

ARTS AND CULTURE

PRESERVING CULTURAL TREASURES:

- Rising real costs are an issue (rent, insurance etc.).
- There is a \$125,000 loss in planned income for all Arts organizations in Tompkins County. Overall a 20% cut in funding for the county.
- Sponsorships are happening less and less.
- We must work harder to stay even with subscriptions and single ticket sales: many households retrenching on discretionary spending.
- It is important to maintain individual donations for general operations while mounting a successful capital campaign. There are a number of capital campaigns going on right now.
- We must help patrons and donors understand our bare bones status. . .extremely low salaries, only state mandated benefits, e.g. no health insurance, retirement etc., difficulty in succession planning given these realities.
- We must work very hard to keep overall budget stress from hurting mission. We need to maintain the quality of productions, the ability to secure best actors etc.
- The arts are frequently viewed as optional in a community.
- Income for local artists is a concern during these economic times.

EXAMPLES:

Hangar Theatre lost its ability to do an expansion program of their 4th grade education.

Cayuga Vocal Ensemble will have a reduced season.

State Theatre lost \$10,000 in operating support.

Quotable Quotes from the tour:

“The volatility of funding has an impact on core services and makes planning more challenging.”

“Schools have become, FIRST, social service agencies and SECOND, a place for education. We must do something to get back to teaching.”

“We live in a perpetual state of heightened awareness about possible options for help in achieving our mission.”

“I wish funders saw funding more like a quilt. . . funding for services is only one square; it’s not the whole program.”

“How do we expand our impact and reach within the confines of space and budget?”

“It is difficult to drum up leadership. We need support building our volunteers into leaders.”

“Our biggest concern—the health of our organization 5 years out.”

“Three out of four factors for the high school drop out rate are home factors.”

“We dream big!”



COMMUNITY FOUNDATION’S

LISTENING AND LEARNING TOUR

FALL 2009

In PARTNERSHIP with

- AFCU
- BOCES
- Community Arts Partnership
- Human Services Coalition
- Sustainable Tompkins

Our primary purpose was to listen and learn from various nonprofit organizations as they responded to a series of questions related to the current economic environment and also to inform our grant making efforts.

Questions:

Community Foundation of Tompkins County
info@communityfoundationoftc.org

607-272-9333

COMMON THEMES

- Loss of revenue is definitely having an effect on our nonprofit organizations.
- Demand for services has increased at the same time as donations have remained the same or decreased.
- Maintaining current successful programs is in jeopardy.
- Agencies are clearly looking at efficiencies in their organizations and determining the importance of their core services as they relate to their missions.
- Collaborations and partnerships are critical during these times. Many are thinking of ways to help each other and considerations are being given to possible mergers or strategic alliance.
- Everyone seems to be working harder, faster and smarter to get resources and services to people who need them and to continue successful programs and services.
- Capacity building and stability in all areas is very important but different for each organization (i.e. technology, development, particular expertise, professional/board development/training or specific services).
- Unrestricted grants for basic operating expenses are especially important. Suggested that funders do their homework first so organizations are not overburdened with paperwork.
- Finally, regardless of the economy basic costs continue to escalate.

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

PROFILE OF THOSE NEEDING SERVICES:

- People who have never needed help are trying to figure out ways to get information and are waiting longer to ask for help.
- People who are almost homeless—they may own land.
- People whose insurance plans have changed.
- People who are unemployed and are concerned about the time when unemployment runs out.
- People who are still working but their hours have been cut and they are finding it harder to make ends meet.
- People who are under increased stress.

FINANCIAL ISSUES:

State and Federal Governments are slower in making payments for contractual services which also is hard on staff morale, hard on vendors that need to be paid and may cost more money if loans need to be taken. This lack of resources puts pressure on agencies to look at grants that may not be parallel to their mission or to chase the money that is available. Innovative programs and expansion of existing programs are being eliminated because this is funded with discretionary dollars which are more difficult to get and tend to be local.

Funders of all types continue to be very reluctant to fund administration and general operations. They want to fund direct services and innovation only and fail to recognize that even new programs have overhead expenses. Some donors that have been generous for years are not giving this year.

EXAMPLES:

There are 35% more HEAP applications, 40% greater utilization of food pantry and a 3 year wait for Section VIII housing.

PUBLIC EDUCATION

CRISIS IN PUBLIC EDUCATION:

- State provides funding for students to attend school 7 hours a day for 181 days a year, however, non mandated programs, afterschool programs etc. are often the ones that engage students in learning.
- Most schools have no centralized administrative position or coordinated strategy to access additional funds for supplemental programs. Some, but not all, teachers attempt to this in the context of increasingly time consuming teaching requirements.
- There is a loss in state funding this year and there is a 2 year freeze on funding which will result in significant cuts.
- Families are in distress which is evidenced by more abuse and neglect. There is a critical need for mental health services yet it is difficult to serve rural communities with these services due to isolation and stigma.
- There is an increased need for parenting skills—so few stable homes with half the students coming from unstable homes.
- Some parents don't convey the value of education which is reflected in student attitude and behavior. Concern about the time available for volunteers to be involved and the question of leadership succession.

WHAT IS HAPPENING:

- Schools are more and more dependent on agency partnerships—it is where the resources are coming from yet the schools do not have enough administrators to make more connections.
- Schools are looking for ways to support their existing programs by sharing resources with other schools.
- What were once teacher enhancement funds are now necessity funds.
- Mapping community resources will maximize resources and sustain the assets of the community. We must look at the totality of the community.
- A recent survey of middle and high school students indicated that up to 50% of them are depressed. In two area schools the drop out rate is 17%. There is 35 % unemployment without a high school diploma and 12% with a diploma.

SUSTAINABILITY

CREATIVE AND COLLABORATIVE:

- Demands for services and educational opportunities are up but staffing, if they have it, has remained constant. However, the economic climate has increased the need for programs.
- Many of the organizations are volunteer run and thus the economy has had less of an impact on their programming.
- Most groups have plans for growth, are growing and are wrestling with how to grow and expand responsibly. Growth potential is there but training and development is desired.
- Capacity, physical and professional, is at the limits. Many seemed interested in shared space.
- All seem to be willing and are looking for partnerships. Since many of the organizations are new they are at the early stages of this endeavor.
- There are many ideas and projects on the shelves waiting for possible funding. Even for the all volunteer groups a professional staff hire may be necessary.
- Donations seem constant, many have their own income streams (sales and fees) and depend less on grants but they were concerned about the availability of future grants.
- Some groups are very sophisticated but many are still in their infancy. There is a need to build these volunteer groups into strong organizations.

POSSIBILITIES:

- All groups seem to know clearly where they want to go, what programs they want to offer, and whom they want to serve, etc.
- There is a strong desire to figure out how to get from HERE to THERE with expansion, revenue streams, momentum and partnerships. How do they figure out their “alternative” growth strategy for sustainability?
- Need to strengthen the web that pulls them together.

COMMUNITY BUILDING

STRENGTHENING OUR CONNECTIONS:

- Lack of stable, renewable flexible funding sources for this type of organizing and community building work. Need trust of funders and donors to put funds where needed most.
- Question of who has the power to determine what is important and to whom. How do disenfranchised groups participate in setting the priorities?
- Increasing demand for personal financial services, people are more on edge dealing with economic stressors.
- Issues of volunteer retention, leadership succession and long term planning. Need for staff and board training. Newer, smaller and less visible programs are vulnerable.
- A greater sense of hopelessness and despair especially among the young and in communities of color.
- People are stressed with demands of managing multiple jobs, family crises and neighborhood disconnection. People are giving up their dreams.
- Community building providers are always in transition working with new groups and addressing emerging problems.
- Immigrant issues are growing compounded by a challenging entry level employment scene.
- Grant uncertainty and funding volatility are leading to staff reductions, waiting lists and service reductions.
- Community building work is not as tangible as direct service, results are harder to document and results take longer.
- Partnerships and collaborations can be difficult since sometimes they force more competition for fewer resources.