Developing a Local Cultural Plan

This is a substantial task but is essential if you are to successfully build participation in, increase access to, and shape the priorities of local cultural development. Your cultural plan can be the road map for strengthening the shared cultures in your community. The planning process creates an opportunity to identify and discuss what is most valued and what is lacking or threatened. It is a time to identify resources and opportunities and create steps for positive action.

Most local cultural plans address a five-year period. Since the first plans were created in 2003, a portion of each grant awarded to County and Tribal Cultural Coalitions has been available since 2007 to support the costs of revising local cultural plans.

- Inventory cultural resources
  A good starting place is to identify all the exciting cultural resources in your community. Don't limit yourself to the obvious resources. It is worth doing some digging to find the resources that are less obvious but potentially just as significant.

  Once resources identified, you might want to explore the strengths and weaknesses of each of the resources.

  Starting asking how you can improve existing resources by strengthening them and by encouraging collaborative efforts. You will have resources from arts, heritage, and humanities plus other community resources. Explore models of working across disciplines.

- Define what you would like the cultural life of your community to be
  This is truly the time to dream. Create a vision of the type of cultural environment you want for your community. While you need to set some priorities later in this process, at this point, there will likely be many components to your vision. Each community will have a different vision, but here are a few examples of the types of things, which might be included. Don't be limited by this list!
  - More art activities for disadvantaged young people
  - A stronger emphasis on saving historic buildings
  - Better preservation of indigenous languages
  - Recording local stories
  - Building an arts and culture center
  - Encouraging cultural tourism
  - Using local culture for increased economic development
  - Creating a supplemental art program for local schools
  - Reaching a wider percentage of your population with cultural programs
  - Developing cultural programs for seniors
  - Encouraging creativity by local artists
  - Stabilizing existing cultural organizations

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- Identify Barriers to Cultural Expression
  What is standing in the way of public cultural participation and meeting your goals?

- Develop Specific Strategies to Achieve your Goals
  This means looking at your existing resources and deciding how you can use them to achieve your goal. It will certainly encourage inter-organization and interdisciplinary collaboration. It may involve the creation of new resources. You want your strategies to be bold and imaginative but achievable.

  For example, if one of your goals is to encourage cultural tourism, you might want to:
  - Have an "open studio" tour where people are encouraged to visit artist studios
  - Have a self-guided public art tour with a map and brochure
  - Identify your community with some component of culture (i.e. Ashland and Shakespeare)
  - Encourage artists to give classes and workshops which attract participants from outside the area
  - Have the historic society, local museums, and antique dealers work together on a "history weekend"

- Set Priorities
  While you will have many exciting ideas by this time, it will be clear that you can't do everything at once. It is important to set priorities. Doing so will assist you in making the best decisions when you have to decide which group or activity to support with grant money.

- Public Review and Discussion
  Your planning process should include opportunities for public review, discussion, and feedback. This review can be key to later plan implementation.

- Create Benchmarks (Measures of Success)
  The Oregon Cultural Trust requires the creation of annual performance measures to determine the impact of grant funds. Performance measures are quantitative measurements of success, impact, or effectiveness. They will vary with each cultural plan. Because the impact of cultural programming is often deeply personal, we suggest that local cultural plans consider identifying both quantitative performance measurements and qualitative indicators of success that connect with the power of personal stories or other narrative. Following are examples of the kinds of priorities and measurements we anticipate will be included in local cultural plans.

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- **Cultural Plan Priority: Stronger use of culture in building economic development**
  - Quantitative Benchmark: Increase each year in sales and/or services of local artists
  - Qualitative Indicator of Success: More artists and creative service workers are participating in civic organizations

- **Cultural Plan Priority: Greater involvement of arts, heritage, humanities with families and at-risk youth**
  - Quantitative Benchmark: Increased local public financial support for cultural programming for families and youth at-risk
  - Qualitative Indicator of Success: Participating families and youth interviewed voiced personal achievement connected with the cultural programming

- **Cultural Plan Priority: Increased awareness and respect for community and/or Tribal history**
  - Quantitative Benchmark: 100 elders interviewed each year as part of ongoing recording of community/Tribal history
  - Qualitative Indicator of Success: Noticeable increase in interactions of youth and elders

- **Cultural Plan Priority: Improvement in the built environment**
  - Quantitative Benchmark: Increase in the number of buildings preserved and rehabilitated
  - Qualitative Indicator of Success: Local "history" walks throughout community are now organized for both locals and tourists

- **Cultural Plan Priority: Bridges built between sectors of the community or Tribes**
  - Quantitative Benchmark: Organizing at least one significant cross-cultural event each year, involving multiple organizational partners
  - Qualitative Indicator of Success: Interest/eagerness of volunteers to participate in organizing cross-cultural event

Often the greatest benefits from cultural planning come from the human interaction through the planning process. Leave room in your process for creativity, fun, new ways of thinking, challenging ideas, and meeting new people.