

The Multiple Benefits of Collaboration among the Community's Education Venues.

COMMONALITY OF MISSION.

Community education venues, i.e., schools, theaters, museums, galleries and parks, all have an education mission. Entertainment, exercise and socialization are undoubtedly part of the picture and in some cases even primary. But the commonality of their shared missions leads to common participants, facilities, networks and funding sources. What if the distinct educational, cultural and recreational organizations coordinated their efforts and collaborated in a holistic manner?

CO-LOCATIONS.

At a minimum, every community educational organization should be searching for opportunities to co-locate facilities, possibly even share facilities. The savings are great, the cross-marketing opportunities are big and the collaboration on programming beneficial.

THE BENEFITS OF ORGANIZATIONAL COLLABORATION.

Better is the full integration of organizations. At the end of the day, boards of directors and administrators of the several community educational venues can reap multiple benefits:

- Co-located facilities with shared infrastructure costs reduce individual venue expenses.
- Coordinated calendars eliminate conflicting event dates.
- Coordinated membership lists facilitate cross-marketing, allow discounts for members of multiple organizations and create a comradery between performers such as the ballet and the symphony.
- Supporting activities, such as restaurants, can take advantage of a multi-venue complex to offer food and beverage services.
- Museum, theater and other venue retail shops can be coordinated in purchasing terms, off-site joint locations and shared branding opportunities.
- Economic development benefits are great; businesses making location decisions to stay put or move to from another community find comfort in a community that has a unified approach to its educational and cultural activities. It attracts owners and employees.

Timing is important. Facilities cannot be relocated at a whim. Sharing of valuable membership information does not happen absent trust between organizations. Coordinated fund raising events happen slowly. But with purpose, partnerships can be built, tested, adjusted and implemented. Over the life of the city, facilities become outdated and they are re-built offering an opportunity to re-locate facilities that make sense. Over time, partnerships can mature.

THE CRITICAL ORGANIZATIONS are:

- The public school board,
- The public library,
- The local history museum,
- Public galleries and gardens,
- The parks and recreation board,
- The community theater organization, and
- Any like-minded private institution interested in participating in a collaborative public system.



PURPOSE-DRIVEN COLLABORATION.

The overall purpose is to create a common vision of collaboration and coordination between the community’s education venues to let the community become bigger, faster, stronger and better as it progresses through its history. The essential strategy is a long-term, comprehensive plan originating from each community education organization that fits within the community’s overall collaborative vision.

Vision-driven action plans for individual groups can dramatically advance the educational, cultural and entertainment value of their individual offerings while elevating the intellectual, economic and social capital of the entire community.