celebration of outstanding original visual art – that is created by the hand of the artist - in a festival atmosphere

Impact Community

We foster and celebrate the involvement of all people.

Promote Collaboration

We promote and inspire meaningful collaboration to strengthen the arts community.

Deliver the Highest Standards

We value professionalism and quality. We operate in a fair and honorable manner with transparency. We are strong financial stewards. We manage with responsibility and maximize value to our partners.

Innovate Strategically

We champion new and emerging ideas.

ADOPTED MISSION AND VISION

Mission

Impact Lives through the Arts

Vision

Strengthen a Vibrant and Creative Community

KEY AREAS OF FOCUS

Celebrate the arts year-round

- a.* Elevate the year-round presence of the organization with community engagement.
- b.* Actively partner to bring the Arts alive year-round.

Elevate the impact of the Arts in the region

- a.* Play a leadership role in advancing the Regional Cultural Assessment's priorities.
- b.* Expand partnerships to elevate the Arts.
 - Partner with large employers to leverage the focus on Arts and creativity in employee recruitment and retention.
 - Recruit larger base of smaller businesses (and individuals) as sponsors and actively engage them in the Festival and Arts year-round.
- c.* Influence civic, economic and ecological regeneration.
- d.* Encourage "Arts First" mentality among regional leaders.

Expand support for artists

- a.* Collaborate with artists for economic success.
- b.* Promote ideas and information that give artists opportunities to expand their skills, expertise and collaboration.
- c.* Be a trusted resource for artists.
- d.* Shine a spotlight on the economic development that artists generate.

Be an inclusive organization

- a.* Engage diverse segments of the community using Arts as a catalyst.
- b.* Inspire individuals to find their creative voice.

GOING FORWARD

(next steps)

Board Endorsement

- a. Provide input on Key Actions/priorities.
- b. Identify metrics to measure success and “end goal.”

Board Leadership & Task Force Formation

- a. Advance Key Actions of the Plan (convert Key Areas of Focus into Strategies & Tactics).
- b. Identify and support resource requirements (human and capital) needed for implementation.

Educate Key Constituencies

- a. Establish awareness of new goals and strategic focus.

On January 24, 2018, the board of directors adopted the following:

Our Mission

Impact Lives through the Arts

Our Core Values

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