Tips for Coalitions & Planning Committees

General Tips for Cultural Coalition Planning Committees and Coalitions

I. What is the Purpose of the Community Cultural Participation Program?

The purpose of this program is to support and fund a grassroots approach to building community cultural participation through local Cultural Coalitions. Each County, and each federally recognized Indian Tribe, establishes a local cultural coalition. Membership of the local cultural coalition is reviewed and accepted by the Cultural Trust Board. Each cultural coalition develops a local cultural plan. Each year, the Cultural Trust Board allocates funds by formula to each local cultural coalition. Using its local plan, each cultural coalition then decides how these funds are spent locally. While there are some requirements that cultural coalitions must meet, the purpose of this program is to give them maximum freedom and autonomy. The first grants were awarded in 2003.

Culture includes the arts, heritage and humanities, and "community cultural participation" means involving community members in creating, sharing, documenting, celebrating, and developing their shared culture. The program's focus is on local planning, with each county, and each federally recognized Indian Tribe, building participation in, gaining access to, and shaping priorities of local culture. The program encourages inter-organization and inter-disciplinary collaboration, along with support for excellence.

This program is intended to increase public participation in all that is culture, through a balance of preservation of the past and an investment in the future. It encourages people to actively participate and enjoy the cultural resources in their communities and fosters the development of a unique cultural identity.

II. How Do We Create a County or Tribal Cultural Coalition?

1. Establish a Cultural Coalition Planning Committee. The final committee will be appointed by the Cultural Trust Board but recommendations are sought from County Commissioners and Tribal Governing Bodies. Individuals or organizations who don't feel that County or Tribal recommendations have been inclusive may submit additional recommendations directly to the Cultural Trust Board.

   The size of the Cultural Planning Committee will vary depending on local needs. You want a Planning Committee with sufficient numbers to represent arts, heritage and humanities and still have other "at large" members from business, education, media, libraries, etc.

2. Identify a fiscal agent:
   This agent will receive funding from the state and will be responsible for keeping financial records and reporting to the Cultural Trust. It is important to remember that the fiscal agent must be a 501(c)(3) private, non-profit organization or a local public

entity. The fiscal agent must also meet federally accepted fiscal standards and demonstrate managerial capacity.

Develop a local cultural plan.
This is the primary responsibility, and the biggest job, for the Planning Committee. Every community's cultural plan will be unique because it reflects the cultures of that place. A local cultural planning process can be as creative and as comprehensive as participants and resources allow. Your cultural plan does need to have three things: PRIORITIES, SPECIFIC STRATEGIES and BENCHMARKS (Measures of Success).

In addition to creating the plan, the Cultural Coalition Planning Committee has a responsibility to disseminate the plan widely so as to insure the maximum and most diverse response and participation.

Define the structure of the Cultural Coalition
This is the entity that will be approved by the Cultural Trust Board to accept future grants. The Cultural Coalition Planning Committee needs to recommend to the Cultural Trust Board BOTH the structure of the cultural coalition and the names of the members. It may be that your cultural coalition is the same as your original Cultural Coalition Planning Committee. It is likely, however, that as the Committee works through the planning process, it finds ways to improve the effectiveness of the group. The collective strength of your cultural coalition members will determine the success of your Community Cultural Participation Grant Program. This means that it is important to have members who are dedicated to arts, heritage, and humanities. Creative, flexible, committed and informed members will help you create a vibrant local cultural environment.

The cultural coalition should involve people across geographical, social, income, racial, and other groups with every effort being made to include as many community cultural components as possible. Each year the cultural coalition will propose new members to the Cultural Trust Board. You will want to plan to provide good public notice to prospective new members.

III. Once the Cultural Coalition is Formed, What is its Major Function?

The Cultural Coalition leads the community in implementing the cultural plan created by the Cultural Coalition Planning Committee. It will be responsible for seeing that local grants reflect the priorities stated in the cultural plan. The cultural coalition will also be responsible for measuring the progress of the local cultural plan through the use of appropriate benchmarks.

How the cultural coalitions accomplishes these things will largely be up to the local community. However, the cultural coalition has a responsibility to see that arts, heritage, and humanities are all represented. Further, it is responsible to see that the cultural plan is

implemented in a way that fairly encourages participation in cultural activities by a wide variety of citizens.

The Cultural Coalition uses grant funds to support cultural activities identified in the local cultural plan. A portion of the grant funds received each fiscal year by a cultural coalition may be used for costs associated with grant management, community technical assistance and accounting.

ADDITIONAL TIPS:

I. Identifying Cultural Leaders

You want both your Cultural Coalition Planning Committee and your cultural coalition to have a diverse, energetic, and committed leadership. You want to make sure you have representation from the arts, heritage, and humanities as well as the different communities within your County or Tribe. Where do you find these people?

Local arts leadership (Suggestions NOT limitations)

- *Artists* – musicians, actors, dancers, filmmakers, writers, crafts people, designers, architects, etc.
- *Local or regional arts councils* – administrators, staff, volunteers, board members, etc.
- *Local or regional arts organizations* – art museums, galleries, local cultural centers, symphony orchestras, chamber ensembles, community choirs, theater groups, dance companies, arts presenters and promotion companies, arts festivals, theater festivals, music festivals, film festivals, folk art groups, craft groups, etc.
- *Local or regional art educators* – school teachers in art, music, dance and theater, private arts instructors, arts scholars, college or university arts, art history, and arts administration faculty

Local heritage leadership (Suggestions NOT limitations)

- *Local or regional heritage organizations* – representation from conservation and preservation groups of objects, structures, buildings, documents, collections, traditions, languages, folkways, commemorative groups, trails, heritage museums, history museums, natural and cultural history museums, pioneer cemeteries, folk life groups, presenting and promotion organizations in the areas of heritage, historic preservations, etc.
- *Local or regional historians/heritage educators* – historical societies, school teachers, college or university historic preservation, history faculty; amateur/professional historians, anthropologists and archaeologists, history preservation leagues, etc.

Local humanities leaders (Suggestions NOT limitations)

- *Local or regional humanities organizations* – representation from libraries, parks, linguistics, literature, philosophy, folklore, multicultural festivals, arts criticism, political science, international studies, history, women's studies, American studies, presenting and promotion companies in the areas of humanities such as libraries, Chautauqua presenters, etc.

- *Local or regional humanities educators* – school teachers, librarians, storytellers, college or university faculty in the disciplines of history, literature, linguistics, philosophy, ethics, jurisprudence, comparative religion, and the history, criticism, and theory of the arts, culture anthropology, archaeology, political science, international relations, and interdisciplinary areas such as folklore, women's studies, and American studies, etc.

Other Local Cultural Leadership

- Local or regional organizations with cultural interests to include, but not limited to, representation from K-12 schools, community colleges, universities, newspapers, television, radio, business, health and human service organizations, regional and economic development agencies, etc.

II. Successful Planning

- Involve local persons beyond those who are already on every board and committee. Involve everyone that shows a willingness to roll up their sleeves and follow through. Sometimes a bit of naiveté is useful on a committee – they may ask needed questions and facilitate dialogue and relationship building.

- Be inclusive, but don't drive yourself crazy. Make honest invitations to involve people in the planning process. Work with those that show up as your core planning group, then develop ways to outreach to others. In this first round of planning, please err toward being very inclusive.

- Listen. Planning is really about strategic listening. Figure out how to listen to those people in your community. What are their strengths? What are the barriers to their cultural expression and cultural participation? How do people naturally come together in your community – through potlucks, school events, etc.?

- Really listen. At the end of meetings, ask those that have spoken to listen. Invite, one by one, those who have not spoken to reflect on what they have heard, or say what is on their mind. Often it is these people – the quiet ones – that have the answers.

- Create a safe place for people to dialogue. Your planning committee and process must make it safe for people to speak out and voice what is most important to them. Conflict is a natural part of planning.

- Honor people's time. An important rule is "begin on time, end on time". A well-organized and well-run meeting goes a long way toward keeping the planning group feeling productive and useful.

- Organize – don't burn out people. The cultural planning process should help organize cultural interests. We are glad when planning processes are completed, but we should

enjoy the process of working with our neighbors. Schedule in special events, ceremonies, celebrations, food, whatever it takes to keep the interest and momentum going.

- Craft a unique process. Study other planning processes, and then gather your core group and craft a process specific to your group. Be cautious of those that suggest you follow a process completely like that followed someplace else.

- Consultants. Consultants can help you meet your goals, but don't expect them to have all the answers. The best consultants will bring their experience and help you work locally.

- Tap the power of culture. You know you are succeeding when people feel passionate about their ideas, their stories, and their experiences. Culture is where we feel most at home. Expressing your culture is often emotional; expect tears.

- Have fun. People need to laugh. Use humor to your advantage. Mix pleasure with business; make the process fun.