

PRO BONO STRATEGIC PLANNING FOR RURAL ARTS ORGANIZATIONS

The DeVos Institute invites arts and culture organizations in rural communities to participate in pro bono strategic planning and research initiative, underwritten in full by the University of Maryland

Application Deadline: December 14, 2018

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The DeVos Institute of Arts Management at the University of Maryland (www.DevosInstitute.net) is pleased to offer pro bono strategic planning services for up to five arts and culture organizations based in rural, semi-rural, or micropolitan communities.

Each planning process is valued at \$75,000 and will be fully underwritten through a multi-year commitment by the University of Maryland to helping build capacity of cultural communities in the United States and around the world.

This initiative recognizes that the conditions experienced by arts and culture organizations in rural, semi-rural, and micropolitan communities in the United States differ in meaningful ways from those faced by peers in urban centers, and that, as several recent studies have discussed, arts funding, engagement, and creation are often unique to these environments as well.

As such, the Institute, a national leader in capacity building and strategic planning for arts and culture organizations, seeks five partners with whom it will work to develop a long-term strategic plan that celebrates the unique assets of their organization, community, cultural history, and environment.

Through these processes, which will be run independently with each organization, the Institute and each

participating organization will focus on long-term artistic and educational programming; marketing and communication; community and volunteer engagement; cross-sector collaboration; fundraising; and board engagement.

Specifically, the process will focus on financial diversification. According to one recent study conducted by USDA, funding for organizations in non-urban areas of the United States represents under 4% of the annual distribution of the 1,000 largest foundations supporting arts and culture in America. As such, this process will position participants as experts in a research initiative being led by the Institute to better understand and articulate strategies for resilience amongst arts and culture organizations in rural, semi-rural, and micropolitan communities around the United States.

The Institute will author each plan in close coordination with executive and artistic leadership, staff, board, and community leadership of participating organizations. Each of the five processes will be led by Institute President Brett Egan. Additional planning support may be provided from Institute specialist consultants according to the discipline and strategic direction of the organization (community-based creative practice, cross-sector partnerships, arts education, etc.).

ELIGIBILITY

The opportunity is open to organizations based in rural, semi-rural, micropolitan, or similar communities across the United States with a population of 50,000 or less. In addition, applicants are expected to:

- have a history of at least five continuous years of programming;
- have at least three full-time staff members, although the program is equally equipped to work with larger staffs;
- have an annual operating budget of at least \$250,000;
- articulate a compelling set of objectives for the planning process; and convey broad based support at both the staff and board leadership levels.

The process is well-suited to organizations at a variety of inflection points, for instance (but not limited to) organizations seeking to address:

- social, ecological, or economic change in their local or regional environment;
- mission or program evaluation or re-alignment;
- leadership succession;
- sustained or accelerated growth;
- crisis or uncertain future.

For questions regarding eligibility, **please contact Syrah Gunning, Director, Training, Research and Development,** at SEGunning@DeVosInstitute.net.

Applications open November 7, 2018 and are due December 14, 2018. The seven-month planning process will begin in January 2019.

CLICK HERE TO APPLY

About

THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

A strategic plan provides a practical, five-year roadmap for advancing mission and impact in an ever-changing environment.

The framework below broadly describes the Institute's planning process; however, the Institute will work with each organization to ensure that the process adheres to the culture and conditions of their organization and community.

The seven-month planning process entails:

1. Your completion, and our analysis, of a comprehensive **information request** that positions us to be good partners to you in this effort.
2. A thorough, joint review of your organization's **mission**. Here we will be looking together at the current mission's effectiveness as a "contract" that helps define who, how, and where your organization currently serves, and ways that may change in the years to come. If needed, we will work with you to refine this mission following the environmental and internal analysis (steps 3 and 4 in the process). By the end of the planning process, we will want to ensure that your mission serves you as an aspirational, pragmatic, concise guide for future investment of time and resources.
3. On your behalf, we will then conduct an **environmental analysis** that evaluates the external factors that would affect the implementation of that mission, specifically to understand new opportunities, or constraints, facing the organization in the execution of its mission. Here we will give special attention to how the environment (financial, social, ecological, political, etc.) is changing, and how the organization might respond to maximize its relevance and sustainability.
4. Simultaneously, we will conduct an **internal analysis** to evaluate how the organization compares, at present, to what is required for success given the factors unearthed through the environmental study.
5. Together, through several working sessions, we will develop **detailed strategy** in response to the environmental and internal analyses.
6. Next, we will provide you with a draft **implementation plan** that outlines tactics required to execute each strategy, assigning responsibility for each, and a deadline for their completion. We will work together to complete this and ensure that the organization has a practical roadmap that is achievable.
7. Lastly, we will work with you develop a **financial plan** that projects the income and expense structure of the organization over the full timeframe of the plan, accounts for the resources required to implement each strategy, and projects the benefits expected as a result.

ROLES AND TIME COMMITMENT

We will ask participating organizations to appoint a **"Task Force"** which will serve as our primary point of contact. This Task force typically includes the executive, or equivalent; artistic director or program lead; Board Chair, or equivalent; and a scheduling point-of-contact. This task force, which is also part of the "Planning Committee" described below, can expect a time commitment of approximately 30-35 hours, working with us during pre-planning; to identify and coordinate the planning committee; and participation in a series of 6-8, 3-hour Planning Committee meetings.

We work with this Task Force to identify approximately 12-15 members for the **"Planning Committee"**, who can expect a commitment of approximately 25-30 hours for planning meetings, interviews, and working sessions. We expect the active engagement of this Committee at meetings, as well as their time in reviewing and feeding back on plan drafts between meetings. Committee members typically include senior artistic, programming, and administrative staff; board members; and, as appropriate, representatives from the communities served by the organization.

Lastly, we will ask the Task Force to help identify an **"Advisory Committee"** of approximately 20 individuals that represent a diverse cross-section of their constituency. These may include program participants or alumni; community leadership; funders and donors; board members not on the Planning Committee; and peers in the field. These individuals will be interviewed during the environmental and internal analyses; their time commitment is approximately one hour.

Between meetings, we conduct all research on your behalf and prepare all meeting materials. We provide all materials necessary for planning and execution but will

ask that your office commits to hosting planning meetings in a manner appropriate to the culture of your organization and community, and to provide a laptop and projector for each in-person meeting. Printed copies of the plan, if desired, would also be furnished to committee members by your organization.

Approximately half of planning meetings will take place in your offices (or another location identified by your team in your community); the others will take place via web conference.

For more information on the DeVos Institute Strategic Planning Process, and client testimonials and outcomes, please visit the Institute's website at www.Devos.Institute.net.

About the role of participants in the Research Initiative

The DeVos Institute has undertaken a research initiative to better understand and articulate the state of private philanthropic funding for cultural activity in rural, semi-rural, and micropolitan communities. Participating organizations will be invited to participate in this initiative as field experts to help frame the scope of research, articulate their experience in seeking funding from philanthropic sources both internal and external to their immediate community, and work with the Institute and its partners to develop recommendations to be issued as part of a research summary on this topic in 2019. Integral to this research will be integration with other, existing frameworks for understanding and articulating the unique assets that define wealth in the rural setting, including the Rural Wealth Framework, pioneered by the Rural Policy Research Institute and other scholars.

About

THE DEVOS INSTITUTE

The DeVos Institute of Arts Management at the University of Maryland provides training, consultation, and implementation support for arts managers and their boards. It operates on the premise that while much is spent to train artists, too little is spent to support the managers and boards who keep those artists at work.

The DeVos Institute's core service provides in-depth, comprehensive, implementable strategic plans. The Institute's planning processes are designed to address a range of organizational states: from those in crisis to those looking to cement and accelerate a position of strength.

Throughout the process, the Institute engages key stakeholders and beneficiaries to provide insight into the organization and its environment. Each plan is carefully tailored to address the organization's unique mission, goals, and challenges. The Institute's approach values transparency and due process, but does not forgo visionary action for the sake of consensus.

The Institute has served more than 1,000 organizations from over 80 countries since Michael M. Kaiser founded it during his tenure as President of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C. While environments, objectives, and disciplines vary, the Institute works with each of its clients to create, market, and sustain exemplary cultural programs.

For More Information

For more information about the application process, **please contact Syrah Gunning** at SEGunning@DeVosInstitute.net or 301-314-0958.

"In many cases when working with consultants, clients are given generic solutions that do not account for the history and culture of an organization. Our experience was quite the opposite with the DeVos Institute...They were highly knowledgeable and efficient in their analysis and recommendations. As such, they developed a comprehensive and succinctly tailored plan that addressed our capacities and needs."

**Dr. Raymond Codrington, Executive Director
Hi-ARTS, New York**