

Regional Arts Partners Retreat
Wednesday, February 3, 2010
Columbus, Indiana
Comfort Inn & Suites, Garden Room

Attendees:

RAPS – Jim Sparrow (Region 3), Donna Catalano (Region 1), John Cain (Region 1), Jan Shupert-Arick (Region 3), Jeff Kuehl (Region 9), Lisa McSpadden (Region 11), Angela Butiste (Region 2), Kit Miracle (Region 11), Tetia Lee (Region 4), Paige Sharp (Region 4), Mary Jane Schenk (Region 10), Sue Burk (Region 5), Eric Rogers (Region 5), Dave Lawrence (Region 7), Jon Robeson (Region 6) and Sherri Wright (Region 6).

Commissioners – Karen Ellerbrook (Region 10), Jeanne Mirro (Region 5), Suzie Rentschler (Region 9), and Irene Smith-King (Region 1).

IAC Staff – Lewis Ricci, Kristina Davis-Smith, Michelle Anderson, Susan Britsch, Bobbie Garver, April Blevins, and Laura Frank

Moderator – Ron Stratten

Review of Current Strategic Plan and Accomplishments

Lewis began reviewed the Strategic Plan from FY 08 and 09 and accomplishments by going over the bulleted items in the Final Draft handout. The largest item that came out of the Strategic Plan from those years is the need for Arts Education programs. Some items that were instituted because of the arts education priority include:

- Susan Britsch was hired to administer arts education programs for the IAC.
- The Arts Education grant program was formed from available funds from the Cultural Trust.
- The IAC applied to be a part of Education Leadership Institute (ELI) and was accepted.
- The IAC organized a statewide summit, a partnership with Young Audiences, which included keynote speaker Ra Joy from Arts Alliance Illinois. Ra spoke about arts advocacy.

The second item on the Strategic Plan was to Recognize Public Value. Lewis mentioned that the IAC ended up having to fight for the money, so targeting private \$\$ was not as high of a priority as outlined in the Final Draft of the Strategic Plan prioritization.

The third item on the Strategic Plan outline was to Vitalize Community Quality. The IAC established a Cultural Tourism program with Representative Eric Koch and Lafayette, Bloomington and Carmel were the first communities accepted as statewide cultural districts. Indiana Artisan, lead by Eric Freeman, was established in conjunction with OCRA, Indiana Tourism, and Indiana State Department of Agriculture, complete with artisan trails and an expanding retail program.

Lewis invited Commissioners to respond. Ron commented that the initial plan with this Strategic Plan was to move forward in at least half of these areas and the IAC was moving along at a fast pace until they were hit with the budget cuts. At first, Jeanne said she was disappointed that we couldn't do more in education, but after Lewis listed the accomplishments, she realized we have done more in education. Jim Sparrow asked about the arts education and if our hurdles were philosophical or financial. Lewis responded that it was more philosophical. For example, the Department of Education (DOE) wouldn't supply anyone to go with them to ELI; they then relied upon higher education. The DOE is really one-sided, and has cut out not only arts but core emphasis areas. Irene commented that we have come a long way, but we have a ways to go. She requested Commissioners be reminded periodically of these plans. Eric agreed that Strategic Plans only work when they are revisited. Lewis commented that the IAC's Strategic Plan needs to reference bigger goals (NEA) and also what is needed locally. Lewis suggested RAPs need to reference our goals with their goals when going through a Strategic Plan. Angela hopes that if something is a priority for us then it would be communicated to the partners.

Ron moved outside of the agenda and presented an activity where participants had to stand back to back and change 5 things about their appearance. They then had to turn around and remember what has changed about their partner. They did it again with 10 things and were then told they had to do it again with 15 things (although Ron let them off the hook on the last item). Ron then presented the following seven dynamics of change:

1. People will feel awkward, ill-at-ease and self-conscious.
2. People will think about what they have to give up.
3. People will feel alone if everyone else is going through the change.
4. People can handle only so much change.
5. People are at different levels of readiness for change.
6. People will be concerned that they don't have enough resources.
7. If you take the pressure off, people will revert back to old behavior.

Ron also presented the following IAC Truths:

1. The shrinking budget is forcing changes in thinking and approaches to deliverables.
2. Change is uncomfortable.
3. Change is coming.
4. What are our priorities for the future? What is important?

Ron broke the attendees into 3 groups and asked them to write out 7 strengths and 7 weaknesses of the arts in Indiana.

Strengths

- Group one: networking/collaboration; economic impact (jobs & tourism); improved quality (arts and organizations; passionate leadership; statewide outreach; active volunteer support; and advocacy.
- Group two: strong geographical presence by artists and arts orgs, as well as diversity of arts; strong artistic foundation through longevity of institutions & new programs; resilience and adaptability through needs identification; strong community leaders, grassroots, and communities that are advantageous in advocacy efforts; increased NEA \$\$; strong collaborations established; and strong technology presence throughout the state.
- Group three: regional arts partnership (quarterly meetings, re-granting, networking, connections help regionally, resources out the 92 counties, artists and arts orgs easier to do partners' works, advocacy efforts stronger as a combined effort, social capital –admin., stronger RAP, leadership of IAC & partnership strong); commission structure (adaptation of change, independence of the governor's office, an independent agency); IAP program; strong programming; information (communication between RAP and IAC); private philanthropy is strong overall; and strong community foundations.

Weaknesses

- Group one: complexity of grant process; lack of financial resources; technology – knowledge and tools; lack of respect for arts from state government; duplicated efforts; marketing – identity, brand, building a plan; lack of big picture vision among orgs; and artist services.
- Group two: funding resources threatened; lack of quality, world-class institutions (what we do have is undervalued); territorial – repetition doesn't help with quality and collaborations tend to break down; perception of art-misunderstood (value, criticism, impact of education, economic development); getting the message out is a challenge (lack of empirical data and how to use it, campaign/strategy for message, coordinated marketing effort spanning regions & state); and increased need for service agencies and developed professional advocacy (versus volunteer).
- Group three: arts undervalued; variance of capacity of the RAP's; economic limitations (public and private); political vulnerability (governor, local, etc.); weakened educational system (even worse than before); lack of strong central advocacy organization; and marketing (limit of capacity).

After the lists were finished and hung up on the wall, each attendee walked around and selected their top 5 each of the weaknesses and strengths. Susan and Kristina then added up results and here are the top four overall strengths and weaknesses:

Top 4 strengths

1. Strong community leaders, using community for grassroots efforts.

2. Strength of advocacy
3. Passionate Leadership
4. Statewide outreach (reaching into underserved areas of the community)

Top 4 weaknesses

1. Vulnerability (political)
2. Perception of art misunderstood, mixed message
3. Lack of financial resources
4. Marketing, identity, brand, building a plan

Review of Statewide Needs Assessments/Surveys

Michelle presented data from surveys, beginning with the IAC survey. See handouts for reference.

Ron then had the group break into small groups to look at art in Indiana and opportunities that were unknown when meeting in groups previously. The second part of this activity was to identify threats; things that can bring it all down.

Opportunities

- Group one: advocacy, arts education, collaborations/partnerships, and develop a new model that builds on the strengths of the RAP.
- Group two: funding (strengthen advocacy, local/regional economic development, de-politicize the funding – no legislation, expand & develop partnerships with local CVBs, rethink leveraging private/public money, using/making arts as a campaign position before elected); peer learning and joint activities (can include other nonprofits/for profit collaborations such as sports orgs/businesses, public collaboration with arts and artists, change perceptions, diversity and types of activities/forms); and support for technical assistance (share resources – travel share/workshops, trade between orgs to even out costs/cuts).
- Group three: other funding possibilities to the RAP consortium; statewide technical assistance sessions (collaboration); give the arts more visibility; gather better data as a group; create a common voice; increase the value of the arts; build better relationships with schools; collaborate with humanities, tourism, etc.; more peer learning/best practices.

Threats

- Group one: funding/handling of funds; being inflexible; partnership dissolution and how that affects underserved or unserved populations; and weakness/decline in arts education leads to less support and involvement for the arts.

- Group two: funding/economy (threat to public/private income and resources, politicizing the arts funding, competition for resources, hand to mouth, transient orgs); and public perception (elimination of arts ed funding, how the arts are treated as non-essential, how does it relate to jobs and building local economy, bridging gap of info and importance to for profit world, arts as a quantifiable commodity, art=liberal, how art is relevant to each person).
- Group three: perception that arts are not worthy of public funding (both locally and statewide); decrease in mid-major level arts organizations; diminishing arts requirements within educational institutions; brain drain; shifting lifestyle (staying at home, becoming more insular); economic shifts; and competition.

The group dispersed for the day.

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Moderator – Ron Stratten

Public – Tom Wilhelmus

Review of Possible Alternative Partnership Scenarios

Lewis went over the budget and reductions for the past 3 years. Lewis pointed out the IAC has been reducing administrative costs all along in order to serve people in the state as the IAC is charged.

Ron asked that participants keep in mind the events of the previous day when reviewing the alternative partnership scenarios. Ron also discussed with attendees the difference between cooperation and collaboration. Cooperation is giving someone your bottom 5 and selling them as if they are the top 5 and never give away things you can't afford to lose. Collaboration is to churn that and have something that is much larger than either one was able to let go of because they let go.

Jim asked what the best way to serve all 92 counties is. Would like to say it's short term, but not sure that it's short term or not. We have to look at the future, what it looks like, what's the best way to do it.

Tom asked for clarification of the term "the field." Lewis responded that the IAC pushed as much money as possible to the programs throughout the state; what would be service money to RAPs and program money to IAC. Lewis said the IAC has consciously made the decision down the line to push as much grant money out onto the field as possible. Tom commented, saying in that context, since some of the program decisions are made in Indianapolis (Majors, IAPs), do we have a clear sense of how those balance out? Lewis responded that 60% of the IAC's money is tied up in the RAP. Eric responded that some of the attendees have come to the table with different amounts of information, and some are less aware. Ron said if there is something that is not clear, this is the time to raise the question. No further questions were raised.

Lewis presented six scenarios to the group. Lewis explained that the scenarios are meant to illuminate how different decisions would affect the arts field. In order to think inside some kind of framework, IAC staff had to come up with something. Ron said when we're finished, a recommendation to the commission from attendees would be ideal.

The first graph is where the IAC stands now. All of the scenarios are based on money the IAC currently has in their budget. Above the dotted line in each scenario is with project grants; below the line is without project grants.

See scenarios handouts for reference.

- Scenario 1 is to have services entirely centralized. Lewis read through this scenario.
- Scenario 2 is status quo. In scenario 1 the IAC goes back to where they were 15 years ago, so this is where the IAC stays the same.
- Scenario 3 makes regional grants external, all other services administered by IAC.
- In scenario 4, grants are centralized internally and services are administered externally by the RAPs.
- Scenario #'s 5A & 5B would be 5 regions or 4 urban partners. 5A took out community art programming and money was rolled into AOS category. 5B is eight regions (the four corners and four urban areas).

Lewis reiterated that these scenarios are not necessarily alternatives, just guides to help think about possibility.

Jeff noted the 2.1 million totals in the spreadsheet scenarios did not cover Region 8 and 12 amounts. Michelle confirmed that Jeff was correct.

Jim asked Ron if there were any core values that transcended the situations of the partners that could make this process proactive rather than reactive.

Jeanne responded that the committee on the future has discussed the IAC's goals/mission and how to make it a more proactive effort. Jeanne doesn't know enough about the missions of the partners in comparison to the IAC to make a statement.

Ron read the IAC's mission.

Jon R. elaborated on Jim's comment and asked for context in prioritizing work done now to reach that mission. Which of 4 core services are most important? What is IAC's priority in serving out mission?

Lewis said the IAC is struggling with how to deliver core services to all citizens and those in rural areas with the dollars the IAC currently has. He said the IAC is asking for help in how to do that in the best way or how the IAC comes close to their goals without the dollars needed to make it meaningful.

Eric responded that true constituency is every tax payer in the state. In their surveys, the IAC did not hear from every tax payer because they were hearing from just those in the arts.

Lewis notes the surveys gave us at least some indication of what people are thinking and acknowledges it is not a fool-proof method.

Ron reminded attendees that they were trying to get a recommendation out of this and suggested breaking the group up to discuss collaborative efforts needed to fall within the areas noted.

Ron broke attendees into small groups to discuss scenarios (IAC staff left the room).

Jim Sparrow presented the first group.

The first group decided to look at deliverables from the state level instead of regionally. Cultural planning should be done at the state level and be transferred in relation to education, advocacy and access. Certain things that could be pushed back to the state level are technical services. Referral services are best done at the regional level. Didn't talk about dollars; expected those dollars to go down.

Written on their sheet was the following: Focus – education, access, advocacy; central to all goals/statewide; look at deliverables through that lens; info referral – local; cultural planning – central (focus on core statewide values); look at technical services to push where best suited (unified technical/current, possible application, etc.).

Tetia Lee presented the second group:

The group's focus was on access and advocacy and efficiency. The group discussed how they could better tweak the scenarios, pulling out from them what was good. Regional structure is necessary to continue to provide to the 92 counties, but with a tweak because of working with fewer dollars. There is overlap of services, and perhaps this could be reduced (SWASO, RAP, Majors). Technical services can be provided by SWASO and removed from RAP.

Written on their sheet was the following: regional structure provides advocacy, access and accountability; regional structure necessary (working with fewer, reduce overlap of services SWASO/RAP/Majors; redistricting and redefining; and more arts education money to regional partners, as RAPs are better to identify needs of schools.

Eric Rogers presented the third group:

Group 3 agreed that core services must be evaluated for efficiency. Rather than being "simplistic", the IAC should take some elements from each scenario that has merit. Group three believes options 2-4 are the ones to focus on. One of the things that came out of the discussion is that all these services currently come from one level. Many of the services must be performed at both levels. An online grant system is essential, as is flexibility of guidelines for each region. It is important to seek other sources for funds. Collaboration can be powerful, but

can also be a pain in the neck. There is a need for a centralized art information system, which is the IAC's responsibility.

Written on their sheet was the following: group 3 thinks option #'s 2-4 are the starting point for the IAC; the core services must be re-evaluated for efficiency and purpose; many of the services must be performed at both RAP and IAC levels; online grant system is essential as is flexibility of guidelines for each region; seek other sources for funds; and centralized arts information system is critical – the IAC is responsible.

Ron first directed questions to Jim and group one.

Mary Jane asked if they thought grants would be centralized or decentralized.

Jim responded that the group didn't talk specifically about grants. Spoke of grants in respect to three core items (education, advocacy, and access).

Dave (who was part of group one) said they felt clear goals were needed for the partnership. It's premature to say what to do when the goals are unclear.

There was a general consensus among the group that the goals are not clear.

Dave commented that there has been a lot of talk about not being all things to all people. There is a need to hone in on what the citizens need or want.

Ron directed questions to Tetia and group two.

Tetia brought up group two's discussion of the effectiveness of centralizing education, stating that some felt it would be more efficient as a regionalized service. All schools are feeling a great crunch; most RAPs have established relationships with the schools in their community.

Karen asked who could partner best with the school. The RAP's job would be advocating, but the grant in the state would carry out that mission.

Ron solicited questions for Eric and group three.

Tom mentioned that a lot of the scenarios had things that need to take place centrally and things that need to take place locally, suggesting a better conversation at all levels that addresses each of these services differently.

Ron continued, saying there needs to be a discussion on what needs to be in what bucket. What else are we supposed to be doing to make us the agency we want to be?

Jeff (who was in group three) spoke of the focus of funds going to arts orgs....the eliminating of the project grants. What's an arts org? Definitions are different. Where is the focus of grantsmaking going to go? Who delivers the message? It came out split among the group on centralized and field-oriented.

Eric agreed; they didn't have a consensus and had differing opinions on where things ought to be.

Lewis asked about information referral (group 1 had it local and group 3 had it centralized).

John Cain said the promotion of local arts activities has always fallen under that category. John feels promotion of that needs to be done locally.

Eric says their group doesn't necessarily disagree with that, but they were saying this was complex, and the IAC needs a higher involvement.

Jon R. spoke about advocacy and having the partnership allows advocacy mechanism to stay together and stay strong. Some of the granting process should remain locally, as this keeps them strong.

Jim said his group (one) felt that serving the people of Indiana, sometimes we are measuring the dollars per county instead of the services provided.

Mary Jane asked if dollars are better spent in little project grants or to really support a major organization that can affect more.

Jim responded that it is not an either/or question.

Ron noticed a lot of head nodding about idea of education and advocacy. That's a transformative thought. Does that resonate with funders and recipients? Then that's a keeper of an idea.

Lewis said historically, education and access are the two things that get passed down from the NEA. Lewis sees that changing, and more focus will be about employment/jobs instead. The IAC needs to figure out how to respond within these concepts or add additional concepts to make their case to the NEA. Right now on a statewide level, we have to do metrics, and we've positioned all of our metrics in education. Rocco Landesman (NEA Director) has a different view of this, so there is something different coming down the line from the NEA. Maybe it needs to be added or it's something to be wrapped around.

Jim responded that we may have a preconceived notion of what arts education means. There's a way for us to wrap those messages around that position and use them as strengths. As long as we are open to what the definitions are of the key elements that are evolving.

Jon R. asked if advocacy was becoming a bad word.

Lewis responded that it's being positioned in a different way. There's an additional role or focus of advocacy; it's shifting. There's a suggestion to allow for-profit and not-for-profit organizations as the potential recipients of art support to make the arts happen in America. It won't matter for Landesman if it's for-profit or not-for-profit. He's moving away from philosophical to a practical approach, which widens the net to things not traditionally dealt with. Lewis' prediction is that we will see some push towards that from the NEA.

Jim responded that this might be more quantifiable.

Tetia said this elevates the role the arts have in quality of life. She thinks this approach is very interesting, sustaining the arts in a way that makes us viable to the nation (which is needed).

Lewis said the President Obama's new focus is on jobs. Landesman is presenting the arts in that manner. Governor Daniels' focus is on jobs. Lewis said he heard this from an Economic Development person: I have been told my job is to close deals, not to think out 10 years. The bigger picture is shifting and a lot of this will need to shift as well.

Susan Britsch commented on arts education by stating that we are seeing states pulling together to have resources to have the data to show legislators. There's nothing new about the argument; they are trying to quantify that and hold themselves together in a different way. Most states don't test the arts, so they have to create an assessment.

Tom stated that the fundraising element of all of this is important. He said that they talked about it in their group and thought it could happen both at the state level and locally. He thinks this requires a better conversation about who is going to do the better part of resource gathering.

Ron pointed out on the strength list was the ability to raise money at a local level. Some folks say they cannot do that at all. We need to figure out ways in which we can be nimble and be diverse.

It was asked what the next steps are.

Lewis said the material from the retreat is for two parallel initiatives; something that helps the Commission make decisions regarding economics and then something to use for strategic planning. Lewis said the IAC meets with the Committee on the Future on the 23rd. Lewis and staff will present what comes out of the retreat and the Committee on the Future will use that to make some initial recommendations to the Commission because we have to react to financial news, even if it's the same. Lewis and staff will take info from the first day to have people on a Steering Committee help come up with a strategic plan for the IAC. IAC staff will summarize both days back to RAP, provide electronic versions of data, scenarios, and basic pieces of information so RAP's can use locally and put more thought to this.

Eric pointed out that there is a separate scenario, and he was puzzled why it wasn't presented. The seventh option would be to put all services regionally and reduce the commission operation to bare bones (minimal staffing centrally). He stated that he is not supporting or going against it, but if we are looking at the total gamut, then we really need to look at the total gamut.

Lewis responded that there was a feeling that people might gravitate to that as a scenario, so it was taken off the table for the moment to talk about things that are more uncomfortable. It was thought this would force some discussion within some parameters.

Ron stated that Eric's additional scenario can be included in our summary and there was general consensus that it should be included in the summary.

Eric explained that one of the most important things in the partnership is building trust. This concerns him that the scenario wasn't included, and he doesn't want it to be perceived this way in the future. For it to be suggested that they would just jump on that boat is unfortunate.

Lewis responded that the IAC thought it would be easier to really think and pay attention within the plate that was laid out on the table because it would force more difficult discussion. Eric's discussion was noted, and Lewis agreed it's important. However, the decision to exclude it had nothing to do with trust, and had everything to do with making sure certain discussions happened.

Eric stated that he feels confident that was the intention, but felt obligated in letting the IAC know what the perception could be.

Ron urged all involved that as we go forward to give everyone credit for being smart enough to figure things out and give them every opportunity to get it right. The IAC will include the 7th scenario. Adding it to the list of scenarios would just be an alternative for groups to be looked at, and Ron didn't hear anyone coming close to that as an option during small group discussion.

Ron closed by thanking everyone for their discussion. He will be facilitating parts of the IAC strategic plan process and will be involved for the first 2-3 meetings. Discussions will then transition to a different facilitator. He will be sure to pass this information on to those involved.

Attendees then broke for lunch and an informal wrap-up.