

**Institutional Fundraising  
For  
Folk and Traditional Arts Organizations**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

World Arts West (WAW), producers of the San Francisco Ethnic Dance Festival, was founded to present the diverse ethnic dance companies in the Bay Area. WAW's mission is to support artists sustaining the world's diverse dance traditions by providing needed services and performance opportunities, and to deepen the public's support of and engagement with world arts and cultures. WAW serves as the hub for over 450 dance groups based in Northern California which collectively sustain over 100 international dance forms.

From 2011 to 2014 WAW faced a number of situational and financial challenges that resulted in the loss of revenue and staff. As a result the executive director, Julie Mushet, became responsible for all development and fundraising activities for the organization. While WAW continued to operate and present its annual San Francisco Ethnic Dance Festival with core staff, the organization could not continue to operate at capacity without a new infusion of funds specifically to fill the development director's position.

In order to address this need, Julie began to search for a development professional with unique qualifications to help WAW. These qualifications included extensive experience in fundraising for Bay Area cultural organizations; prior experience as a senior arts administrator, preferably as an executive director; long-term involvement in the local ethnic dance community; and an artist-activist who views fundraising for WAW through the lens of cultural equity. I came to WAW with a unique combination of experiences, as the former executive director of Oakland Asian Cultural Center, a seasoned grant panelist for over a decade, and a development consultant for many cultural organizations in the Bay Area. In addition, I have been a dancer and singer in folk and traditional dance companies for 20 years, and have had a long association with the San Francisco Ethnic Dance Festival as a performer, volunteer, and supporter.

When Julie and I first met, we both felt that I would be the right candidate as WAW's development director. But the first issue to overcome was WAW's lack of funding to hire a development director. The first step in creating the development director's position was to secure an initial grant to support my role as a part-time development consultant. I applied to serve as a consultant for the American Folklore Society's (AFS) Consultancy and Professional Development Program and received a contract to engage as a development consultant to strengthen WAW's capacity for institutional fundraising.

During the 6-month AFS consultancy (September 2015 to April 2016), I helped WAW apply to multiple grants, totaling over \$500,000. These included San Francisco Arts Commission, San Francisco Grants for the Arts, Sam Mazza Foundation, California Arts Council, and the National Endowment for the Arts. See Appendix A for a broader list of San Francisco Bay Area funding sources. Subsequently, WAW received a two-year general operating grant to bring me on board as their new developer director.

## **NEEDS ASSESSMENT, SCOPE OF WORK**

During the AFS consultancy for WAW, I worked with Julie to identify WAW's three major needs in institutional fundraising. They are: 1) the need to create a better system to organize grants materials 2) the need to improve a system to keep track of grant deadlines 3) the lack of dedicated development personnel with institutional fundraising knowledge unique to traditional arts organizations.

### **1) Organize grant materials for easy retrieval**

At the beginning of the AFS consultancy period, I conducted an assessment of WAW's materials necessary for grant applications and reports. As a 38 year old organization, WAW had accumulated many grant-related documents and materials over the years. WAW did not have an efficient system that organized materials for well-constructed grant applications. This resulted in WAW staff spending excessive time looking for materials necessary for grant applications.

To address this challenge, I created a grant application template –

1. IRS determination letter
2. Project narrative
3. Project budget
4. Project budget notes
5. Cultural Data Project report and budget notes
6. Bios of key project personnel
7. List of board of directors
8. Organization's calendar of activities – last year, current year, proposed year
9. Work samples

The grant application template organizes materials necessary for most grant applications. All materials are to be stored in a chronological order (works samples, calendar of events, etc.). This system allows for easy access and retrieval of materials for grant applications.

### **2) Systematic tracking of grant deadlines**

Managing a large number of ever-evolving deadlines is paramount to successful fundraising. Missing a grant application deadline can mean waiting another year for the next grant application. Keeping track of upcoming deadlines also helps development staff plan ahead to prepare materials necessary for a grant application packet, such as work samples. To help WAW track its deadlines in an efficient fashion, I created a user-friendly grants calendar. This calendar keeps track of grant application deadlines, as well as upcoming deadlines for grant reports due, funder communication, grant information workshops, etc. This grant calendar is organized chronologically by the "next step" column. This clusters the ac-

tion items in the immediate future, and allows staff to prioritize fundraising related tasks according to their due dates.

See below for a sample grants calendar –

Name of Funder	Grant Deadline	Amount Requested & for Which Program	Notes/ Comments	Last Action Item	Next Step
NEA Art Works: <a href="http://arts.gov/grants-organizations/art-works/we-fund-we-do-not-fund">http://arts.gov/grants-organizations/art-works/we-fund-we-do-not-fund</a>	Feb 18, July 15 2016				
Zellerbach Family Foundation – Community Arts Program <a href="http://www.zellerbachfamilyfoundation.org/">http://www.zellerbachfamilyfoundation.org/</a>	April 1, July 1, Sept 30, Dec 30 2016				
City of Oakland Cultural Funding Program: <a href="https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/#inbox/153e7d6b929e6b5a">https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/#inbox/153e7d6b929e6b5a</a>	May 16, 2016				
ACTA Living Cultures Grant - <a href="http://www.actaonline.org/content/living-cultures-grants-program">http://www.actaonline.org/content/living-cultures-grants-program</a>	July 15, 2016				
SF Arts Commission Cultural Equity Grants – <a href="http://www.sfartscommission.org/ceg/grant-programs/">http://www.sfartscommission.org/ceg/grant-programs/</a>	October 15, 2015				

### 3) Need to identify development personnel uniquely suited for World Arts West

With unique qualifications to serve as World Arts West’s development director, I began to strategize with Julie to identify funding sources for this position. While initially it was difficult for WAW to secure a large, multi-year grant to hire a development director, I suggested targeting a small grant to bring me in as a short term consultant. Part of my work for the AFS grant consultancy was to find further funding for a full-time development director. During the AFS consultancy period, I helped WAW secure a two-year general operating grant from San Francisco Arts Commission to hire me as WAW’s new development director.

## **CONCLUSION: BROADER CONNECTIONS TO SMALLER TRADITIONAL ARTS ORGANIZATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE**

Lack of funding for development personnel is a common challenge for folk and traditional arts organizations. While smaller arts organizations may not need a full time staff person, they can follow a similar approach to secure funding for development personnel. First step is to identify the right person as WAW did. That person needs to have a deep understanding of and dedication to the organization's mission and have an interest in fundraising work. The second step is to try to secure a smaller capacity building grant to hire a person temporarily as described above. The ultimate goal is to secure a larger grant to bring on development staff part-time or full-time.

As the executive director of Oakland Asian Cultural Center (OACC), I faced the similar challenge of shouldering all development responsibilities for the organization. Initially working with a development intern, I later secured a capacity building grant from the San Francisco Foundation to hire the development intern as a part-time development associate. I worked closely with the development associate to secure further funding for a full-time development associate position. Through further professional development, the development associate eventually became the development manager and oversaw all of OACC's grant writing effort.

In the folk and traditional arts field, it is rare to find development professionals who possess a deep knowledge of philanthropy and ability to connect philanthropic dollars to support traditional artists and arts organizations. I am inundated with requests from traditional arts organization to mentor emerging fundraising professionals dedicated to traditional arts. This informal mentoring effort needs to be formalized into a professional mentoring program, in order to foster professional fundraisers dedicated to the large number of traditional arts organizations that need their services.

Most of these traditional arts organization have no or a few paid staff. Collectively they sustain the vibrant multicultural arts landscape of California and beyond. Many of the artistic directors also serve as cultural bearers of communities that are preserving their cultural traditions despite political persecution, genocide, global migration, and other challenges. The philanthropy sector needs to partner with folk and traditional arts organizations to identify and address funding needs of these organizations, and support the professional development of emerging fundraisers in the traditional arts sector. This support ensures cultural equity in our ever increasing multicultural American landscape.

**APPENDIX A****Funding sources for San Francisco Bay Area arts organizations**

1. Akonandi Foundation
2. Alliance for California Traditional Arts
3. ARTSFUND
4. Berkeley Civic Arts Commission
5. Bernard Osher Foundation
6. California Arts Council
7. CASH Grants
8. City of Oakland Cultural Funding Program
9. East Bay Community Foundation
10. Fleishhacker Foundation
11. Kenneth Rainin Foundation
12. MAP Fund
13. National Endowment for the Arts
14. Sam Mazza Foundation
15. San Francisco Arts Commission
16. San Francisco Grants for the Arts
17. San Francisco Foundation
18. Wallace Alexander Gerbode Foundation
19. Walter & Elise Haas Fund
20. William and Flora Hewlett Foundation
21. Zellerbach Family Foundation Community Arts Program

## **APPENDIX B**

### **Essential Tips For An Effective Institutional Fundraising Strategy**

1. Create a grant application template
  - a. IRS determination letter
  - b. Project narrative
    - i. Organizational mission
    - ii. Summary/highlight of programs
    - iii. Needs statement
    - iv. Project impact
    - v. Community served
    - vi. Evaluation methodology
  - c. Project budget and budget notes
    - i. Income must equal expenses
    - ii. Large budget line items require budget notes
  - d. Data Arts Cultural Data Project report
  - e. Bios of key project personnel
    - i. Bio content must be relevant to the specific project of request
  - f. List of board of directors
  - g. Organization's calendar of activities
    - i. Chronological list of activities
    - ii. Last year, current year, proposed year
  - h. Work samples
    - i. If requesting funding for an ongoing program, provide sample of most recent program
    - ii. If requesting funding for new program, provide sample of similar work
2. Create a grants calendar with action items and update it regularly (see sample above)
3. Funder engagement strategies
  - a. Funder engagement is a year-round process
  - b. Invite funders to organizational events
  - c. Inform funders about important organizational updates
  - d. If unsure about project's fit with specific grants, call the funder to ensure project's alignment with the funder's mission, before preparing the grant application
  - e. Inform funder of changes in the project well ahead of the grant reporting deadline
  - f. Engage funders with the aim of building a long-term partnership

4. Grant application review involving peer review panels
  - a. Attend grant review panels that are open to the public. Panel comments are immensely helpful in improving future grant applications
  - b. After the application review, contact your program officer and request for a copy of the panel comments
  - c. Find out in advance if applicants are allowed to give comments at the end of review. If yes, speak clearly and address panel questions succinctly
  
5. Other grant application tips
  - a. If scoring criteria is given in the grant application guidelines, try to score your own application before submitting the application
  - b. Ask another person to review your application before finalizing your draft
  - c. Make sure your work sample is relevant to the application