

**Placer Community Foundation's
Audience Development Program for the Arts**

**Preliminary Report on Phase I Funding
January 2009 through December 2009**



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Introduction

The Audience Development Program supports nonprofit arts organizations, operating along the western slope of Placer County, in attracting and encouraging new households to participate in the offerings of these organizations. It is anticipated that such efforts will help increase public involvement in local arts, while working to ensure the long-term sustainability of the arts organizations themselves.

This program consists of two phases. Phase I covered the fall of 2008 through the end of 2009. It began with an analysis of current arts marketing efforts in Placer County and was followed throughout 2009 with funding by the Placer Community Foundation to implement new, more collaborative audience development strategies. This first phase is the basis of this preliminary report and will highlight **initial findings showing a 13% growth in combined audiences in the first year**. While there are significant factors to note that affect this growth, this first phase shows tremendous promise for this program's ultimate goal—to increase earned income among arts organizations so that they are able to stabilize their operations and invest in quality programming. Such stability positively impacts the economy but it also allows the arts to become a quality of life resource that can effectively build and strengthen our community.

Special Recognition

The Placer Community Foundation would like to extend its deep appreciation to The James Irvine Foundation for their financial investment in our arts grantmaking strategies. Their support through re-grant dollars, along with our board's steadfast commitment, has allowed the arts to be among the varied, pertinent philanthropic causes affecting residents of Placer County. We would also like to thank the Nonprofit Resource Center and Williams Group for their ongoing technical guidance and assistance and to Louise Stevens of Arts Market Inc., for her initial analysis of arts organizations, which provided the framework for the Audience Development Program. Finally we would like to acknowledge the arts organizations and specifically PlacerArts, for sharing the vision of this program and committing the staff and volunteer hours needed to collaboratively grow audiences in Placer County.

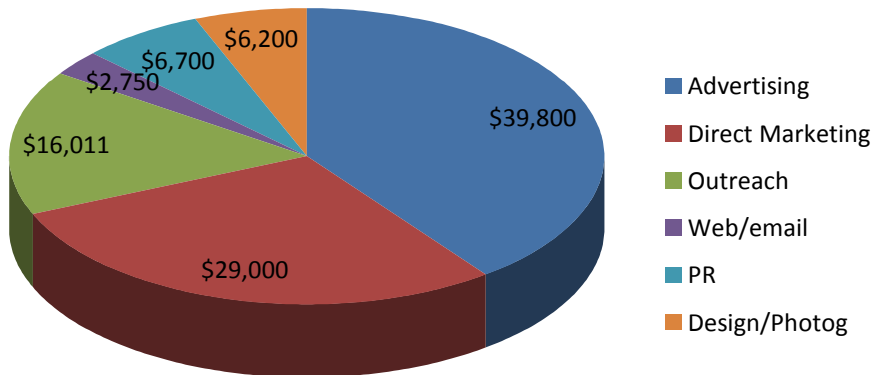
Why Audience Development?

In September of 2008, staff and volunteers from 11 nonprofit arts organizations in Placer County participated in an Audience Development workshop conducted by Louise Stevens of Arts Market, Inc. The workshop, sponsored by the Placer Community Foundation, was driven by a local demographic analysis citing a 27.7% growth in population by 2017, the majority of which are projected to be new, younger families choosing to move to Placer County for a better quality of life. Arts organizations are therefore presented the opportunity of making these new people aware of the varied programs and events they offer, but face the challenge of operating within limited marketing budgets.

In preparation for the workshop, Louise Stevens had each of the organizations complete a thorough diagnostic of their marketing efforts. When aggregated the diagnostic showed the

groups each spend an average of \$15,000 a year on marketing and are only accessing about 4% of the households in Placer County.¹ Additionally, there is a large, average gap (38%) between what the organizations estimate to be their potential attendance versus their current actual attendance.

Marketing Expense Areas



Based on these figures, and the consequent discussions that took place, the groups concluded that greater resources needed to be more efficiently invested in marketing. They also determined that a collaborative approach to marketing would allow for greater economies of scale. By collectively reaching audiences throughout the western slope, small to mid-sized arts organizations could reach new or current consumers of the arts not currently in their database.²

Creating a Funding Strategy – Phase I

Following the Audience Development workshop, participants from each arts organization identified long and short-term tactics to build audiences and set forth discussions with their boards to develop an initial marketing plan. In response, the Placer Community Foundation created the Audience Development Program in 2009 and has been making grants to support implementation of marketing strategies for these same organizations. Additionally, the Community Foundation funded our local arts council, PlacerArts, for Phase I of a Collaborative Marketing Program for the Arts.

The first grant to PlacerArts supported creation and development of a new online **Arts Calendar and Registry of Artists**. Designed to promote artists and arts organizations, the website offers direct public access to everything arts-related in the community. Additionally, PlacerArts

¹ Findings include numbers from 10 of the eleven organizations. One organization was excluded due to a disproportionate share of marketing dollars budgeted.

² A small arts organization is defined as all volunteer run with an annual operating budget of less than \$100,000. A mid-sized arts organization is defined as having at least one paid staff member and operating with an annual budget of \$100,000 to \$500,000.

received funding to head a joint marketing effort in which arts organizations work collaboratively to reach new audiences. PlacerArts formed a Steering Committee, to represent each artistic discipline and participating organization. The Committee meets to determine collective strategies such as joint mailings, promotional ads, e-blasts and customer incentive programs. PlacerArts also heads technical assistance workshops for these groups to in part, develop and enhance online marketing tools and opportunities.

“By improving our collaborative marketing efforts we greatly increase the public’s on-line accessibility to Placer County’s flourishing arts and culture scene. Grants from the Placer Community Foundation are supporting a gateway to a rich array of performing, literary and visual artists and arts organizations that provide quality programming.”

Angela Tahti
Executive Director, PlacerArts

Preliminary Results for Phase I

Grantees to the Placer Community Foundation’s Audience Development Program were asked to submit a dashboard tracking audience growth on an annual basis.³ The dashboard serves two purposes—to track audience growth in aggregate as a result of funded marketing strategies and, to function as an internal tool for arts organizations to monitor their individual marketing efforts. The following arts organizations are participating in this analysis:

Auburn Community Concert Association
Auburn Placer Performing Arts Center
Lincoln Arts & Culture Foundation
Magic Circle Theatre
Placer Community Theater
Placer Theatre Ballet
PlacerArts
Roseville Arts!
Sierra College Foundation’s Chamber Music Alive!
Take Note Troupe

Since grants were distributed starting in 2009, audience counts from 2008 operate as the baseline from which to chart any growth. Baseline figures for five of the ten organizations are estimates, which immediately highlighted the need for proper tracking of arts patrons. Moving forward in 2009 all ten groups are able to provide a more accurate count of people attending their events and have fields in their databases to target audiences by areas of interest, location, giving level, etc.

³ Refer to Appendix A.

While a more thorough trend analysis spanning five or more years will give greater credence to any growth or decline, it is worth noting that in the first year, organizations are showing an overall increase of 13% in attendance.⁴ Many factors affect this growth (which will be noted here), but these same factors also illustrate that the Audience Development Program is impacting public participation in the arts for Placer County and that, with increased investment, much more can be achieved.

Factors Affecting Growth

Six of the ten organizations experienced growth in their audiences for 2009. Organizations that recorded the greatest growth included Auburn Placer Performing Arts Center (APPAC), Placer Community Theater (PCT) and Roseville Arts. The remaining organizations faced marginal declines, which they attributed to a range of external and internal factors.

APPAC essentially does not have a baseline figure for 2008 because they operated without a venue and were only able to hold one event. At the end of 2008 they moved into their newly renovated State Theatre and throughout 2009 offered live music and theatre productions, various community events and a film series. They surpassed their audience attendance goal for the year by almost 12% and are continuing to focus on marketing strategies to build upon this effort in 2010. APPAC's State Theatre seats 125 but they are seeking to expand the building and its occupancy and have embarked upon a capital campaign to fund this endeavor. Marking future growth for APPAC will signify not only increased demand for public arts programming, but the need for adequate facilities to house the various events produced by smaller arts organizations.

Placer Community Theater's audience grew by 125%, and while this growth can also be attributed to a change of venue, their efficient use of marketing dollars and collaborative efforts allowed them to nearly triple their average audience attendance for their 2009 opening production. PCT coordinated with APPAC to house their opening at the State Theatre. Knowing that this was double the occupancy of their previous venue, the two groups coordinated their marketing efforts to draw new audiences into the theatre. PCT captured information from new attendees and is cultivating them to become further engaged in their work.

Roseville Arts represents one of the larger arts organizations in the Audience Development Program and to date, has shown tremendous progress in reaching the broader community through the help of strategic investments from private philanthropy. In 2009 they grew their audience by 89%.

At the start of 2008 Roseville Arts opened their state-of-the-art Blue Line Gallery in downtown Roseville. With increased costs needed to run the 5,000 square-foot space, Roseville Arts sought to expand their membership, while staying inclusive of diverse populations in their region. In 2007 Roseville Arts received a two-year grant from The James Irvine Foundation to

⁴ One organization is excluded in this analysis for 2009 due to an inadequate database tracking system.

fund a marketing campaign designed to broaden and diversify their audiences. They were very successful in drawing in many new visitors their first year in the gallery. They then sought council on strategies for more closely aligning marketing efforts with their revenue goals. In 2009 they received funding from Placer Community Foundation for a consultant to assist them in creating revenue-generating marketing strategies, to be implemented at both the staff and board level.

The work that continues at Roseville Arts will take time to generate revenue because relationships with new visitors need time to build. As the public grows to value and utilize all the programs Roseville Arts has to offer, their loyalty will manifest in a financial contribution. But for the purposes of this report, Roseville Arts has shown a positive move in strategic business planning through the grants they've received. Financial support from The James Irvine Foundation combined with technical assistance through the Placer Community Foundation is working towards Roseville Arts' long-term, sustainable growth.

Measuring Progress and Exploring Brand – Phase II

Moving into 2010 the Placer Community Foundation will continue to fund marketing strategies for arts organizations along the western slope of Placer County, and will be monitoring their individual dashboards to chart any changes in audience attendance. Added to this tracking is an analysis of changes in total revenue, with the ultimate goal being the long-term sustainability and investment in quality programming among the groups. With better tracking systems now in place, we can look at these numbers in consequent years with greater validity and see which marketing strategies are producing the best results. All of this will help show donors to the arts how and where their contributions are impacting Placer County's arts community.

At the start of 2010 the Board of Directors of the Placer Community Foundation approved a grant to PlacerArts to embark upon branding the arts in Placer County. This second phase will continue to involve the same arts organizations that participated in the initial Audience Development Workshop in 2008. These partners will work together to determine a joint brand, messaging and logo with which to collectively market their varied programs to the general public. Each organization will continue to refine their marketing plans so they can best capture new visitors gained through this work and engage them accordingly.

Creating Partnerships

It is worth highlighting in this report, the process in which this second phase came about. A partnership across many organizations began with the development of a relationship between the Community Foundation and PlacerArts—our countywide arts council and the designated state-local partner of the California Arts Council for the County of Placer. During this time, the Community Foundation gained a deeper appreciation of the leadership strengths and potential of this important arts institution. In turn, PlacerArts came to know the Community Foundation as a philanthropic resource and advisor on mitigating perceptions of PlacerArts as a competitor

among arts organizations. This support prepared the way for PlacerArts' leadership of the collaboration and the successes to date of participating arts organizations.

The Community Foundation fostered relationships among our local arts organizations through small, incremental steps; first providing technical assistance grants and microgrants and offering workshops. These early experiences helped the Community Foundation and arts organizations get to know one another and laid the groundwork for the audience development program, system of measurement and planned next steps. Just as the Community Foundation has learned about the needs and opportunities unique to arts organizations, the participating arts organizations have sharpened their capabilities in applying for funds and reporting outcomes—strengths they can apply to their advantage in the context of competitive state and countywide funding opportunities.

Prior to this experience, many local arts organizations pursued marketing in isolation, directly competing with each other in a perceived zero-sum effort to gain constituents. This was particularly the case among organizations operating at either end of the Highway 80 corridor. Working together with leadership from PlacerArts and the Community Foundation, participating organizations now perceive greater opportunity in collaborating to reach a shared constituency. This second phase of branding therefore represents the culmination of regular communication and brainstorming among disparate groups to achieve one shared look, feel and message for the arts along the western slope.

Promoting a Diverse Arts Ecosystem

The arts organizations represented in this report present the public year-round theatrical productions, music and dance performances, and visual art exhibitions. Additionally they provide diverse, hands-on programming for youth, working to compensate for the gap of arts education in our public schools, and quality classes, workshops and events for families and adults. All of these programs are affordable and bring the community together in a meaningful and lasting way. The new brand and logo will seek to represent these groups and convey all that Placer County has to offer in the arts.

Placer County offers residents and visitors of all ages, quality visual and performing arts programming and houses an extensive, talented and eclectic community of individual artists. What is needed is greater public awareness and accessibility. This joint branding project seeks to promote a vital arts community because it can greatly benefit the social and economic development of a region. The arts offer many things to different people—they build cultural connections, help advance educational success, and inspire creativity. The arts are therefore a prominent resource that can influence why and for how long individuals, families and businesses choose to be part of a community. If adequately supported through private and public funding, the arts will help define Placer County as a rich and unique place to visit and live.

Summary and Conclusion

National context is important when considering the challenges and successes Placer County arts organizations experience. The National Endowment for the Arts issued a 2009 report citing the lowest public attendance of arts and cultural events since 1982.⁵ Like their counterparts across the country, Placer County arts organizations face cuts from both private and public funding sources and, as a result, contend with reductions in programming and loss of paid staff. For larger arts organizations in particular, decreases in revenue can mean board and staff leadership changes—shifts that we have seen dampen the results of organizations described in this report. In a troubled economy, arts organizations are particularly vulnerable.

We began this program with the understanding that targeted arts organizations were reaching only about 4% of households in Placer County—leaving much unrealized potential. Results from the first year of the program are promising: Six out of ten organizations have achieved growth in their audiences and despite set backs encountered by the remaining four organizations, participants achieved a net growth in audiences of 13%. Through this experience, participating arts organizations and the Community Foundation have grown in our appreciation of the hope and solutions a thriving arts community can present to a region facing trying economic times. Can arts organizations reach still more of the households not counted among their audiences today? Their ultimate success will be measured following data collection and analysis in coming years. In the meantime, the Placer Community Foundation remains optimistic that future investment in these giving strategies will yield great, long-term benefits for arts organizations—and our community.

⁵ National Endowment for the Arts' 2008 Survey of Public Participation for the Arts, www.nea.gov/research/ResearchReports_chrono.html.

Appendix A

**Placer Community Foundation
Audience Development Program for the Arts
Dashboard to Track Audience Attendance for**

<<INSERT NAME OF GRANTEE ARTS ORGANIZATION HERE>>

Note: Format for the dashboard may be changed to best suit the needs of the organization, as long as they contain information asked for below.

2008			2009			2010			
Name of program	Month and year program took place	Audience Attendance	Name of program	Month and year program took place	Audience Attendance	Name of program	Month and year program took place	Audience Attendance Goal	Audience Attendance Actual
Total =			Total =			Total =			

Appendix B

