

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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DeVos Institute Partners with Five Arts Organizations in Rural Communities in Pro Bono Strategic Planning and Research Initiative

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The DeVos Institute of Arts Management at the University of Maryland, a global leader in training and consultation for cultural organizations, will provide six arts and cultural organizations in rural, semi-rural, or micropolitan communities with pro bono strategic planning services. The opportunity, underwritten in full by the University of Maryland, was open to organizations across the country through a competitive application process. The Institute is pleased to announce the following six participating organizations:

- [American Shakespeare Center](#) Staunton, Virginia
- [The Bascom](#) Highlands, North Carolina
- [Carbondale Arts](#) Carbondale, Colorado
- [Grand Marais Art Colony](#) Grand Marais, Minnesota
- [Museum at Warm Springs](#) Warm Springs, Oregon
- [Perseverance Theatre](#) Douglas, Alaska

The 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, selected these 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.

“A strategic plan provides a practical, five-year roadmap for advancing mission and impact in an ever-changing environment. We look forward to partnering with these organizations, and their communities, over the next eight months in a rigorous planning process,” said Institute President, Brett Egan. “Each organization is at a meaningful inflection point where a focus on long-term planning and strategy development is critical to celebrate its history and position it for long-term sustainability within its community and region at large.”

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.

Guiding these efforts, 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. Participants in the strategic planning process will be positioned as experts in the research initiative being led by the Institute to better understand and articulate strategies for resilience amongst arts and culture organizations in rural communities. Participating organizations will

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.

Participating organizations reflected on the opportunity, offering:

“I firmly believe that theatre creates community by fostering empathy, building relationships, and cultivating our ability to interact with our neighbors through a shared experience. Through engagement with community leaders and institutions, Perseverance Theatre works to better equip all of us to problem solve, collaborate, and create a vital and just society. I am Native, Inupiaq, Yup’ik and Cree, I am an Alaskan, and I am an American who wants to see a future where professional theatre serves its community by telling the stories that need to be shared, particularly for underserved communities. An honest assessment of the organization and business model will give the leadership a perspective and understanding that I feel is critical at this point of Perseverance Theatre’s 40-year history.” – Joe Bedard, Board President, Perseverance Theatre (Douglas, Alaska)

“The Museum at Warm Springs aggressively purchased one of the largest collections of their own indigenous people, piece by piece, and articulated in its founding its future need to provide proper context for the cultural materials. There are not many institutions of this kind in the world. After twenty-five years of operations, the Museum has experienced reduced funding and is looking at strategic ways to manifest prosperity and engage with the public. The Museum is at the exact point where careful planning is most needed to set future direction for this invaluable institution.” – Elizabeth A. Woody, Executive Director, Museum at Warm Springs (Warm Springs, Oregon)

“This is a very exciting time to be a part of American Shakespeare Center and we are ready to do the work needed in order to move to the next tier in our organization. My hope is that we will become more widely acknowledged and recognized as a premiere destination for Shakespeare theater and scholarship. Such an accomplishment would not only be meaningful to us, but to our community, as well. Being a big part of a small town means that our success multiplies in significant ways through our neighbors. We hope to be a model for what happens when a small community puts art at its center and how manifold that investment can pay off.” – Candice Hark, Chair, Board of Trustees, American Shakespeare Center (Staunton, Virginia)

“Carbondale Arts works closely with several other organizations around Economic Development and part of this plan will focus on how we can best work together to achieve common goals. We are all experiencing the ‘sense of fit’ with other established or traditional economic entities in our communities and Carbondale would like to lead the way on creating good practices to follow. Duplication and competition for funding can muddy the relationships unless we have defined strategies that keep us working together. We hope the model we create from this strategic planning process will be able to be duplicated in many other rural communities. We aim to develop strategies that will allow our community to move forward in the 21st century with clarity and meaning.” – Amy Kimberly, Executive Director, Carbondale Arts (Carbondale, Colorado)

“Part of what makes our community unique is the diverse mix of local and seasonal residents and retirees with a wide range of ages, socio-economic standing, and education levels. There is a strong tradition of craft and art that spans centuries in this region and we are proud to embrace the elements of the past with the best of emerging arts. Being chosen to participate in the DeVos Institute strategic planning process is a transformative event at this critical time for The Bascom. It will introduce a new way of

thinking, of constant evaluation, and of organizational introspection that will benefit the future boards and staffs.” – Teresa Osborn, Executive Director, The Bascom (Highlands, North Carolina)

“The small community of Grand Marais, located in a place where an ancient mountain range and boreal forest meet at the banks of Lake Superior, served as a perfect setting for developing artists to learn and grow artistically in the natural setting. Since its beginning in 1947, the Art Colony has had strong years and lean ones. During the past ten years of organizational growth, the staff and board have focused on upgrading the facilities, aligning the mission and programs of the organization, expanding the program offerings, and expanding the staff. It has been a pleasure to see the organization regain its focus, become financially healthy, and grow the artistic programming and support for artists. Our organization will benefit from guided strategic planning to focus our next steps to further our vision and mission in an intentional way. Due to our remote location and small size, it is difficult to draw upon the expertise of others in our community who have a grasp on how an arts organization in a small town can develop the support of our students and others from around the state and country. The opportunity to work through these growing pains and make our decisions with the guidance, support, and assistance of the DeVos Institute will be extremely valuable for our organization.” – Sally Berg, Board Chair, Grand Marais Art Colony (Grand Marais, Minnesota)

This initiative is made possible with the support of the University of Maryland.

About the DeVos Institute of Arts Management

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.

At the same time, rapid changes in technology, demographics, government policy, and the economy have complicated the job of the manager and volunteer trustees. These changes continue to accelerate.

Organizations that have mastered these trends are flourishing—even leveraging them to their advantage.

For those that have not, however, the sense that “something’s not quite right” can seem unshakable. For too many, these changes have led to less art, decreased visibility, diminished relevance—even financial collapse.

These challenges inform our approach. Never has the need to balance best practices and new approaches been so urgent.

Institute leadership and consultants—all arts managers themselves—understand that, in today’s environment, there is no time or resource to waste. Therefore, Institute services are lean, direct, and practical.

The DeVos 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, each of our clients shares the desire to create, market, and sustain exemplary cultural programs.

The DeVos Institute has designed its services to assist a wide range of institutions, from traditional performing and presenting organizations, museums, galleries, art schools, and libraries, to botanical gardens, glass-making studios, public art trusts, and nonprofit cinemas, to name a few.

In 2014, the DeVos Institute transitioned to the University of Maryland, where it continues to offer support to individuals, organizations, and—in collaboration with foundations and governments—to communities of organizations around the world. The Institute’s core beliefs can be found [here](#).

For more information about the DeVos Institute, visit www.DevosInstitute.net.

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